IS IT SHAKESPEARE

BY A GRADUATE OF CAMBRIDGE

Fernando Pessoa.

IS IT SHAKESPEARE?

PORTRAIT OF BACON

From the First Edition of "Sylva Sylvarum" *Frontispiece*

PORTRAIT OF BACON

From the First Edition of "Sylva Sylvarum" *Frontispiece*

THE RAPE OF LVCRECE.

FRom the beſieged Ardea all in poſt,
Borne by the truſtleſſe wings of falſe deſire,
Luſt-breathed TARQVIN, leaues the Roman hoſt,
And to Colatium beares the lightleſſe fire,
VVhich in pale embers hid, lurkes to aſpire,
And girdle with embracing flames, the waſt
Of COLATINES fair loue, LVCRECE the chaſt.

Hap'ly that name of chaſt, vnhap'ly ſet
This bateleſſe edge on his keene appetite:
VVhen COLATINE vnwiſely did not let,
To praiſe the cleare vnmatched red and white,
VVhich triumpht in that skie of his delight:
VVhere mortal ſtars as bright as heauēs Beauties,
VVith pure aſpects did him peculiar dueties.

B

OPENING STANZAS OF THE FIRST EDITION OF THE "RAPE OF LUCRECE"

To face p. 4

IS IT SHAKESPEARE?

THE GREAT QUESTION OF ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE. ANSWERED IN THE LIGHT OF NEW REVELATIONS AND IMPORTANT CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE HITHERTO UNNOTICED

BY A CAMBRIDGE GRADUATE

"They have their exits and their entrances"

WITH FACSIMILES

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
1903

TO . ALL . SERIOVS . STVDENTS.
OF . ELIZABETHAN . LITERATVRE.
SHAKESPEARIANS . OR . BACONIANS.
CIPHERERS . DECIPHERERS.
OR . REVIEWERS.
THE . AVTHOR.
WISHETH.
HAPPINESSE . AND . VNITIE.
VNDER.
ONE . HEAD . ONE . MOTTO . AND.
ONE . TRILITERAL . BANNER.

THVS . SVBSCRIBING . HIMSELF.

So, Reviewers, save my Bacon;
O let not Folly mar Delight:
These my name and claim unriddle
To all who set the Rubric right.

PREFACE

WHO knows not how difficult it always is to get people to alter their preconceived ideas or their traditional beliefs? But whenever sufficient evidence has been discovered in support of a change of current opinion, then it is, I think, just as well that some one should collect it and present it to the public, making, at the same time, such additions from his own researches as may help to settle the question. That is my excuse for this volume. If people were afraid to offer rebutting evidence because all the leading literary authorities had declared that there was no evidence against them that was not "irrational," we should make very slow progress in research.

Look at theology; how often have the big guns and canons of the Church declared that the evidence for the antipodes and the motion of the earth was "irrational." If no one had ventured to oppose this idea in the face of their tremendous authority, we might still all be holding the apparently very sensible opinion that the earth is fixed and flat.

To me the question of the authorship of those immortal works which have so long borne on them the name of William Shakespeare is one of the most interesting we can discuss in literary criticism. I hold in addition, that the whole matter should be discussed without heat, without prejudice (though that is very hard), and without

vituperation. The last requisite ought to be very easy, for surely vituperation is no argument, neither is it any assistance to argument with right-judging people. But the orthodox Shakespearians have not as a rule fulfilled the last literary requisite, and I hope I shall not be reckoned uncourteous if now and then in the following pages I take occasion to notice it.

For the literary services of Mr. Sidney Lee, who is the generalissimo of the orthodox party, I have the highest esteem and respect. His numerous articles in the "Dictionary of National Biography" are the models of what such notices should be; but when he writes in the *Times* or elsewhere on the Bacon-Shakespeare question he seems a different man, and has no expressions too severe to use against "irrational" Baconians.

I have been obliged to point out the errors and inconsistencies of the chief Shakespearians whereby they often refute each other. Of course this is an accessory to my argument, and I have a right to avail myself of it, but I shall be indeed sorry if it can be shown that I have spoken discourteously of any one, for this reason, if for none other, that such a method defeats its own object.

We must not forget, however, that this great literary question is still *sub judice;* neither party is out of the wood yet, or out of court either. All the talents may yet prove to be only blind leaders of the blind, and the ditch they are to fall into may not be very far off.

Remember the *cognoscenti* in the witchcraft delusions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and what a big ditch they are all buried in now. They were the "big battalions" with a vengeance, and only a stolid champion

here and there could be found to oppose them. Their arguments were irresistible, even as the Shakespearian arguments are irresistible—"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exod. xxii. 18). If that was not a final and unimpeachable argument, where could there by any possibility be one? The Word of God definitely states that witches exist, and are to be killed off-hand.

So that question was settled.

In our matter Ben Jonson, who knew Shakespeare as well as any man living, and knew Bacon equally well, declared in black and white again and again in the first collected edition of the Shakespeare-Plays that Shakespeare, the Swan of Avon, was the man who wrote them, and several other contemporary writers virtually said the same thing. If we have not here a final and convincing argument, where can one be found better? So that question is settled, and the only question that no one seems able to settle is, "Why on earth do not the Baconians give up their folly?"

Now, what are we to say to such things? Well, surely this much; that in literary judgments, and in our judgment of other matters as well, the most cultivated and judicious men of the age may be both right and wrong. That is to say, they may be right according to the lights and knowledge of their age, and their judgment quite a sane one according to *the evidence before them; but*—and there is everything in this *but*—there may be a great deal of evidence not before them; many facts which cannot, at the time, be brought into court because they are then unknown; facts which throw a totally different light on the testimony to be dealt with.

Up till now I have been altogether an outsider, a non-combatant without the slightest wound or scratch that

could fester or rankle, but herewith I join the ranks and the fight and shall look out for blows.

Besides the ordinary weapons of this Forty Years' War I have accoutred myself with a few new and fancy weapons of my own, and this is my chief excuse for 'listing for the fray. I want to prove my arms. My fear is, that being a raw recruit I may shoot, through want of discipline, some of my own side.

My arguments and illustrations are mainly based on the Sonnets and the Poems as being fresher and, as I hope to show, more productive ground.

This ground has been avoided by most Baconians, and triumphantly claimed as Shakespeare's by all the orthodox talent. However, I hope to show clearly that both Poems and Sonnets alike came from the marvellous brain of Francis Bacon.

There is really no need for much preface. We must not stay too long in this vestibule, or some cryptograms may be discovered. I will therefore only say here what I have also repeated at the back door or finis of this book. I wish this work to be considered tentative, and not the creation of a predominant idea. I would give up my Rival Poets, my loose-legged Lais, my Dark Lady, together with dancing Mary Fitton, and all the Adonis-like young damsels in doublet, hose, and codpiece, who may have taken Bacon's curious fancy;—I would renounce them all, or any other false or irregular moves I may have made in this difficult game;—nay, I would suffer fools gladly, and take a checkmate from wise critics with a joyful countenance, if they would only treat this interesting matter seriously, and play fair.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

IS IT SHAKESPEARE?

CHAPTER I

BACON "SHOWS HIS HEAD"

I HAVE often thought that the Sonnets were the real keys wherewith the great secret of the true authorship might perchance be discovered, and I have been extremely surprised that all the prominent Baconians for the most part confined their researches and attacks to the ground occupied by the immortal Plays of William Shakespeare.

And yet the Sonnets have every appearance of being autobiographical. They seem to be genuine though artfully-concealed presentiments of striking events and passionate feelings that had occurred again and again in the author's personal experience; whereas we do not expect a tragedy or a comedy, or indeed any dramatic work put on the boards of a public theatre, to contain direct and emphatic allusions to the author's life. Moreover, a very cursory survey of special phrases and parallel expressions in the Sonnets and the Plays, will show at once that both the Sonnets and the Plays are undoubtedly the work of one and the same author. Yet, strange to say, the Baconians, who might reasonably expect here a rich mine for their explorations, have passed by the Sonnets and Poems with hardly a glance, and have left the many personal incidents in them to the tender mercies of thorough-paced Shakespearians, by whom they have been rent almost limb by limb in order to give to the mysterious "sole begetter," Mr. W. H., a local habitation and a name.

I hope to show that the Sonnets are much better keys to unlock the secret than the Plays, and contain by far the strongest and clearest indications of the true author.

For instance, we will take Sonnet XXVI., and see how it reveals the very name of the hidden author.

XXVI

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
To thee I send this written embassage,
To witness duty, not to show my wit :
Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine
May make seem bare in wanting words to show it,
But that I hope some good conceit of thine
In thy soul's thought (all naked) will bestow it ;
Till whatsoever star that guides my moving
Points on me graciously with fair aspéct,
And puts apparel on my tattered loving,
To show me worthy of thy sweet respect :
Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee,
Till then not show my head where thou may'st prove me.

This Sonnet, as all critics admit, has an interesting and remarkable resemblance to the dedication of *Lucrece* to the Earl of Southampton in 1594, which was signed by William Shakespeare. This Sonnet is certainly addressed to some one in high position; the words *vassalage* and *embassage* settle that. It also seems to be the concluding Sonnet (L'envoi) of a sequence (XVIII.–XXVI.), where deep love and admiration are expressed for a high-born youth, and where the author, although he rather audaciously claims immortality for his verse (S. XVII.), still for "fear of trust" does not go the whole length of expressing his love, or, as it appears, even his name as yet, but the verses or "books" that he sends are to be the "dumb presagers" of his "speaking breast" (S. XXIII.). And he finishes, in this last Sonnet of the sequence (XXVI.), by hoping that his young friend will have such a "good conceit" of the bare verses sent, that he will take them in and cherish them in their nakedness; and

then, the author hints, if his stars lend auspicious help to his future movements—

> " *Then* may I dare to boast how I do love thee,
> Till then not *show my head* where thou may'st prove me."

Now we shall see how the author lets out the great secret in those words *show my head*.

This Sonnet (XXVI.) naturally leads us to make a closer examination of the dedication of *Lucrece*, with which it is evidently connected.

The dedication reads as follows :

THE RAPE OF LUCRECE

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE HENRY WRIOTHESLEY

Earle of Southampton, and Baron of Titchfield

The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end : whereof this Pamphlet without beginning is but a superfluous Moity. The warrant I have of your Honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored Lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours, what I have to do is yours, being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duety would show greater ; meane time, as it is, it is bound to your Lordship : to whom I wish long life still lengthned with all happinesse.

Your Lordship's in all duety,

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

Now all this seems plain and straightforward enough, except the apparently unmeaning and unnecessary remark about " this Pamphlet without beginning " being " but a superfluous Moity."

Such a curious statement naturally leads one to examine the " beginning " of the Pamphlet in its first edition as presented and dedicated to Southampton, and lo ! Bacon " shows his head " at once, for the *first two* lines are headed by this monogram F^{R}_{B}, *i.e.* Fr. B., which may well be called also a *superfluous moiety* of Fr. B|acon, Fr. representing one half of his name with the superfluous B flowing over from the other half.

This seems promising, but the first few words of the dedication seem to harp on the antitheses "without end" and "without beginning." Let us therefore, since we have taken away the author's head from the first two lines where he showed it, and so have rendered the Pamphlet without beginning, let us take away the endings of the *last two* lines, and see if we can find whose is the love that is "without end." We do this, and out comes BACON, neither more nor less. By itself, without the index finger of the last line of Sonnet XXVI., this is a neat and curious discovery, and the credit of it is due to a German publisher and printer who has devoted much time to the Bacon-Shakespeare secret, and has recently written several books on the subject. I claim to have rendered the discovery much more valid and probable, nay, almost certain, by connecting it with the promise of the author, in a Sonnet that was evidently connected with *Lucrece*, to "show his head" if things turned out well and his friend wished to prove his identity.

The first two lines of *Lucrece* are :

FROM the besiged Ardea all in post
Borne by the trustless wings of false desire.

The last two are :

The Romans plausibly did give *con*sent
To TARQUIN'S everlasting *ba*nishment.

FINIS

If we take all the larger capitals in the first two lines we get "Fra. B.," which is another way of signing Bacon's name, and is *exactly* the moiety of the whole signature, viz. "Fra. B|acon," and is again, as before, a superfluous or overflowing moiety.

There is another "undesigned coincidence" which lends a great air of probability to this little cipher device at the beginning of *Lucrece*. It is this. No doubt Bacon shows his head pretty plainly, or seems to do so, when

we take the hints of the dedication and the Sonnet XXVI. in connection with it: but some one might say, "Oh, it's nothing, no proof at all, merely a coincidence, a mere chance arrangement of letters;" and then another objector might add, "Fra. B. is not the usual signature of Bacon to his correspondents or his lovers;" and another, would exclaim, "I can safely say, and you may take my word for it, that Bacon never signed a letter in the absurd form Fra B. in his life."

In reply to such assertions, I would simply adduce the following remarkable coincidence, viz., that when Francis Bacon was about twenty (c. 1580) he wrote several letters to his uncle and aunt (Lord and Lady Burghley) all signed B. FRA.

This additional piece of corroborative evidence was unknown to the German investigator, nor did he bring in the Sonnet as an auxiliary, so that now the force of the Baconian proof is considerably strengthened. However, as no one took any heed of it when he produced it in 1900, I do not suppose any one will deign to notice it now, or if they do, it will be deemed quite sufficient to say that the printer put it so by accident, that the author's MS. began so by accident and finished so by accident, that the "moiety" and "duety" and "beginning" and "end" were all expressions of no particular significance, tending rather to confuse than elucidate the poem, and that as for Fra. B. being like Bacon's "head," it was no more like it than an Aunt Sally at a fair. However, such criticisms have now somewhat lost their edge, and are too common and blunt to disturb our equanimity. But before they begin to slash, I would ask them to consider also the following points connected with this same piece of evidence. The Northumberland Manuscript, which is about the only piece of documentary evidence we possess that connects the two names Shakespeare and Bacon, has among other scribblings this line from *Lucrece*:

"Revealing day through everie Crany peepes."

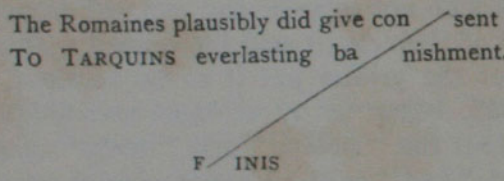
It is not scribbled down quite correctly, because line 1086 of *Lucrece* is :

"Revealing day through everie Crany *spies*."

This shows that the writer quoted it from memory. But is it not also a hint from some one that the revealing light of day would peep out of some cranny, some hole or corner of *Lucrece*, one of these days ?

Strange to say, though Spedding notices the MS. at some length, and quotes the line, he does not say where the line came from originally. Possibly he did not know. Certainly *Lucrece* had no revealing light to throw on *his* Bacon, and yet he knew Bacon better than any one else in the whole world !

The other point is, that if we include the word FINIS which is placed underneath the last two lines, and take its first letter F, and draw a line at an angle upwards through the last two lines in the direction of *ba* and *con*, we get F. BACON, thus :



And this is a way that some writers have used to get their names upon the title-pages of their works in such a manner as to be there without any one noticing them.

Some of the Shakespeare Quartos have words oddly divided on their title-pages, and the syllable *con*, the latter part of Bacon, is often prominently put forward there, but the general result is too fanciful at present to attach much importance to it, unless it be considerably improved.

Nor must I omit another circumstance which is at least rather suggestive.

Ben Jonson in 1616 dedicated his *Epigrams* to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and plainly insinuated that in some dedications titles had been changed in a more audacious manner than Ben Jonson ventured to imitate,

This ſayd, he ſtrooke his hand vpon his breaſt,
And kiſt the fatall knife to end his vow:
And to his proteſtation vrg'd the reſt,
VVho wondring at him, did his words allow.
Then ioyntlie to the ground their knees they bow,
And that deepe vow which BRVTVS made before,
He doth againe repeat, and that they ſwore.

VVhen they had ſworne to this a duiſed doome,
They did conclude to beare dead LVCRECE thence,
To ſhew her bleeding bodie thorough Roome,
And ſo to publiſh TARQVINS fowle offence;
VVhich being done, with ſpeedie diligence,
The Romaines plauſibly did giue conſent,
To TARQVINS euerlaſting baniſhment.

N

FINIS.

CLOSING STANZAS OF THE FIRST EDITION OF THE "RAPE OF LUCRECE"

To face p. 6

and also that some authors' consciences caused them of necessity to employ a cipher for concealment. This may be a hit at the cipher and dedication of *Lucrece* before noticed, for I verily believe Jonson knew far more of the Bacon-Shakespeare secret than any of his contemporaries, as I hope to show further on.

The dedication of the *Epigrams* in 1616 is:

"My Lord,—While you cannot change your merit I dare not change your title; it was that made it, not I. Under which name I here offer to your Lordship the ripest of my studies, my Epigrams; which though they carry danger in the sound, do not therefore seek your shelter; for when I made them, I had nothing in my conscience to expressing of which I did need a cipher."

The "head" or beginning of *Lucrece* is strictly a cipher in one of the senses of the word, for the definition of the N. E. D. gives us "(6) An intertexture of letters, especially the initials of a name, a literal device, monogram," and quotes an example from Massinger of date 1631.

While on this word *cipher* let me say plainly that I am an utter disbeliever in the cryptograms and biliteral ciphers of certain well-advertised American authors, Mrs. Gallup to wit, and others. They are hardly worthy of notice, and have done more to discredit the discussion of an unusually interesting literary problem than anything else I can call to mind.

Whether there is or is not a cipher in the first folio Shakespeare remains for the present a question certainly not to be determined off-hand. But I must say that the likelihood of finding one there is by no means to be dogmatically set aside. Mr. Sidney Lee is not justified in saying positively there is no cipher in the folio Shakespeare. I am surprised that he ventures on so bold and dogmatic an assertion, seeing that he is a member of the Bibliographical Society, and therefore in a good position to be acquainted with a neat little monograph on *Some Elizabethan Cipher-books* to be found in the

Transactions of that Society, and read 18th March 1901. We learn there that the politicians of the parties of Essex and Burghley lived in an atmosphere, so to speak, of ciphers, and such men as the two brothers Anthony and Francis Bacon would be thorough experts of the art. The ciphers were of the most varied kinds—astronomical, zodiacal, multi-literal, cabalistic, and cryptogrammatic.* It seems that Lord Burghley's favourite device was the zodiacal, *i.e.* using the signs of the zodiac for the names of persons referred to. This reminds me that when looking at the well-known Baconian relic called the Valerius Terminus MS., I noticed some signs of this kind scribbled at the foot of a page; but whether an attempt has been made to translate them, I know not. These were supposed only to refer to the date of the MS. But the reading of this little monograph is apt to make one less of a scoffer at those who work on the Bacon-cipher treadmill. I fear these workers are in many cases mere "cranks," but the theory itself is certainly not an "empty delusion." Neither do I believe that the italicised words in the Sonnets are without some hidden allusion.

This monogram cipher of *Lucrece* is one of the very few direct, external, and visible proofs that we have as to the authorship of the Sonnets. It is surprising, as we shall see, to what a degree this Baconian evidence simplifies the Sonnets controversy, and the question of the youth to whom they were addressed. There has been for many years almost a pitched battle between the Herbertites and the Southamptonites, and the most prominent general of the contending armies has completely changed his colours, or rather his camp, at least once, and perhaps more often, for I have only lately come on the field and go by hearsay. I hear, too, that his last dictum is that Shakespeare had never any

* Sir Robert Cecil writes to Anth. Bacon 19th May 1592: "My lord desires you to send a cipher which you may make yourself—especially for his advertising of Names—which will serve, though the alphabets of Letters often be discovered."

intimate acquaintance with William Herbert at all, or at most nothing much beyond official recognition.

Well then, in that case, who in the world wrote the Sonnets ?

The amount of labour and ingenuity that devoted and learned Shakespearians have bestowed upon elucidating the Sonnets has been enormous. For instance, in 1888 Gerald Massey sends forth a huge quarto of nearly 500 pages, entitled *The Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, and proves without a shadow of doubt in his own mind, when and where Shakespeare wrote the Sonnets, to whom and for whom they were addressed, and without hesitation fixes on the Dark Lady and the Rival Poet.

Two years later, in 1890, Mr. Thomas Tyler, with equal, if not greater, knowledge of the subject, writes another most learned, careful, and exhaustive book on these same Sonnets, proving conclusively (?) that Shakespeare wrote *all* the Sonnets to one young man, Mr. W. H., whose Christian name was William, and his full title William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and that Shakespeare hardly had any intimacy with the young nobleman that Gerald Massey had backed through thick and thin for 500 pages. Moreover, he brings forward a totally different Dark Lady and a different Rival Poet.

Then the general comes on the scene (having recently changed his tactics), and authoritatively declares, that as for Mr. Tyler's young man William Herbert, and his Dark Lady, Mistress Fitton, he, Sidney Lee, could say with confidence that Shakespeare had no acquaintance with either of them, except of a most distant and reserved nature. Now, when great experts and men perfectly competent to deal with the question annihilate each other in this ridiculous fashion, lookers-on naturally conclude that there must be something rotten in the state of Denmark—something radically wrong with all three elucidators—and so, I contend, there was. They were all three building on a wrong foundation, arguing from false premises, and assuming the wrong author

for the very subject-matter they were dealing with. They assumed a plebeian to be the author instead of a patrician, they argued on the primary supposition of William Shakespeare, backed up by a long line of traditional authority, to which they attached such overwhelming importance, that the very mention of the patrician Bacon was left by them to the half-educated and the irrational! Their mutually-destructive theories ought to have made them less dictatorial; but some people are too confident either to take advice or to learn that they can possibly be wrong. But, of all people, I ought to be least angry with these magisterial and self-sufficient Shakespearians, for it was the unpleasantly contemptuous tone of certain letters to the *Times* not very long ago, which first induced me to buy a few more special books and to give some pleasant hours to a subject in which I had previously only a passing interest, and which I thought could not yet be decided for want of sufficient evidence.

I by no means assert that there is absolutely complete evidence now. Indeed, for people who are prejudiced no evidence can be complete. But I claim to have added a few more bricks to the Baconian building, and also to have somewhat strengthened the foundation, which to so many sane and sensible people of my own acquaintance seems an absolutely rotten and foolishly impossible one.

But before I quite leave this important evidence from *Lucrece* and the Sonnet corresponding to it, I will bring forward some hints from Bacon's acknowledged works which seem to favour the reality and genuineness of this Lucretian discovery, and later on will attack the still more curious problem of the "Scandal" in the Sonnets, after I have shown that there can be little doubt that two contemporary satirists had discovered Bacon's secret as early as 1598. Both these chapters of evidence will be quite new.

Enough, and perhaps more than enough, has been said of this first item of evidence that I adduce.

The next chapter, I hope, will be even more novel and convincing. Shakespearians are always dwelling on their great stock argument that "all the poet's contemporaries recognised him as the author of his own works, and that they, if any are to judge, ought to be best able to decide the question of authorship. They did decide it unanimously, and there's an end of the controversy to all who are not 'irrational,' or are not 'cranks' best in an asylum."

This, or something like it, is their favourite *pièce de résistance*. I shall now try to show that two well-known contemporaries, at least, knew that Bacon wrote the Shakespeare Poems, and whispered the secret pretty distinctly, but no one seemed to hear it.

CHAPTER II

MARSTON AND HALL REVEAL BACON

It is an odd circumstance that we cannot be at all certain what manner of man Shakespeare was in facial expression. The arguments and controversies about the various portraits of him which have come down to us, have filled hundreds of pages without much positive result. He seems to have had a reddish hue (Rufus) and to have been a man of good presence; that seems about as much as we can say, and that is not positively agreed upon. Of course this "personal matter" is very interesting to some people. As late as July 26, 1902, a contributor to *Notes and Queries* thought he had made a discovery in this direction at last—Shakespeare was a man with large lips. Here is his evidence.

Marston in 1598, at the end of *Pigmalion's Image*, gives to some contemporary writer the nickname "Labeo," in these words:

> "So Labeo did complain his love was stone,
> Obdurate, flinty, so relentless none;"

which certainly looks like a reference to *Venus and Adonis* (lines 200–201).

The discoverer then tells us: "According to Smith's *Latin-English Dictionary*, 'Labeo' = 'the one who has large lips.'" He leaves it so, virtually considering it a Q.E.D. and that he has added a feature to Shakespeare's face. But I fear he has done nothing of the kind. He should have looked up his Horace. He would have found Labeo there,* and a note would most likely have told him that M. Antistius Labeo was a rather

* "Labeone insanior inter
Sanos dicatur."—I. Sat., iii. 82.

famous lawyer who by his free and perverse tongue had offended his emperor, the sensitive Augustus. This will not help us much to the features of Shakespeare's face! Moreover, the critics who have often enough exercised their ingenuity in trying to find out who this Labeo might be, who is mentioned more than once both by Hall and Marston, have generally said that Hall's Labeo was Marston, and as for Marston's Labeo have ignored him altogether. Then Dr. Grosart long ago showed that Hall's Labeo could not be Marston, for the good reason that Marston had not written anything then for Hall to refer to. Then it was suggested that Labeo was Chapman, a nasty thrust if really the case, for there was also a Labeo in classic times who translated Homer and made a frightful and unreadable hash of it. And now we have Labeo, a thick-lipped man generally, and Shakespeare the thick-lipped one in particular.

This will never do; and it shows us the danger of playing with the names, chiefly of classic origin, with which Hall and Marston, and Ben Jonson and others of that age, interlarded their satires, comedies, and epigrams. These University wits were steeped in Horace, Juvenal, Persius, and Ovid, and thence brought forth a nickname from their retentive memory whenever an occasion required it. But we must be cautious in our attempts to unveil the personages satirised, for it does not always follow that because they are satirised under the same borrowed name, they are therefore the same persons. For instance, Marston has a Tubrio in one place, who is a very different character from a Tubrio he mentions in another place; but any two lewd-living, boisterous, military braggarts could be included under the generic name Tubrio. Indeed, many of the names constantly met with, such as Luxurio, Gullio, Fortunio, &c., are simply generic, and unless a striking detail is added, it is useless to try and decipher them. Thus in the *Poetaster* we hear a good deal about Crispinus or Cri-spinas, and some think Jonson is girding at Shakespeare, and some that Marston is the man meant. In

fact he sometimes means one and sometimes the other, and so shields himself from direct libel. Once or twice he gives Crispinus his full name, Rufus Laberius Crispinus or Cri-spinas, and it has been thought that *Rufus* referred to Shakespeare's red hair, that Laberius referred to Shakespeare also, because Laberius was a playwright (*mimographus*) who used new and bombastic words. And as for the hyphenated Cri-spinas, that was clearly the hyphenated Shake-speare.

There may be something in all this, but we must beware of carrying it too far. I would rather take Laberius to belong to Martial, Lib. vi. 14, which is a short epigram very appropriate to Shakespeare, and is a most likely source for Jonson to draw upon. But such things are mere details. They often, however, are useful (if we can be sure of them), in giving us Jonson's earlier views as to Shakespeare and Bacon. And the same may be said of Marston and Hall's use of Labeo, if what they meant could be clearly ascertained.

Fortunately I have been able to make an identification of one of the personages in the Satires of Hall and Marston, which will prove of great value for deciding the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy. It is not mere guess-work, or a probable solution, as so many of the so-called identities are, but direct, neat, and lucid. The veil was artfully adjusted 300 years ago, but I rather wonder that no one has lifted up even the corner of it, or even touched it until now.

Its importance will be admitted when I say that it points out in a singularly clear manner that it was known to contemporaries that Bacon was the author of *Venus and Adonis*.

The proof comes out in the literary war between Hall and Marston, our very early English satirists. Hall was first in the field with his *Toothless Satires* in 1597; they had been written perhaps some years earlier. Then came Marston in 1598 with his *Pigmalion's Image and certain Satires* (May 27), which he called his

"first bloome of Poesy." He is bitter against his predecessor Hall, but for what reason does not appear, unless he felt forestalled by Hall in his own favourite vocation.

Both satirists adopted the incisive method of Juvenal and Persius, being really the first of our nation thus to imitate the ancients. They were both very severe upon the vices of the court gallants and others in high place, especially Marston in his *Scourge of Villainy* which followed his Satires, shortly afterwards in the same year 1598 (Sept. 8).

The consequence was that on the 1st June 1599, Marston's *Pigmalion* (spelled Pygmalion in the Registers) and *The Scourge of Villainy*, and Hall's *Satyres* and several others, were suppressed and ordered to be burnt at the instance of Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Barlow, Bishop of London. And on June 4, Marston's books were burnt in the garden of the Stationers' Company with Davies' *Epigrams* and some others, and Hall's *Satyres* were stayed and *Willobies Avisa* called in. This looks as if Whitgift (Bacon's friend and old tutor) had had some high influence brought on him to stop these libels, as they would certainly be very scandalous to those who knew the persons aimed at, and Bacon wanted publicity as little as possible.

Now for the evidence that both these satirists knew Bacon's secret.

Hall in the second book of his *Satires*, which he called (after Plautus) *Virgidemiæ, i.e.* a bundle of rods or harvest of blows, brings on the scene a character for castigation whom he names Labeo, and attacks him thus:

> "For shame write better, Labeo, or write none,
> Or better write, or Labeo write alone;"
> —Bk. II., Sat. i., 1.

and finishes the satire by a refrain:

> "For shame write cleanly, Labeo, or write none."

There is not much here to discover who Labeo is

intended for, and, as I have said, some have thought Marston suited the satire, and some Chapman, but all were doubtful. The inference from the lines quoted amounted to no more than this, (1) Labeo did not write alone, but in conjunction with or under cover of another author; (2) he was not a pure or moral writer, but of the impure and salacious school. Of course these inferences would suit many contemporaries, and Labeo still remains so far *incognito*, and unidentified.

Early next year, 1598, three other books (IV.-VI.) of the *Virgidemiæ* were issued by Hall, just before Marston had published his *Satires*, and in Book IV., Sat. i., line 37, we find:

> "*Labeo* is whip't, and laughs me in the face;
> Why? for I smite and hide the gallèd place.
> Gird but the *Cynicks* Helmet on his head,
> Cares he for *Talus* or his flayle of lead?
> Long as the crafty *Cuttle* lieth sure
> In the black *Cloude* of his thick vomiture;
> Who list complain of wrongèd faith or fame
> When he may shift it to another's name?"

Dr. Grosart quotes this in his edition of Hall's Poems, and calls it "Sphinxian," but he does not attempt the part of Œdipus, nor do I know any one that has. What can be inferred from the lines seems to be that Labeo was a man of mystery who had hidden himself from curious or pursuing eyes by the tactics of a cuttlefish, that is, by getting behind his own dark unwholesome productions, and by shifting them to another's name. Also that Hall had hidden or not revealed fully the galling secret of Labeo, and that therefore Labeo could laugh the matter off.

These inferences did not lead to much, for there were many anonymous and mysterious writers of unwholesome literature in that age. There are one or two other references to Labeo, but they are even less distinct than those quoted.

But these are by no means all the inferences that can be drawn from this Sphinxian passage, and I shall venture next, though with somewhat of stage-fright,

to assume myself the *rôle* of Œdipus before an audience which I know is, up to the present, preponderatingly Shakespearian and orthodox. My solution will, I hope, forge another link in the chain that shall bind Labeo to Bacon.

It turns on the word "Helmet."

> "Gird but the Cynicks Helmet on his head,
> Cares he for Talus or his flayle of lead?"

The Cynic, whether Diogenes in particular or his imitators as a class, used no Helmet as far as we know; what then can be the allusion? What was this Helmet that made Labeo so careless about the blows of that terrible smasher Talus? I suggest that it was "The Honourable Order of the Knights of the Helmet," of which we hear so much in Francis Bacon's *Gesta Grayorum*, that Hall hinted at. It is now admitted by Spedding and the best authorities that Bacon is responsible for this Device performed at his own Gray's Inn during the year 1594, and that he was the undoubted sole author of the Counsellors' speeches therein given. The Second Counsellor makes a fine oration, "advising the study of Philosophy," and if we want an accurate description of the innermost views and hopes of Francis Bacon, when in his megalomanic mood, we shall find them there. He ends his speech as follows:

> "Thus, when your Excellency shall have added depth of knowledge to the fineness of [your] spirits and greatness of your power, then indeed shall you be a Trismegistus; and then when all other miracles and wonders shall cease by reason that you shall have discovered their natural causes, yourself shall be left the only miracle and wonder of the world."

If a man has such a Helmet on what need he fear? and Bacon, I believe, when cogitating on his schemes of power over Nature, often thought that he had that within him which might make him the wonder of the world, a second Trismegistus. When this Order of the Helmet was instituted, the name was taken, we are told, "in regard that as the Helmet defendeth the chiefest

part of the body, the head, so did he (the member) defend the head of the state." Each member kissed the Helmet when he took his vow, before girding it on. The articles of the Order are given at length in the *Gesta Grayorum*, and are worth reading in this connection, and indeed if any Knight of the Helmet kept them all, or even the greater part of them, he might well care nothing for Talus and his flail.

This allusion may seem very far-fetched and improbable to my adverse critics now, but it should be remembered that it was not far-fetched *then*, for it was only about four years or less since the *Gesta* had been performed, and the learned humours of the Knights of the Helmet would still be in the memory and on the tongues of London literary men.*

I have another strong passage (from Hall) which is best noticed here. We have already seen several reasons for coupling the Cynic of the *Satires* with Bacon; the following lines give further corroboration:

> "Nay, call the Cynick but a wittie foole,
> Hence to abjure his handsome drinking bol
> Because the thirstie swain with hollow hand
> Conveyed the stream to weet his drie weasand.
> Write they that can, tho' those that cannot doe,
> But who knowes that, but they that do not know."
>
> —Bk. II., Sat. i., 3.

This too is Sphinxian, but I think that the original Latin distich prefixed to *Venus and Adonis* by the author, will enable us to play the part of Œdipus:

> "Vilia miretur vulgus, mihi flavus Apollo
> Pocula Castaliâ plena ministret aquâ."

Here we have the "handsome drinking bowl" (*pocula plena*) which the Cynick author abjured (Bacon), while the "thirstie swain" (Shakespeare) "conveyed the stream" (of the Castalian fount) "with hollow hand to weet his drie weasand."

The last two lines are written in riddling vein, but

* For the best account see Spedding's Life, vol. i. pp. 325–343.

they seem to mean: "They who can write, should write, although some who cannot write are esteemed as authors. But who knows about these last pseudo-authors and their secret? Why, no one but a few privileged ones, and they all profess ignorance of the secret; if asked, they do not know." If I prove correct in my suggestion, we have here a pretty clear reference to *the mystery of William Shakespeare*, and the full draughts of Castalian water in the Latin distich.

Next then we come to Marston's satires, beginning with his *Pigmalion's Image*, which he strangely spells in piggish (Baconian?) fashion, though an excellent classical scholar who ought to know the proper spelling.

Here we have a poem founded on the model and lines of *Venus and Adonis*. It is a love-poem and not a satire, and we have naturally nothing helping us to find out Labeo here, but as an appendix to it the author writes some lines in "praise of his precedent Poem."

Here we find Labeo again:

> "And in the end (the end of love, I wot),
> Pigmalion hath a jolly boy begot.
> So Labeo did complain his love was stone,
> Obdurate, flinty, so relentless none;
> Yet Lynceus knows that in the end of this
> He wrought as strange a metamorphosis."

Now this is helpful to us, for it shows us, or rather Lynceus shows us, what poem is referred to and who Labeo stands for. For it was *Venus and Adonis* that had the strange metamorphosis at the end, that of Adonis into a flower, quite as strange as the metamorphosis of *Pigmalion's Image*, and it was the author of *Venus and Adonis* who wrote or complained:

> "Art thou obdurate, flinty hard as steel—
> Nay, more than flint, for stone at rain relenteth?"
> —*Venus and Adonis*, ll. 199–200.

And this is Labeo's complaint almost word for word; so we arrive at the pretty certain conclusion, thanks to far-seeing Lynceus, that Labeo is intended for the author

of *Venus and Adonis*, of which Marston had evidently a favourable opinion or he would not have used that sincerest of all flatteries—imitation.

We have thus made a good step forward—Labeo is the writer of *Venus and Adonis;* and as there is every reason to think that Marston used the name Labeo because Hall had used it, we are therefore able to infer that Hall and Marston both mean the same man. We therefore advance another step and infer that the author of *Venus and Adonis* did not write alone, that he shifted his work to "another's name," and acted like a cuttle-fish by interposing a dark cloud between himself and his pursuers.

Our next step is a surer one still, it is nothing less than showing, by a clear, direct, and unmistakable piece of evidence, that Labeo, the author of *Venus and Adonis*, is no less a personage than Bacon.

This strong proof is derived from Marston's *Satires*, published with his *Pigmalion's Image* in 1598, several months after Hall's first three books of *Virgidemiæ* had appeared. Marston's Satire IV. is entitled *Reactio*, and is full of railing and censure on Hall's "toothless" snarls, and ridicules his prefatory *Defiance to Envy* through many lines and quotations. Marston in this *Reactio* goes through pretty well all the literary celebrities that Hall had aimed at, and defends them:

> "O daring hardiment!
> At Bartas' sweet *Semains* rail impudent;
> At Hopkins, Sternhold, and the Scottish King."
> Sat. iv., 39–41.

This was his "reaction" against Hall's satirical remarks on sacred poets, and sacred sonnets, against which, as Marston says, [He] "like a fierce enraged boar doth foam." He defends several other authors and books against the envious and spiteful satire of Hall, as he terms it. He defends the *Magistrates' Mirror*, which Hall had ridiculed in his Book I., Sat. 5, but he seems to take no notice of Hall's attack on Labeo, although that attack was a marked and recurrent one.

Labeo seems to be omitted from the list in the *Reactio* altogether.

But it is not so really; *Labeo is there*, but concealed in an ingenious way by Marston, and passed over in a line that few would notice or comprehend. But when it *is* noticed it becomes one of the most direct proofs we have on the Bacon-Shakespeare question, and what is more, a genuine and undoubted contemporary proof. The missing Labeo, the author of *Venus and Adonis*, appears under a Latin veil in the following interrogatory line addressed to Hall:

> "What, not *mediocria firma* from thy spite?"
> —Sat. iv., 77.

that is to say, "What, did not even *mediocria firma* escape thy spite?" That Latin veil is thin and transparent enough in all conscience. It's BACON'S OWN MOTTO, and I am gazing at it now, finely engraved over that well-known portrait of *Franciscus Baconus Baro de Verulam*, which faces the frontispiece of my early edition of his *Sylva Sylvarum*.* "Surely you have blundered like the rest of the cranks," I seem to hear the Shakespearians say; "surely it was a motto common to many families and proves nothing." The thought made me refer to our Smart Society's Bible, edited by Burke, and there I found that no one but the Earls of Verulam or the Bacon family has used that motto. I am reassured,† and I come to the strange conclusion that after three hundred years of mistaken identity the true author of

* This motto apparently came from Sir Nicholas Bacon, for at the trial of Sir Walter Raleigh in 1603, the Lord Chief Justice (Popham) said: "It was the posy of the wisest and greatest counsellor of his time in England." *In medio spatio mediocria firma locantur.* So it seems that part of the posy formed a motto for arms.

† In the matter of general acceptance by its readers, Burke's Bible may be said to be superior to its time-honoured namesake which begins with the Pentateuch. For Burke is opposed by far fewer heretics and free-thinkers, and has never yet been printed in a Polychrome edition, of varying authority. Hence my reassurance.

Venus and Adonis is discovered under the very thin device of his own heraldic motto.

Marston has been edited and reprinted and annotated again and again, but this odd line has never received, as far as I know, a single word of notice. What shall we say to all this? I can think of nothing more appropriate than the expression Professor Dowden used when he referred to one of Judge Webb's Baconian errors—"Did you ever?"

But I have another unnoticed piece of evidence from Marston's *Scourge of Villainy*. Unfortunately it is rather of the nature of "crank" or "cipher" evidence, and therefore those who believe that Bacon never used any alphabetical devices in any part of his works, had better skip this evidence.

For the sake of those who have not pre-judged the case of Bacon's literary concealments, I will produce it.

It is a pleasant episode in the midst of Marston's biting and libellous satires. He suddenly breaks off while apparently speaking against the affected and senseless character of much of the contemporary drama and poetry, and addresses an unnamed *littérateur* of those days in the following strain:

> "Far fly thy fame,
> Most, most of me beloved! whose silent name
> One letter bounds. Thy true judicial style
> I ever honour; and, if my love beguile
> Not much my hopes, then thy unvalued worth
> Shall mount fair place, when apes are turnèd forth."
> —*Scourge of Villanie*, Sat. ix.

Who can this be? Praise from Marston, the severe satirist, is most unusual. Who was this genius that was to rise by his own "unvalued worth when apes (*i.e.* actors or imitators) are turned forth"? I thought at once of Marston's known appreciation of Shakespeare; he evidently knew the works that went by his name well, and imitation of *Hamlet* and other Shakespeare plays, or rather reminiscences of them, can be frequently traced in Marston's dramas. It has also been stated

before that his *Pigmalion* was both in metre and style an imitation of the *Venus and Adonis*. Therefore it did not seem unlikely that in this rising genius "most, most of me beloved," Marston might refer to Shakespeare. Did the passage afford any clue? Yes, one of a very Sphinx-like character. His name is alluded to, "one letter bounds" it, and it is a "silent name," *i.e.* I suppose, an "unuttered name." Is there a name of one letter? Well, there are several such—Dee, Jay, Kaye, &c., but not one suitable to the case. At last it struck me that F was the one enclosing letter, and that Marston knew much more than I thought. For F is the letter that "bounds" the other two where Bacon "shows his head" in the beginning of *Lucrece*, F^{R}_{B}, and it bounds his name at the end also, where the F of Finis bounds the BA CON of the two last lines. And that name was a "silent name," not uttered either in the vestibule or any other part of *Lucrece*.

Indeed, as far as that vestibule was concerned, an "ape" or "poet-ape" was in possession, and Marston plainly says that he did not expect the man he addresses, and whose "judicial style" he did "ever honour," would mount to his right position till the "apes are turned forth." All this, I say, *looks* as if Marston knew the Baconian secret thoroughly, and had either recognised Bacon's head and tail or had been told of it. Of course, I know well enough that all I have been bringing forward in this last page or two *may* be nothing but fantastical rubbish, and I shall certainly *not* call any one irrational who won't believe it. But though I admit that this last "one letter" proof stands on a much weaker foundation than does the hidden allusion to Bacon's motto, I do not think it quite unworthy of being offered to the critics. But both these proofs may be utterly demolished without interfering at all with the general argument and force of my present work.

Judge Webb introduced one argument about the "noted weed," which was demolished as soon as seen by every critic. It was this that brought out Professor

Dowden's "Did you ever?" and it has gone a long way towards depreciating his excellent summary. But one mistake no more damns a book than one swallow makes a summer. *Qui s'excuse s'accuse*, and it is true that I am rather doubtful about my last "one letter" discovery. But if not Bacon, who on earth can Marston mean? Was there another fellow of the same name and the same motto? Oh yes, there was his brother Anthony. Well, I will accept any one on sufficient evidence, and will be pleased to hear of it. As for the Marston evidence, there is this that I can say with certainty—he alludes more than once to a rising literary genius whom he loves, so he says, as his own self. He expresses a personal literary devotion in stronger terms than were usual even in those days of adulation.

Take this further example from his play of *What You Will*, Act. II., Sc. I.:

> "Or the deere spirit acute Canaidos
> (That Aretine, that most of me beloved
> Who in the rich esteeme I prize his soul
> I terme myself)."

Taking this and comparing it with the identical expressions in the "one letter" passage from the *Scourge of Villainy* above, there can be little hesitation in asserting that they refer to the same man. That man is Bacon surely. The appellation of "Aretine" is quite proper to the author of *Venus and Adonis*, for he appears throughout the poem to be trying "his hand with Aretine on a licentious canvas," as Boswell remarked of Shakespeare long ago.

The fact is both Marston and Hall were "moral" satirists, and were genuine doubtless in their detestation of the vices of the age. Indeed, Hall became an excellent bishop, and Marston, as it seems, spent the latter years of his life in a vicarage and with the cure of souls. I believe they both, especially Marston, admired and esteemed the lofty genius and soul of the "concealed" poet, but they thought he had prostituted it by the lascivious and unclean nature of his beautiful verse.

"For shame write *cleanly*, Labeo, or write none," says Hall, and Marston, if I am correct in my surmise, calls him an "Aretine" and dubs him *Canaidos*, though he loves him. It is within my knowledge that Nash was thought to be the "Aretine" of that day by his fellows, and that he himself almost assumed that title, and therefore it may be that Marston was referring to him. But there is no evidence that Marston was a student of Nash and an imitator of him, as we know was the case with Marston in regard to the Shakespeare poems and plays.* Moreover, I think Nash appears in the *Scourge of Villainy* branded with the vilest opprobrium, and so I hold to Bacon as being most likely the man Marston means.

Many of that age who admired Bacon's other sterling qualities, regretted his early licence of love, and his "phantasticall" devotion to such "toys" as plays and sonnets. Such were Sir Thomas Bodley, the Cecils, father and son, and the Queen herself. I often think that it was from causes of this kind mainly, that Bacon's promotion in his uncongenial career was so long delayed.

And then there was the Scandal too. What does Marston mean by *Canaidos?* It is not without some hidden meaning, for it is an invented name, and not borrowed out of the common stock of Juvenal, Persius, or Horace, whence the University wits drew their nicknames for the most part. What if it implies the similarly sounding word "Kunaidos," which would lead us to "Cynædus," and some vile form of "Cynicism"? I hope not. But about this time or a bit later, according to my theory of the Sonnets, Bacon was undoubtedly "vile esteemed," and there were many *mendacia famæ* rolled like a sweet morsel under the tongues of the envious vulgar. Those connected with the garrulous theatrical

* "A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!
Looke thee, I speak play scraps."
—MARSTON'S *What You Will*, Act II., Sc. i.

Marston has several other instances, especially from *Hamlet*, which latter give a plausibility to an earlier *Hamlet* than we now possess. He also has a quotation from *Richard III.*, Act I., i. 32: "Plots ha' you laid? inductions dangerous."

world, which always has its touch of a cynicism of some kind, would be sure to hear of it. Neither Ben Jonson in his early days, or when supreme at the "Mermaid" later on, nor yet his literary "sons" who viewed him as a dictator, would be so delicate as to taboo this unpleasant subject over their sack and pickled herring, and I am surprised we have not heard *more* about this scandal in contemporary satires. But there was the Star Chamber and the censors, and Bacon's powerful friends, to suppress and eradicate such references. *Pigmalion*, the *Satires*, and the *Scourge of Villainy* were all burnt, and others were "stayed," as we know. This partly accounts for the reticence.

But Marston elsewhere speaks more pointedly of the two great Shakespeare Poems; there can be no doubt about the passage I shall next quote. A sense of personal pique at unfair treatment is plainly exhibited here. Is he (Marston) to be muzzled while the freedom of the press is readily granted to lewd poems fathered and signed by a William Shakespeare, a mere trencher-slave? Shall poems which "magnificate" the lust of a goddess of Jove's Olympian court, or tell the suggestive story of "Lucrece rape," be endorsed by archiepiscopal sign-manual, while his own, the production of a scholar and a gentleman, are muzzled and threatened? That was the sore point, as he clearly states:

> "Nay, shall a trencher-slave extenuate
> Some Lucrece rape and straight magnificate
> Lewd Jovian lust, whilst my satiric vein
> Shall muzzled be, not daring out to strain
> His tearing paw?"
>
> —*Scourge of Villanie*, iii. *ad finem.*

If it be thought strange or contradictory that a poet should be first praised and called "most beloved" "deere spirit," with other friendly epithets, and then vilified almost in the same breath, it should be remembered that the satirists of that age made it their object to lash current vices irrespective of personal friendship or even ties of blood. The rather free frontispiece of the *Scourge*

of Folly (1611) shows this. Here we have Folly represented as hoisted on Time's back, untrussed and ready for castigation by a wit who is flourishing his lash, and saying, "Nay, up with him, if he were my brother." The wit was John Davies of Hereford, author of many other poems besides the rare *Scourge of Folly*, and with a large circle of acquaintance among the upper and middle classes, whom he did not spare.

It must be admitted, that if we examine closely the possible allusions to the Shakespearian drama in Hall and Marston's satires, we shall find signs of condemnation rather than approval. But their condemnation is mainly in one direction only, in fact it amounts to the same dispraise which Jonson expressed when he said to Drummond that Shakespeare wanted *art*. Ben meant, I think, classical art and the Aristotelian Unities, and it was the same with the twin University scholars, Hall and Marston.

Hall says (of the Shakespeare plays, as it seems):

> "A goodly hoch-poch; when vile Russettings
> Are matched with Monarchs and with mighty kings.
> A goodly grace to sober *Tragick Muse*
> When each base clowne his clumsie fist doth bruise,
> And show his teeth in double rotten row
> For laughter at his self-resembled showe."
>
> —*Virgidem.*, Lib. I., Sat. i. 39.

Hall, Marston, and Jonson, all seem to be of the same opinion, that Shakespeare over-edited very considerably the plays he obtained by brokerage—"his huge long scrapèd stock," as Marston calls them. They thought he added far too many "shreds" of his own of a rough, rustic, railing, jesting, clownish character—for there must be rude clownage for the gallery; it was a tradition of the old stage right away from the time of the miracle-plays, and Shakespeare as an actor-manager, with an eye to the main chance rather than to strict chaste classic art, could not or would not dispense with it.

Even when Ben's severely classic *Sejanus* was brought out by Shakespeare's company at the Globe Theatre

in 1603, we find from Ben Jonson's preface to the play, that it was "not the same with that which was acted on the public stage," the fact seeming to be that Shakespeare or some of the company, but Shakespeare for choice, had inserted gags, or additions, or alterations differing from Ben's MS. He says "a second pen had good share in it," and adds, perhaps satirically, that he was unwilling "to defraud so happy a genius of his right" by publishing his additional ornaments, and that he has replaced his own original composition and words in the published play.

Surely this throws a flood of light on the Shakespearian authorship of the plays. Shall we be thought absurd if we suppose that Shakespeare of Stratford was a good practical playwright, with a rough and ready trenchant humour, acceptable on traditional lines with the greater part of the less cultured among the audience, but an eyesore to the better-instructed University critics, who looked for classic art; and this Shakespeare wanted. But not only in the low-comedy scenes could Shakespeare insert his "shreds"; he was a veritable *factotum*, and could bombast out a bragging blank verse—that is, he could fill up the lines he wrote, as well, in his own opinion, as the best of his fellow-writers. This was just the kind of man to over-edit a MS. obtained by brokerage, and to be unable to restrain himself from adding to and patching up even such high-class work as Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*, and Francis Bacon's immortal creations. We should read in connection with this the whole passage concerning Luscus—"Luscus, what's play'd to-day?"—in the *Scourge of Villainy*. As I have said elsewhere, I hold Luscus, both here and in Jonson's *Poetaster*, to be Shakespeare the actor.

Marston says, referring to Luscus:

> "Now I have him that ne'er of ought did speak
> But when of plays and players he did treat—
> Hath made a common-place book out of plays,
> And speaks in print: at least what e'er he says
> Is warranted by curtain plaudities.
> If e'er you hear him courting Lesbia's eyes,

Say (courteous sir) speaks he not movingly,
From out some new pathetic tragedy?
He writes, he rails, he jests, he courts (what not?)
And all from out his huge long-scrapèd stock
Of well-penn'd plays."

—*Scourge of Villanie*, Sat. xi., 41.

Here there seems a good biographical passage connected with the real original Stratford Shakespeare, and as they are so uncommonly rare, I make no excuse for quoting it. It is such passages as the above, which make me deprecate and detest the assertion that "Bacon wrote Shakespeare." It is not true, and it is not likely to be true. That Bacon wrote the Poems and Sonnets in their entirety absolutely, I fully believe, but the Plays are on another footing. I do not call to mind any part of the Poems or Sonnets that does not bear the well-defined stamp of a born aristocrat, who was the equal social companion of court gallants and maids of honour. A very large proportion of the contents of the Shakespeare Plays equally bear this well-defined stamp; such early plays as *Love's Labour's Lost* seeming to me indubitably the work of a well-born and highly educated genius. But there is a not inconsiderable percentage of the matter of the Shakespeare Plays which seems unworthy (if I may be pardoned the blasphemy) of that philosophic, aristocratic, and megalomanic genius, by whose wondrous alchemy words that were dead, blossomed into living pictures; and who, according to my contention, was the true original author of the immortal plays. But Shakespeare of Stratford edited them, gagged for them, arranged the stage machinery (though the true author was no novice at that business), produced them before the public, and very likely paid something for them, so they might well be called and esteemed Shakespeare's Plays. And when Ben Jonson, somewhat like Sir Walter Scott, threw dust in the eyes of the whole reading world by his ingenious prevarications in 1623, that appellation remained stereotyped in the minds of all till less than fifty years ago.

There are several other passages in Marston's *Satires*

where Bacon seems pretty clearly alluded to, and I shall refer to them in their proper connection later on. Marston spares him not, though he admires his intellect; and if we are surprised at the unfeeling censure displayed now and then, we must remember that the office of a satirist is not to praise the virtues but to lash the vices of the masked contemporaries whom he puts into his verse. He calls Bacon, as I am inclined to think, a "Cynic" in several different passages. In one he addresses him, "Thou Cynic dog," and as a "currish mad Athenian," by this last word meaning a University man by education. Marston insinuates elsewhere that his wits were rather "flighty," as we say:

> "Why in thy wits half capreal
> Let's thou a superscribèd letter fall?
> And from thyself unto thyself dost send,
> And in the same thyself thyself commend?"
>
> —Sat. i., 7, &c.

Now this letter-trick was almost peculiar to Bacon. He was constantly using it, as we see by what Spedding unfolds. "Capreal," a rather uncommon word, seems here to mean "fantastical," which was a term of obloquy often applied to poets, especially if they were high-born. Thus Puttenham's *Arte of Poesie* tells us: "Whoso is studious in the Arte, or shewes himself excellent in it, they call him in disdayne a *phantasticall*" (edition Arber, p. 33). The word is doubtless connected with *capriole*, the high-leaping or curvetting of a horse or goat. In fact, Marston in his *Antonio and Mellida* (Act V., i. 94) exclaims:

> "Now, cap'ring wits
> Rise to your highest mount."

But Marston most of all seems to dislike the comic low characters, and the "tricksy, learnèd, nicking strain" of the immortal plays. He says:

> "My soul adores judicial scholarship;
> But when to servile imitatorship
> Some spruce Athenian pen is prenticèd,
> 'Tis worse than apish;"
>
> —*Scourge of Villanie*, Sat. ix.

and again a few lines further on:

> "How ill methought such wanton jigging skips
> Beseemed his graver speech."

All this looks very like Baconian allusion, for in the next lines comes the eulogy "Far fly thy fame," &c., quoted above, and the only eulogy in the whole of the *Satires*—where we get the "silent name one letter bounds," or F^{R}_{B}.

Such passages as are quoted in this chapter, and other new passages even stronger than these that I shall give in the chapter on Jonson and Bacon, should considerably invalidate the force of that great orthodox argument: "All Shakespeare's contemporaries acknowledged him to be the true author of his own works, and that irrevocably settles the question."

I now approach, as promised, the unpleasant subject of the Scandal connected with the author of the Sonnets and with Bacon.

CHAPTER III

THE SCANDAL: EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

THE next evidence which I shall bring into open court in the following pages, is, what I fear some people will call the kind of evidence that should only be heard *in camerâ*. But a literary question can hardly be discussed under such restrictions, and even were it possible to nominate a joint-committee of well-known Shakespearians and Baconians to discuss privately "the Scandal of the Sonnets," and simply report the decision arrived at, without communicating the evidence that led to it, I do not for one moment suppose that any of the public, literate or illiterate, would be satisfied with such a bare result.

So if we are to settle this *quæstio vexata*, we must take the savoury with the unsavoury, and make as few wry faces over it as possible. I think it will be more satisfactory, both to myself and my readers, if I introduce this unpleasant, but necessary, subject in the words of an orthodox Shakespearian, who is a fine scholar, and I suppose knew the Sonnets, backwards and forwards, better than any man in the world. I refer to the late Samuel Butler, who in 1899, being then so little a novice in difficult problems of literature that he had already discovered the writer of the Odyssey to be a woman, tried his experienced hand on Shakespeare's Sonnets.

He began with a good will, there is no doubt of that, for he tells us that before taking any steps to tackle the problem on its merits, he committed the whole body of the Sonnets to his memory, and thus became independent of his book, and had not the trouble of constantly turning over its leaves. Such a beginning, if

it did not end in success, at least deserved it. But alas, being a Shakespearian pure and simple, he found the problem, as they all find it, a much more awkward one than at first it seems. In his case, after a deal of honest hard work, he succeeded, so his friends said, in imparting additional obscurity to several of the plainer and more obvious Sonnets, and by a curious arrangement of earlier dates than had been ever tried before, he rendered some of the Sonnets perfectly unintelligible. But he was one of the very few who have ventured to hint at the tabooed subject of the "Great Scandal," and it is for that reason that I quote him before I cross the threshold myself.

In his book, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (pp. 86, 87), he says:

"No person can begin to read the Sonnets without feeling there is a story of some sort staring them in the face. They cannot apprehend it, but they feel that behind some four or five Sonnets there is a riddle which more or less taints the series, with a vague feeling as though the answer if found would be unwholesome. Their date is the very essence of the whole matter; for the verdict that we are to pass upon some few of them—and these colour the others—depends in great measure on the age of the writer. . . . If we date them early, we suppose a severe wound in youth, but one that was soon healed to perfect wholesomeness. If we date them at any age later than extreme youth, there is no escape from supposing what is really a malignant cancer.

"Those who date the Sonnets as the Southamptonites and still worse the Herbertites do, cannot escape from leaving Shakespeare suffering, as I have said, from a leprous or cancerous taint, for they do not even attempt to show that he was lured into a trap, and if they did he was too old for the excuse to be admitted as much palliation."

Mr. Butler grants that the story is a squalid one, but thinks Shakespeare's first few years in London were passed in squalid surroundings, and he ends by an appeal:

"Considering his extreme youth, his poetic temper, considering his repentance, and the perfect sanity of all his later work, considering further that all of us who read the Sonnets are

as men who are looking over another's shoulder and reading a very private letter which was intended for the recipient's eyes and for no one else's, considering all these things, I believe that those whose judgment we should respect will refuse to take Shakespeare's grave indiscretion more to heart than they do the story of Noah's drunkenness."

And further on (p. 122) he says :

"One word more. Fresh from the study of the other great work in which the love that passeth the love of women is portrayed as nowhere else save in the Sonnets, I cannot but be struck with the fact that it is in the two greatest of all poets that we find this subject treated with the greatest intensity of feeling. The marvel, however, is this, that whereas the love of Achilles for Patroclus depicted by the Greek poet is purely English, absolutely without taint or alloy of any kind, the love of the English poet for Mr. W. H. was, though only for a short time, more Greek than English. I cannot explain this."

No, I may add, nor is any orthodox Shakespearian ever likely to explain it. William Shakespeare was most distinctly *not* the kind of man for a scandal of this nature, nor is there the slightest trace of such a stain in his whole life. He had his scandals too, but they were very different ones. Take his early Stratford days —we all know how he cropped his own sweet rose before the hour. It is down in black and white against him in the contemporary registers of the diocese of Worcester —that is one scandal. Take his London actor-manager days—we know pretty well how he showed a citizen's wife that William the Conqueror was before Richard III. ; that too has been current in black and white from an early period and seems founded on good oral tradition. That is another scandal, but not the kind we have to do with here—nay, it almost excludes it, for Shakespeare's breaches of the moral law were distinctly virile, and, moreover, he was the father of twins begotten in lawful wedlock before he was twenty-one—so there was not much sexual inversion about *him*. We cannot marry any facts, or even fictions of his life, to the scandals of

the Sonnets. But how about Bacon? What do the Baconians—the heretics—tell us about him with regard to this particular matter? Nothing, apparently. Either they know nothing, or else they are in a conspiracy of silence; for I have seen nothing in print on the subject as yet. But as I have only recently entered on the field of controversy, I may not have sufficiently examined their arguments or evidence.

But we may surely begin by saying that at least *a priori* we have in Bacon a much more likely man for a moral scandal than in the country lad Shakespeare, who was brought up far away from the infectious atmosphere of "Italianated" gallants, and who mixed with middle-class people of a much more unsophisticated character than were the libertines of a royal court, whether a French or English one.

Bacon had early experience of court life abroad, and was thrown into the company of aristocrats who had widely travelled and knew the vices of the Continent at any rate, even if they did not practise them. And if we put aside the grosser forms of vice as improbable, and reduce the scandal to an intense Platonic friendship for a beautiful youth, still Bacon is much the more likely man for this too than Shakespeare. For since the Greek teachers and scholars came to Italy after the fall of Constantinople, there had been a great revival, almost a re-birth, of Greek literature in that sunny land, and a kind of Platonism established itself in literature and in the higher culture of men, whereby the Greek view of an intense innocent male friendship was fostered and became indeed fashionable and praiseworthy among the cultivated upper classes, and Englishmen who travelled in Italy, or consorted with men who had spent some time abroad, would be likely enough to catch this fashion or folly of the time, and would either seek or imagine some "master-mistress" for their passion.

Bacon, I maintain, was a much more likely individual to catch this infection than was Shakespeare. But however that may be, I feel it is only right that I should

produce in open court all such scandal-evidence regarding Bacon as I have found in the course of my comparatively short search.

I will begin by calling my principal witness, who is no other than good old Aubrey, whose appearance in the witness-box should be greeted with delight and respect by all lovers of biographical research. If ever a man devoted time and trouble to gathering useful and accurate details of the lives of famous Englishmen of his own age and of the near preceding ones, it was John Aubrey. He has recovered and preserved for us many valuable literary assets which are now in our possession for ever, and we have to thank him for many precious records of Milton, Waller, and scores of other famous and interesting Englishmen, which would have been utterly lost but for his conscientious and pains-taking notes, which he put down in those MS. volumes now preserved in the Bodleian. He is a most valuable witness in this case, as indeed he is in all cases of contemporary biography, for we know his antecedents, and we know how he used to obtain his evidence. He was a man of good position in society, with numerous friends and correspondents, and was a most persistent questioner and seeker-out of those who had personally known any of the worthies whose lives and peculiar characteristics he wished to record in his great MS. collections. He dined out, and had frequent social intercourse with cultivated men of the higher classes, and any scraps of their conversation, any anecdotes they might personally relate, would be carefully and honestly transferred to his note-books on his return home. This was a hobby of his and he rode it for many years. He may be called the Boswell of the seventeenth century, and he took, not merely one literary colossus, but many interesting celebrities into his anecdotal biography.

What then does this valuable witness tell us about Bacon? A new, astonishing, and for the present controversy, a most important fact. Aubrey says: "He was παιδεραστής. His Ganimeds and favourites took

bribes, but his lordship always gave judgment *secundum æquum et bonum.*" * The latter part of this statement is fully corroborated by evidence in other writers, but the first few words contain a most startling fact which I have not met with in any Life of Bacon.

How is it that this serious allegation against the great Lord Chancellor is apparently unknown? Perhaps it has been looked at by those who have happened to come across it as a *scandalum magnatum* which it would be unseemly to stir up or even to notice, on account of the high recognised position of Bacon in English literature and history. But I think the real reason is that until quite recent years (1898), it has really been unknown. It was in Aubrey's MSS. at the Bodleian, and had been there for many years; but what literary student in ten thousand would go through those intricate jottings, those erasures and alterations, or that complicated patchwork of many memoranda spread here and there in the folio pages? Besides, they had been already edited and presented to the public, and most students had read them in this printed form. I had done so, years ago, when I was only a general reader, in my college or salad days, and the astounding fact we are now dealing with was *not* there. It had been suppressed, along with much else that was thought too broad and unrefined for the age.

But in 1898 a distinguished University scholar, recognising the importance of old Aubrey's gatherings, published a much larger (but still not quite unexpurgated) edition, and on re-reading my delightful old friend, I came upon Bacon in a character hitherto totally unsuspected by me.

But is this ἅπαξ λεγόμενον of Aubrey to be accepted as a probably correct statement, or as simply a piece of vulgar gossip without real foundation? Is there any corroboration in Bacon's life or works for such an astounding assertion? I am sorry to say there is; and, all things considered, the amount of corrobora-

* Aubrey's *Brief Lives*, edited by A. Clark, i. 71. Oxford, 1898.

tion is larger than might be expected, for such matters are always most carefully covered under the veil of secrecy by all persons in any way connected with them.

If it be objected, that such a charge is ridiculous, that it has not a leg to stand upon, and that there is not a single *legal* or *official* document or record of anything of the kind connected with Bacon, I would ask these objectors to hear what Bacon himself has to say about the treatment of high official records by those who had power over them. He says in his *History of King Henry VII.* (Works, Spedding, vi. 38) that "soon after this king ascended the throne, all the documents which tended to taint him were defaced, cancelled, and taken off the file." May we not well imagine that Lord Chancellor Bacon, who enjoyed the friendship and confidence of James I. (who also had his Ganymedes), would be able with little difficulty to take off the official files any documents connected with any charge or base attack upon himself, especially if it had been an abortive one, as the words "hunting on an old scent" would seem to imply?

In spite of the many high qualities of Bacon, both in intellect, and as I believe in character as well, he was obliged at times by the exigencies of his social and political position to adopt a Machiavellian policy which hardly received indorsement either from his intellect or from his conscience. He was most skilful in suppressing that which he wished to conceal, and he had considerable practice at this work all his life. He had a great deal to do with the Masques at Gray's Inn, and the Devices for the Earl of Essex; we may say, in fact, that he was the prime mover, producer, and author of several pieces of this description, and yet his name is kept out of the business in a most marvellous manner. His contemporaries (*e.g.* Rowland White and others) write full descriptions of these Devices and Masques in letters to their intimate friends, and do not so much as mention Bacon's name except on one occasion, where he is given the credit of getting up "the dumb shows" of a certain

Masque. The Earl of Essex gets all the credit of his Device, and the inference universally was that he was the author of the libretto. But it was nothing of the kind; it was Bacon who wrote the speeches, and perhaps we should *never* have known this for certain unless some rough drafts in Bacon's own writing had accidentally been preserved in the Gibson Papers, and the famous Northumberland MS. had revealed to us other pieces of Bacon's work. Bacon was one of the greatest literary fabricators (especially of letters for other men) and one of the greatest concealers and cancellers of his own literary work that perhaps ever existed, apart from professional impostors. He would fabricate "Apologies" with the greatest readiness, for this man or for that, or write letters in their name, either to them or from them, and imitate the style required admirably. He would suppress passages in important parts of his works, and add or cancel names as circumstances might require. I think many people quite forget this when they put aside Bacon as an impossible producer of the Shakespeare works. But enough has been brought forward here of the known peculiarities of Bacon's literary life, and his astuteness therein, to show that, combining these with his official position as Lord Chancellor, it would be no difficult matter for him to cancel and conceal from posterity every atom of official evidence concerning this scandal which had ever existed, for such documents would be very few in number, and would be in "archives," not in printed books. But enough about this possible objection.

There is indirect evidence in plenty, and before dealing with that, it will be as well to get a clearer view of the true nature of the charge contained in Aubrey's Greek word παιδεραστής. In the first place, the charge is not so bad as it sounds to the classical ear. The Elizabethans were not ancient Greeks, not even the most Italianated of them; there were no gymnasia and no gymnosophists in Elizabethan England; the cultus of the nude was not in evidence in those days, as it was when Pheidias

gave supreme expression to the human form divine, and when Grecian generals took their favourite minions with them in their campaigns. Our northern climate was different; our institutions and habits were different; the whole *entourage* was different, and excluded the *special* signification of Aubrey's word or at least considerably modified it.

I take the charge against Bacon to mean something much less repulsive than the Greek vice and something infinitely more pardonable, and we shall find, I think, that this more lenient interpretation of the scandal is to some extent borne out by certain well-authenticated but rather mysterious circumstances of Bacon's public life. We shall find that it is very especially corroborated in numerous allusions in the Sonnets and also in the other works usually attributed to Shakespeare; but in the plays not so pointedly or frequently as in those private "sugred" poems, which were certainly never meant for public or general perusal but for his special "friends" alone.

What the secret scandal really was will be best seen as evolved in the course of the evidence.

I. *The hidden scandal in Bacon's life.*

It is admitted *in limine* that there is absolutely no judicial or official record of any prosecution of Bacon on such or similar charge at any period of his life. And it must also be admitted that if such a charge had found its way to official record in any inferior, or, for the matter of that, superior court, no one would have been in a better position to erase or annul the record than Lord Chancellor Bacon. And now for the evidence we possess.

Just before the 29th April 1601, there was a most unseemly squabble between the Attorney-General Coke and Bacon, "publicly in the Exchequer the first day of term," in which Coke abused Bacon most violently and persistently. The abuse had its origin in Bacon raising some legal point as to the re-seizure of the lands of George Moore, a relapsed recusant, and showing "better matter for the Queen against the discharge by plea." This

roused Coke, who was, as a rule, overbearing and insolent to the juniors, and he bade Bacon not to meddle with the Queen's business, but to mind his own. Bacon gave a kind of *tu quoque* reply, and then Coke burst out again worse than before, and according to Bacon's letter of complaint to his cousin Mr. Secretary Cecil, Coke went on to say: "It were good to clap a *capias utlegatum* upon my back! To which I only said he could not; and that he was at fault, for he hunted upon an old scent. He gave me a number of disgraceful words besides, which I answered with silence, and showing that I was not moved with them." Dr. Abbott (*Life of Bacon*, p. 91) says that the threat of *capias utlegatum* no doubt refers to Bacon's arrest for debt in September 1598. But I rather question this. It seems to be some scandalous charge that is referred to, some felony or charge to which Bacon did not appear personally when called to answer it, and so incurred the penalties of an outlaw. It is clear that Coke's abuse was most virulent, for the letter says that his words and tone were "with that insulting which cannot be expressed."

Bacon also reminds Cecil in this same letter (April 1601) that he was using boldness in addressing him on such a subject, because he had before experienced his cousin's willingness to stand up for him jealously when wronged. "I am bold now," Bacon writes, "to possess your Honour, as one that ever I found careful of my advancement and *yet more jealous of my wrongs*, with the truth of that which passed, deferring my farther request until I may attend your Honour."

And earlier in 1598, when Bacon was in trouble on account of being arrested for debt, he had also written to his cousin Cecil, asking him to help in repelling the indignity offered to him by arrest while on her Majesty's service, and says further: "How sensitive you are of wrongs offered to your blood in my particular, I have had *not long since* experience."

I suggest that with these letters before us, it seems highly probable that Cecil had protected his cousin

Francis Bacon some time previously, when some unpleasant and probably disgraceful charge had been either brought against him or threatened—a charge that would tarnish the fame or throw disgrace in a smaller degree on his blood relations and home circle. Still further, we can date this odium or charge as "not long" before 1598, the date of his reference to it in his letter to Cecil. This would bring us to the years 1596–7 as a possible limit for the time of the scandal, and this date agrees remarkably well with the allusions in the Sonnets.

As far as I can make out the old legal term *capias utlegatum*,* it appears to have to do with either treason or felony, and the suggestion that the Attorney-General Coke, who was Bacon's lifelong enemy, referred mainly to the arrest for debt in 1598, seems to me wholly untenable. What was there so very disgraceful in this arrest? How could this charge of itself be so terribly insulting? Besides, it appears that Bacon had purged himself from that charge, nor was this an "old scent." Neither could it be treason that Coke referred to; for if the Essex case looked bad for Bacon, and the play of *Richard II.*, which Bacon seemed to fear that some busybodies would father on him as "one of his own tales," looked still more treasonable, yet these things had only just occurred, and reference to them could hardly be called "hunting on an old scent"; so I cannot but come to the conclusion that this scandal, which Coke raised so brutally and violently (as was his wont at times of passion) against his rival, and which Bacon received for the most part in silence, had reference to some charge or information laid against Bacon's moral character,

* As far as the old law-books and dictionaries help us, we find that the Latin words used by Coke referred to what in plain English would be a "Writ of Outlawry," which was thus defined: "When an indictment has been found in any Court of *oyer* and *terminer*, or general or quarter sessions, against a person, and that when a justice of the peace, being applied to, shall issue a warrant for his apprehension, then if he shall keep away or cannot be found, he is liable to be outlawed, and if the charge be treason or felony the writ would be *capias utlegatum*; but if the charge were only for misdemeanours of less gravity, the writ would be *venire facias*."

and was most likely to have had its origin in his great familiarity and friendship with youthful persons of his own sex. Nothing raises suspicion among the foul-minded vulgar more easily than such a companionship as this, which they, with their low ideas, can only interpret in one way. I believe that Bacon was innocent of such a charge, supposing it to have been made, and that Coke in his temper made himself the mouthpiece of mere vulgar report, or at most a mistaken suspicion arising therefrom. Young Francis Bacon when at Gray's Inn and engaged in arranging plays and masques and interludes, was a very different person from the thoughtful philosopher of Gorhambury, who sat in his arm-chair and mused of Man's Power over the Elements of Nature. He associated with notorious libertines, and, as will be seen, was a bit of a libertine himself. He was the bosom friend of Southampton, and afterwards of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, both young men notorious for debauchery, and almost given up to the attractions of the theatres. Southampton, with whom most of the Sonnets, and all the early ones, are closely connected, was far the worse of the two. The Earl was the Adonis of his passionate admirer, and for him had been written *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, and in their dedications Bacon had enshrined his loved one's name while time should last. This I hope to show very clearly farther on. Bacon's character in earlier life and his then associates form the subject now. Well, another close friend and correspondent was Essex, a man who, whether married or a bachelor, was constantly angering Queen Elizabeth by his intrigues with her maids of honour, not simply with one love-lorn virgin of that vestal band, but with four or five. Bacon's cousins, the two Russell girls, were among the number, and their aunt, Lady Anne Bacon, Francis Bacon's mother, had to lay a formal complaint against Essex, of which he admitted part and promised amendment.

Antonio Perez was another great friend of Bacon. He came over to England in the summer of 1593, or

perhaps earlier, and attached himself to Essex, mainly for political purposes. Essex supported him in London, and procured for him £130 from the Queen, as a pension. Perez became very intimate with Francis and Anthony Bacon, and had now established himself for a time in Bacon's mansion near Twickenham Park. Bacon found food for his curiosity and ambition in the conversation of such an experienced diplomat as was Perez, and besides this, Perez was a very quick-witted, amusing, and, it must be added, a very licentious and dissipated man.

Francis Bacon's mother, the Lady Anne, was naturally alarmed at such an intimacy, and wrote one day to her son Anthony: "I pity your brother; yet so long as he pities not himself, but keepeth that bloody Perez, yea a coach companion, and bed companion, a proud, profane, costly fellow, whose being about him, I verily fear, the Lord God doth mislike, and doth less bless your brother in credit and otherwise in his health." *

Lady Anne had some justification in speaking of "that bloody Perez," for he was suspected of the murder of Escovedo, and his illicit relations with ladies of title were notorious. He and the Princess of Eboli were once found by Escovedo, who was a kind of male duenna to the lady, *en el estrado en cosas deshonestas*, and when Escovedo threatened to tell the king about it, the princess replied: "Escovedo, do so if you like, *que mas quiero el trasero de Antonio Perez que al rey*." Hardly the language one would expect from a "perfect lady," but it helps us to understand why Lady Anne, who was very strict and proper, and herself a grim duenna to the maids of honour her nieces the Russells, and others, did not think Antonio Perez quite the right person for her son Francis to be intimate with.

Somewhat later on in May 1594, Lady Anne Bacon writes to her son Anthony, strongly condemning the dangers of London life. Anthony had located himself in Bishopsgate Street, and his mother disliked the neighbourhood very much. It was too near, she said,

* Birch, *Memoirs*, i. 143.

to the Bull Inn, where plays and interludes were acted. The servants would be corrupted, religion would be neglected, and so on. Francis comes in for his share of his mother's annoyance as well. In fact, the general impression to be derived from Lady Anne's correspondence is that both Francis and his almost inseparable brother Anthony were both somewhat given to a wild licentious life, frequenters and lovers of plays and masques, and boon companions of wealthy young bloods, whose room, in Lady Anne's opinion, would be far better than their company. We have hints too of trouble with the servants; their conduct seems to have been by no means satisfactory to her ladyship at home, and she evidently thought that London and the neighbourhood of the theatres would neither improve their behaviour nor their morals.

We have other evidence about Perez besides what comes from the puritan-minded Lady Anne. She might be suspected of prejudice against Perez as a Roman Catholic, and of jealousy on account of his influence over her two sons, but we are able to judge Perez out of his own mouth. There is a letter written by a Mr. Standen to Francis Bacon in March or April 1595, from which we learn the kind of post that was assigned to Perez—and a person more unfitted for such a delicate post would be hard to find. Mr. Standen writes: "It is resolved that Mr. Perez shall not depart, for that my Lord hath provided him here with the same office that eunuchs have in Turkey, which is to have the custody of the fairest dames; so that he wills me to write, that for the bond he hath with my Lord, he cannot refuse that office."* About this time he seems to have become very intimate with Lady Rich, who writes to Anthony Bacon (May 3, 1596) saying "she would fain hear what has become of his wandering neighbour, Signor Perez." About a year before (March 1595), Perez had written to Lady Rich the following rather impudent and braggart letter, at least we must so consider it when we remember his post: "Signor

* Birch, vol. i. p. 229.

Wilson hath given me news of the health of your Ladyships, the three sisters and goddesses, as in particular that all three have amongst yourselves drunk and caroused unto Nature, in thankfulness of what you owe unto her, in that she gave you not those delicate shapes to keep them idle, but rather that you push forth unto us here many buds of those divine beauties. To these gardeners I wish all happiness for so good tillage of their grounds. Sweet ladies mine, many of these carouses! O what a bower I have full of sweets of the like tillage and trimmage of gardens."

This unabashed reprobate goes on to say that he has written a book full of such secrets as some persons would not like to have known, and he seems to hint that on his return to England these people must pay if they wish their names kept out of his book. So it seems he was a "black-mailer" in addition to his other odious qualities, and that the womanly instinct of Lady Anne had pierced through the veneer of the polished and travelled Perez, and had detected the baseness that was concealed under his clever and insinuating manners.

Most certainly Perez was no fitting coach or bed companion for Francis Bacon, and I should say that the style of their free conversation was a little different from the style of the *Instauratio Magna* or the *Novum Organum*. I doubt whether Mr. Spedding, thorough expert on Bacon's style as he undoubtedly is, would have been able to identify it on these *tête-à-tête* occasions. May not this give us a hint why this same great authority so resolutely says that "whoever wrote the Plays of Shakespeare it was certainly not Bacon"?

This dictum of so great a Baconian expert is almost the greatest stumbling-block that lies in the way of the Baconian theory. For if Mr. Spedding cannot judge of Bacon's style, who is there that can? But may not too much attention have been paid to the high philosophical and philanthropical style which Bacon chose in order to clothe his message to the world with due dignity, and too little heed to the faculty which Bacon

undoubtedly possessed and gloried in—the faculty of presenting feigned letters and compositions under other names than his own, and so working out his object under a mask or veil? Look at the many letters he certainly wrote for Essex, and also some most probably for Pembroke and others; even for Lord Walsingham as early as 1590. In fact Bacon plumed himself on his skill in "invention," and as for our Plays, Sonnets, and Poems, why may not they be, after all, the hidden works of Bacon's "Invention" and "Recreation"? We know of cases of "double personality" in the domain of psychical research—why may there not be double personality in the domain of literary style? I only suggest a question, I do not press it, nor do I highly value the theory.

The only reason I have dwelt on Perez' and Bacon's earlier associations at such a length, is because they are to a great extent passed over in the ordinary biographies of Bacon. Of his life for the ten or twelve years after his father's death (1580–1592) we really hear very little, even in the exhaustive collections of his best biographer Spedding, and the years between one's majority and the age of thirty-two or thirty-three are most important for character and prospects. Francis Bacon was in early and early-middle life more inclined to gay and fashionable society, and much more mixed up with the players and theatrical life than has ever been imagined, and was more in touch with the maids of honour and their Christmas amusements, their masques, their virginals, and their loves, than any of his biographers have given him credit for. At least so I hope to make it appear in the course of my argument.

Thus far I only claim to have shown that in the recorded life of Bacon there was a hidden scandal which was more akin to the veiled scandal of the Sonnets than anything we know or could infer from what has been handed down to us about Shakespeare, their reputed author. Also that this same mysterious something with which Coke used to vilify Bacon, seems to corroborate what Aubrey has plainly stated; and moreover, that Bacon's

early associates and surroundings, so distasteful to his puritanical mother, Lady Anne, point more to the authorship of the Plays and Sonnets than has previously been supposed.

Next let us consider what the hidden scandal of the Sonnets appears to be, and whether it points to the authorship of Shakespeare or of Bacon. But before doing this, there is another piece of evidence to which I attach some importance, and it ought not to be omitted in the present connection. It concerns the unusual helplessness in which Bacon found himself with regard to authority over his male servants, and Spedding accepts it as probably a true history. "In the year 1655, a bookseller's boy heard some gentlemen talking in his master's shop; one of them, a grey-headed man, was describing a scene which he had himself witnessed at Gorhambury. He had gone to see the Lord Chancellor on business, who received him in his study, and having occasion to go out, left him there for awhile alone. 'Whilst his Lordship was gone, there comes,' he said, 'into the study one of his Lordship's gentlemen, and opens my Lord's chest of drawers wherein his money was and takes it out in handfuls and fills both his pockets, and goes away without saying any word to me. He was no sooner gone when in comes a second gentleman, opens the same drawers, fills both his pockets with money, and goes away as the former did without speaking a word to me.' Bacon being told when he came back what had passed in his absence, merely 'shook his head, and all that he said was, 'Sir, I cannot help myself.'" *

The relater of the tale commented on it in a curious and suggestive manner, for he thought that Bacon's manner was so strange when told of the thefts, that it struck him that Bacon's servants must have had some mysterious power over him, and that Lord Bacon had some fault; whatever it was he could not tell.

This Gorhambury anecdote would refer to a later period of Bacon's life than when the Sonnets were written, and would correspond more with the time of his life to which

* Preface to "*On The Cries of the Oppressed*," by M. Pitt in 1691.

old Aubrey refers, *i.e.*, when Bacon was in a high judicial position, and "his Ganimeds and favourites took bribes."

But there are some letters written earlier than this, in April 1593, which appear very compromising for Francis Bacon, and have a worse appearance in regard to the scandal than his familiar acquaintance with Perez, which I have recently related from Birch's well-known Memoirs. They are original letters from Lady Anne Bacon to her son Anthony, and they complain very strongly of the behaviour of the male servants that Francis Bacon kept about him. "There was," she says, "that Jones, and Edney,* a filthy wasteful knave, and his Welshmen one after another." Until they came, the poor mother writes, "he (Francis) was a towardly young gentleman, and a son of much good hope in godliness." And she adds, "he hath nourished most sinful proud villains wilfully;" and ends thus: "For I will not have his cormorant seducers and instruments of Satan to him committing foul sin by his countenance, to the displeasing of God and his godly true fear."

Now this letter was written just about the time that *Venus and Adonis* was being given to the world, and supplies us with a good reason why Bacon should not care to have *his* name mixed up with it, even if it came from his fertile brain. He had to reckon with his mother, who was a lady of considerable force of character, and held both her sons somewhat in her power in money matters. The pecuniary difficulties of Francis were the original cause of these letters and the strong remarks contained in them. Francis wanted to pay his debts by selling an estate called Markes, that had been left to him, but he could not sell without the consent of his mother, who as dowager would have her widow's third. Anthony, who was always trying to help his brother, wrote an appeal to his mother to let Francis have power to sell the estate altogether, for the sake of

* This name has always been deciphered as *Enney;* so Spedding and the rest have it. I have replaced Edney from the MS. Lady Bacon seems to mean Idney, of whom I speak presently.

his brother's health and peace of mind, which were both in a bad state just then. Lady Anne Bacon eventually consented, but there were more letters, which are given (in part) in Spedding.* They are worth reading entirely, and throw a strong light on the unwholesome and unscrupulous kind of young servants by whom Bacon was surrounded—at least so his mother thought. It seems they were mainly Welshmen, and of a low class, for his mother writes, "He is robbed and spoiled wittingly by his base exalted men, which with Welsh wiles prey upon him." "That Jones never loved your brother . . . but your brother will be blind to his own hurt. . . . The Lord in his mercy remove them from him, and evil from you both." And again, she writes: "Oh that he had not procured his own early discredit, but had joined with God that hath bestowed on him good gifts of natural wit and understanding."

These "base exalted" Welshmen remind me of the many Welsh characters in Shakespeare's plays, and the great credit critics have given him for the lifelike way in which the Stratford man reproduces the broken Welsh-English lingo, and the Welsh character. According to Lady Anne just now (1593) and earlier, Bacon had been living almost in an atmosphere of Welsh cunning and Welsh lingo, and was therefore quite qualified to give the speaking portraits of Captain Fluellen and Sir Hugh Evans we find in the Shakespeare plays.

But there is stronger evidence still—evidence that almost proves Lady Anne right, when she said that Francis was "blind to his own hurt." It appears that Bacon used to sleep with one of his men-servants and take him out with him in his coach. This was defying public opinion indeed. This was almost asking the tongue of vulgar scandal to wag. The name of this servant was Percy, and it is to the laborious Spedding that we owe his name. Percy turns Perez out of Bacon's bed, and occupies the place himself. This is far worse than I have been supposing. I first read about Perez

* *Life and Letters of Bacon*, i. 243–246.

in Birch's Memoirs, and was surprised at Bacon's unusual intimacy with such a profligate character, and found an historical reason why Lady Anne should call him "bloody Perez." I noted these things down, and not long after I found that the conscientious Spedding had been to Lambeth and had read through all Lady Anne's letters in her own handwriting, and that he had found that Birch had wrongly deciphered Lady Bacon's rather difficult writing, and that the "bloody Perez" who was bed and coach companion to Francis, should really have been the "bloody Percy." As Spedding thinks, a Henry Percy, one of Francis Bacon's servants, was here meant. But why "bloody"? That word suits Perez much better.

However, in any case, whether Perez or Percy shared the bed, it caused Lady Anne to use very strong language, and evidently worried her very much. Of the two, Percy would cause the greater scandal, for Percy from his position in the household should certainly have had a room of his own; whereas Perez as an occasional visitor and perhaps entertained unawares (though no angel) might well receive the hospitality of Bacon's own chamber.

Dr. Abbott, dealing with this matter of Lady Anne in his *Bacon and Essex* (p. 46), quotes "bloody Percy" as a "*couch* companion and bed companion." These variations induced me to go to Lambeth, and inspect for myself the original there carefully preserved. I found Lady Anne's writing extremely hard to decipher; the paper she used was more like blotting paper, and her pens must have been very bad. But I found that she wrote "coch companion"; there is no doubt of that, and as that was an early way of spelling the name of the vehicle, after the French fashion, I think *couch* may be dismissed. The name Percy or Perez is much more dubious. I could only read it as *Peerer*, which rather favours the Spanish gentleman. "Bloody" also was a puritanical epithet for Papists, "Bloody Queen Mary" to wit.

I have somewhat to remark on one paragraph of Lady Anne Bacon's letter as given by Spedding; it is as follows (i. 244): "It is most certain till first Enney (?),

a filthy wasteful knave, and his Welshmen one after another . . . did so lead him as in a train, he was a towardly young gentleman, and a son of much good hope in godliness." Mr. Spedding puts a note of interrogation after Enney's name, either because he was uncertain whether it had been correctly deciphered, or because he knew no one connected with Bacon of that name. I read the doubtful word as Edney. I suggest that Edney may be a Mr. Idney, whom we hear of through Aubrey, who says, "Three of his Lordship's servants kept their coaches, and some kept race-horses;" and in a side-note Aubrey adds that the three servants were "Sir Thomas Meautys, Mr. Thomas Bushell, and Mr. Idney." The first two are well known to Bacon's biographers, but what became of the last I know not.*

So far then, I think it must be generally admitted that we have a considerable amount of good and undeniable *external* evidence that Bacon was given to unusual intimacy with loose and unprincipled people, some of whom were beneath him in position, and that he was also on terms of friendship with wild and licentious gallants of his own class. There is evidence that he gained discredit by such a manner of life with his mother, and no doubt with other strict-living people, and that he was once publicly discredited by his old enemy Coke on some old and disgraceful charge, possibly of this same character, or worse.

The *external* evidence for a scandal in Bacon's life is stronger and clearer than is usual for a man so highly placed, and can hardly be dismissed. Next let us take the internal evidence for a similar scandal in the author of the Sonnets, which is also strong.

* There was a William Edney connected with the Chapel Royal (1569–1581), and there was a Peter Edney, an excellent singer, who might, as far as chronology helps us, easily be his son. This Peter Edney receives much praise for his "grace and musical talent" from John Davies of Hereford. Bacon might well have taken him as a page, or in some other personal service, when he left his father and the Chapel Royal surroundings, which latter were not the best seminary for a graceful boy. Of course this is mere conjecture from the name alone; but Edney is by no means a common name, and there may be something in the coincidence.

CHAPTER IV

THE SCANDAL: INTERNAL EVIDENCE

To any reader who has the slightest acquaintance with those gems of English verse known as "Shakespeare's Sonnets," it is perfectly evident that the author, whoever he may be, does pathetically confess and bewail some "blot," some "offence" or "guilt" of his, some "lameness," which metaphorically crippled his better nature (for mere physical lameness hardly seems to suit the different passages), some result in some way of his "sportive blood," which others with their "false adulterate eyes" had esteemed vile. Men's thoughts about the author's "frailties" are described as "rank thoughts," and altogether we may say that something unusual and unpleasant of a sexual character is clearly meant. The author gives us many other hints similar in character and phraseology to those quoted above in the inverted commas, and several Sonnets have more or less reference to this peculiar subject of scandal, but CXX. and CXXI. are perhaps the strongest. We must not, however, forget that even in these he defends his innocence, or partly leads us to infer it. Thus, the first four lines of Sonnet CXXI. certainly go far to make us think that the author's offence *never went beyond intention*, and the same remark applies elsewhere, as in Sonnet CIX., where he excuses and accuses himself in this remarkable phraseology:

> "Never beleeve though in my nature raign'd
> All frailties that besiege all kindes of blood,
> That it could so preposterouslie be stain'd
> To leave for nothing all thy summe of good;
> For nothing this wide Universe I call,
> Save thou, my Rose, in it thou art my all."

Now *preposterouslie* is a significant adverb here, and

there seems to be more in this word than meets the eye. We shall find it used in what is evidently a similar connection in *Troilus and Cressida* (Act V. sc. i.), and if we remember that this play is the very one which was supposed to be the "purge" that Shakespeare gave to Ben Jonson in return for his bitter attacks on the play-writers in the *Poetaster*, we shall understand the force of the word still better. For Ben Jonson had hinted pretty plainly that one, if not all of them, belonged to that disgraceful class of men whom the Romans called *cinœdi*, as will be seen further on when I deal with Ben Jonson and Bacon, and the way in which Bacon is implicated in the charge as a young Alcibiades. The Shakespeare passage where the word now in question occurs is a dialogue between "rank Thersites," the universal vilifier, and Patroclus, the unsullied bosom friend of Achilles:

Thersites. Pr'ythee be silent, boy, I profit not by thy talk; thou art thought to be Achilles' male varlet.

Patroclus. Male varlet, you rogue! what's that?

Thersites. Why, his masculine whore. Now the rotten diseases of the south . . . take and take again such *preposterous* discoveries.

There can be no doubt about the application of the word here, and thus some light is, I think, thrown upon the meaning of the word in the Sonnet.

Moreover, in *Othello* (I. iii. 330) we have this word *preposterous* again used in a similar connection; Iago says:

"If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions."

And these words of the Sonnet were addressed to a young MAN, which makes them stranger still. "My Rose!" it seems so very inappropriate. Indeed, Gerald Massey, who devoted so many years to these mysteries, will not believe that the Sonnet was to a man at all. He says, "The Rose is a female emblem," and that he should no more think of calling a man "my Rose," than of calling him "my tulip."

The Sonnets which deal with the peculiar "bewailed

guilt" of the author seem to be XXXVI., CX., CXII., and CXVIII.–CXXII., and any one carefully considering the repeated self-accusations they contain can have little doubt that these Sonnets are distinctly autobiographical. I know some good authorities have held the opinion that these Sonnets contain no key to the author's real life but are simply works of his poetic fancy, trials of imaginative skill, as was the usual habit with many, and indeed most of the Elizabethan sonneteers. This fashion in sonnets may be admitted as pretty general, but no writer has ever dwelt on his own abasement and infamy as it is exhibited here.

There is just a possibility that the scandal was connected with Mary Fitton, for in Sonnet CXIX., which is included in the criminating sequence, we have the suggestive lines :

> "How have mine eyes out of their spheres been *fitted*
> In the distraction of this madding fever ;"

and the punning word "fitted," in connection with her name, is not without other examples—Fitton, fit one, &c., and especially Sonnet CLI. :

> "flesh stays no farther reason,
> But rising at thy name, doth point out thee
> As his triumphant prize."

And moreover, there certainly seems to have been some peculiar scandal about the Pembroke-Fitton case, apart from Pembroke, when we consider the abrupt departure of Mary and her father from town, and the fact of Pembroke renouncing marriage for some reason not clearly stated. Bacon certainly knew Mary well, for did not she and his cousins the Russells act and dance together in masques at court, and private interludes before the Queen ? Moreover, we are told of this rather audacious young maid of honour that she would tuck up her clothes and put on a large cloak like a man, and go forth to meet her lover, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. This kind of male-impersonation would commend itself strongly to a man of Bacon's temperament, as Aubrey would have

it to be. She would be like the charming Rosalinds and other maidens in doublet and hose which meet us in the pages of the immortal plays. I admit much of this is mainly fanciful, but I also submit that it is most curious and suggestive if taken in connection with Aubrey's most positive statement. Anyhow, I will assert with some degree of confidence that Francis Bacon was a much more likely man to sit by Mary Fitton when she was playing the virginals, and to "envy those jacks that nimble leap to kiss the tender inward of her hand," and then afterwards write Sonnet CXXVIII. as a record of the sweet experience—a much more likely man, I say, than was William Shakespeare.

There is an atmosphere of aristocratic life and refinement about the Sonnets, in which I think the Warwickshire rustic would breathe with difficulty. This view of the case is also helped by that expression of Sonnet CXXV., "Hence thou suborned *Informer*," where Informer is meant to be a significant word, being one of the few words put in italics in the original edition of the Sonnets, and implying a hidden reference for those who knew. I take the *Informer* to be Sir William Knollys, who appeared in the Essex trial in that thankless character, and may possibly have informed against Bacon and Mary Fitton as well. He was a lover of the wanton maid himself, and would keep a jealous look-out on her doings, and an effective one too, as he was, so to speak, on the spot, and could get to her by the "postern door," as is well known he did one night, with his a——e * in his hand. But that is another story. All I want to show here is, that the secret scandal of the Sonnets points much more to Bacon as the real author of these strange confessions than to Shakespeare.

And if we consider the Poems, and especially the *Venus and Adonis*, and that bashful smooth-faced boy therein depicted with all a lover's fervour, what are we to think? Must we not feel how Adonis recalls the

* What this was will appear further on. I leave it for the present for the reader's skill in guessing. I do not think any one will succeed.

Southampton of the Sonnets, and is his very "counterfeit," our author's "lovely boy"? Do we not see how Adonis, with his half-girlish coyness and tempting inexperience, as yet unassailed, represents, in a way, the "master-mistress" of the author's passion, who was to live in eternal lines in these very poems? For the Sonnets were a private message, for private friends, not for the world of fame. They were, at least some of them, of the nature of a secret embassy accompanying or preceding the powerful rhymes that were openly to give life and fame to the "lovely boy" whose name was on the dedication page:

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

Have we not here, in the Poems as well as in the Sonnets, Bacon παιδεραστής — Bacon a born lover of youthful semi-feminine beauty, rather than Shakespeare, a virile married man and the father of twins?

Of course, as the poem of *Venus and Adonis* was to be open to the eyes of the public, not a word of scandal or male-love do we hear; but the tendency is but half-concealed when we read in impassioned lines how fair the young Adonis was.

In the Plays the tendency would be more concealed still, for they would be acted in public as well as read in the pirated quartos, and allusions were always keenly looked for by the observant Elizabethan audience. The Plays, too, were historical more than autobiographical.

But there are indications now and then, if only slight ones. Take this from *Hamlet*:

> "So oft it chances in particular men
> That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
> As in their birth—wherein they are not guilty—
> Since nature cannot choose his origin . . .
> Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
> Being nature's livery, or fortune's star—
> Their virtues . . .
> Shall in the general censure take corruption
> From that particular fault."
>
> —*Hamlet*, Act I. sc. iv. l. 30.

And Biron (who represents in so many ways the author) says :

> "For every man with his affects is born,
> Not by might mastered, but by special grace."
> —*Love's Labour's Lost*, Act I. sc. i.

And what is still more remarkable, we find that the admirable lines just quoted from *Hamlet* were all struck out from the last *revision* of the Plays in the folio of 1623. Did the editor of the folio (Ben Jonson ?) do this to prevent any inference being drawn against the true author ? or did Bacon and Ben Jonson jointly withdraw the passage, fine as it was, on the well-known principle of "the least said, the soonest mended" ? We must not forget that there was another possible reason for the omission of this passage, and that is, that the Sonnets had been given to the public since the quarto *Hamlet* was printed, and they might raise suspicions in people's minds, for in the Sonnets there were allusions to "Fortune's spite" and "Nature's defect," and people might put two and two together.

And there are several suggestive passages in that little-read poem *A Lover's Complaint, by William Shakespeare*, printed at the end of the original edition of the Sonnets in 1609. It is a poem allied to *Lucrece* in metre and some other points, and allied to Bacon in its law terms and similes. Here are two stanzas :

> "Nor gives it satisfaction to our blood,
> That wee must curbe it uppon others proofe,
> To be forbod the sweets that seemes so good,
> For feare of harmes that preach in our behoofe ;
> O appetite from judgement stand aloofe.
> The one a pallate hath that needs will taste,
> Though reason weepe and cry it is thy last."

> "All my offences that abroad you see
> Are errors of the blood, none of the mind :
> Love made them not, with acture they may be,
> Where neither Party is nor trew nor kind ;
> They sought their shame that so their shame did find,
> And so much lesse of shame in me remaines,
> By how much of me their reproch containes."

I am half-ashamed to say that I have only just read this poem for the first time. It seems to be written in a lofty Shakespearian vein, abounding in imagination and exquisite phrasing. Stanzas XII.–XXI. would suit young William Herbert very well, but the maiden seems more chaste and reserved than the volatile Mary Fitton had the reputation of being at the time.

Mr. W. C. Hazlitt has lately (1902) written a volume entitled *Shakespear*, with a view to improve upon the famous Life of Shakespeare by Sidney Lee. Mr. Hazlitt's knowledge of curious and out-of-the-way Elizabethan literature is unrivalled, and I bought the book at once, expecting a flood of light on an undoubtedly obscure subject, and possibly a clearing up of the Sonnet-scandal question. I must say I was much disappointed. I will give an instance or two. Mr. Hazlitt takes Yorick to be Richard Tarlton, the popular jester and low-comedian. Very likely that is so; I had already deduced an argument from the same supposition in the present book. But, being an orthodox believer, he has to bring "Shakespear," as he calls him, on the scene somewhere with Tarlton, for the jester had borne Hamlet "on his back a thousand times." What does Mr. Hazlitt do? He invents a journey to London of the boy Shakespeare when of the age of ten! These are his words: "I conceive myself perfectly justified in inferring that the original introduction of the poet to London took place about 1574, when he was a boy of ten" (p. 21). Be it remembered there is not a scrap of evidence to corroborate this assertion. This was disappointing, to say the least of it. But worse follows. He takes it for granted absolutely, that "Shakespear receives a magnificent eulogy from Jonson in the *Poetaster*, 1602" (p. 235). To give a bare *ipse dixi* on a much-discussed question is hardly the way to throw light upon it.

But my purpose here is not to criticise that which disappoints me in this recent book, but rather to quote some remarks connected with the "scandal" which I thoroughly endorse. He is discussing (p. 33) whether

we are justified in "constructing an autobiography from detached passages of the works." Looking at such characters as Hamlet and the melancholy Jaques, not to speak of others, he thinks we are justified in a degree. He quotes the very words of Hamlet that I have just quoted, and adds: "The question is, is it not a personal touch? There are other very similar allusions scattered about, and the insistence is too frequent, too explicit, and even too inconsequent, where it immediately offers itself, to permit more than a single conclusion. . . . Scores of them (such passages) might be lifted out of their places in the text, and printed in sequence; and they would tell one story—that of a magnificent career smitten by a blight." This is a novel and remarkable admission to come from an eminently orthodox Shakespearian, especially one who denies the autobiographical nature of the Sonnets. It sounds inconsistent from him, but I take it *per se* as a very judicious piece of criticism, but applied, alas, to the wrong man. It was Bacon who had the "magnificent career" and the "blight," not Shakespeare.

I will also quote what Mr. Hazlitt says just before this: "The author of *Venus and Adonis*, who we should not forget lived so long and so constantly, as we should now colloquially say, *en garçon*, was what the Goddess of Love would, according to him, have desired the object of her passion to be. Who shall say he never proved a Tarquin to some unchronicled Lucrece? It was the opulent and voluptuous property of his blood—a perpetual spring of warm and deep emotions—which accomplished for us all the nobler and purer things that we so cherish, yet that was chargeable, too, with certain infirmities of our strange composite nature."

I am not quite sure what infirmities of our nature Mr. Hazlitt refers to, and of course when he and I speak of the author of *Venus and Adonis* we are referring to very different people; but I certainly do not see much evidence that *my* author of *Venus and Adonis*, although he also lived so long *en garçon* in the midst of a pleasure-loving set, ever showed in his earlier years much

"infirmity of nature" in his relations with the fair sex. He and his friends were undoubtedly fond of going to the playhouses, but they would not be drawn to the *fair sex* by any personages they might see on the stage. The modern provocatives were not there. When Bacon went to the Bankside or to Blackfriars he saw no ballet-dancers, nor yet any "leading ladies" or fascinating *soubrettes*. If he took a fancy to wait at the stage-door or exit after the performance, he would never have the pleasure of praising an actress for her attractions and graces; for the very good reason there were no actresses to meet. The only semblance of a petticoat likely to flutter the hearts of the *jeunesse dorée* of those days, at the stage-door or on the boards, was bound to belong to a lively boy or to a beardless effeminate-looking youth. At some theatres there were only boy-actors—these and nothing more—nests of little half-fledged "eyases," as they are called in *Hamlet*.

We must take all this into consideration when venturing to pronounce an opinion on the scandal of the Sonnets, and we must not forget that the poet passed the greater part of his middle life in London, in the very centre of the temptations of the age.

There is a puritanical pamphlet of date 1569, entitled *The Children of the Chapel Stript and Whipt*. We have here perhaps the earliest mention of the boy-actors or young singing men of the Chapel Royal: "Plaies will never be supprest, while her majesties unfledged minions flaunt it in silkes and sattens." Again: "Even in her majesties chapel do these pretty upstart youthes profane the Lordes day by the lascivious writhing of their tender limbes, and the gorgeous decking of their apparell, in feigning bawdie fables gathered from the idolatrous heathen poets."

I must say that "unfledged minions" carries a bad savour with it, although I know that the earlier meaning of the word *minion* was perfectly harmless. When the court circles had become Italianated the case was rather different.

The Elizabethan stage was the forum of the people, and their daily newspaper as well. That has always to be kept in mind. Chettle's *Kind-Hartes Dreame* (1592), and Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*, both refer to the topical jests and personal allusions which were permitted on the stage, and enjoyed by the audience to such a degree that hardly any reputation was safe, whether aristocrat or plebeian. The *mendacia famæ* that Bacon refers to in his published letters, were possibly stage lies and scandals enjoyed and appreciated by the many-headed vulgar in the penny and twopenny divisions of the theatre. The victims had to wince and bear it, unless they had influence enough with the Star Chamber authorities, or with the official censors of the theatres, to suppress the libellous parts of the plays. And even then it could only be effectively done when the play was to be printed, when permission could be withheld. It was next to impossible to stop the ill-natured "gag" that could be introduced on "first nights," and other nights as well. We have a reference to this in *Hamlet*, where the boy-actors are referred to. We hear that many a man with a rapier, that is to say, a gentleman, was afraid of goose-quills, or the play-wrights, and was afraid to show himself among the audience. (*Hamlet*, II. ii. 359.)

With reference to the Sonnet-scandal, F. T. Palgrave says:* "We cannot understand how our great and gentle Shakespeare could have submitted himself to such passions; we have hardly courage to think that he really endured them." Mr. Palgrave's own view seems to be that "excessive affection is one of the characteristics of great genius," and looks for Shakespeare's excuse in this direction. He also quotes the "sublime language" of Plato's *Phædrus*, where this same wondrous affection is described as "that possession and ecstasy with which the Muses seize on a plastic and pure soul, awakening it and hurrying it forth like a Bacchanal in the ways of song."

* *Songs and Sonnets by William Shakespeare*, edited by Francis Turner Palgrave. London, 1865.

That young Francis Bacon can be satisfactorily cleared and whitewashed in this high Platonic way is a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Finally, if ever there was a false judgment on any man, Pope made it by the last adjective in his famous distich on Bacon :

> " If parts allure thee, think how Bacon shin'd ;
> The wisest, brightest, *meanest* of mankind."

No word could be less appropriate. One of the most distinguishing marks of this illustrious man was his philanthropy, in the Greek sense of the word, as he used and expressed it himself. As for meanness, he was too liberal, too fond of show, too careless of expense, for his own purse to bear it.

But I must not dwell too long on such points, tempting as they are, for this book is not written either to whitewash Bacon's character, or to blacken it. However, I must here say that I hold him, in a certain sense, to be independent both of eulogy or blame. No man had a greater fall or bore it better, and it might be said of him, as Malcolm said of Cawdor :

> " Nothing in his life
> Became him like the leaving of it."

As to his character, I accept Dr. Abbott's solution of this difficult problem. He undertook political life and conformed to the practices of courtiers, but he was not by nature or intellectual tastes fitted for it ; he knew it was an error, " that great error that led the rest," but he had to go through with it, and " hardened himself in order to subsist." He never forgot his real calling, the furtherance of the Kingdom of Man over Nature, and consequently could never be or feel a commonplace self-seeker. Dr. Abbott goes on to say : " With all his faults he is one who, the more he is studied, bewitches us into a reluctance to part from him as from an enemy. He has ' related to paper ' many of his worst defects ; but neither his formal works nor his most private letters

convey more than a fraction of the singular charm with which his suavity of manner and gracious dignity fascinated his contemporaries, and riveted the affections of some whom it must have been hardest to deceive." Of course when Dr. Abbott refers thus to Bacon as committing to paper "many of his worst defects," he does not refer to the Sonnets, as he does not include them among Bacon's writings; and therefore we cannot have his weighty opinion on the scandals which are therein half-revealed and self-confessed. But he speaks of the "long cleansing week of five years' expiation," which he thinks "may have chastened his moral character and generated in him an increased affection for those few friends who remained faithful to him." In fact, during those last five years, Bacon was more his real self than at any other period of his life, and then we were enabled (at least so it seems to me) to see the true value and genuine ring of a lofty, noble, and intellectual nature. The virtue that was in him became more evident then, for, as he himself most wisely said, "Virtue is like precious odours, most fragrant when incensed or crushed"; and though he is no "professor" of religion either in his acknowledged works or in his active life, or in the Shakespeare Plays, still there is such a reverence for religion generally, and such an absence of bitterness and of the vulgar *odium theologicum*, that we feel, in spite of Lady Anne's complaints of his careless religious habits in his youth, that we have to deal with a nature thoughtful, serious, and self-searching—nay, sometimes, as in "the dark period," sceptical and pessimistic to a degree, but still a mind that was *naturaliter pia*; and if Shakespeare is to be dethroned, the English-speaking world has no reason to be ashamed of the qualifications of the illustrious man who will occupy that lofty seat. However he may have followed the promptings of his nature in the heyday of youth and of his sportive blood, he finished his course with admirable patience and composure, in apparent peace with God and man. If the unpleasant scandal really belongs to Bacon, it can only be, I should

think, in a very modified sense; or if the infection of his nature really was stronger than we have reason to believe, we can still hopefully look to the judgment on it that the great psychological experts of the present day (the only thorough judges) are prepared to give; and we know that they say such a man is to be pitied rather than condemned.

CHAPTER V

WAS THE AUTHOR OF THE SHAKESPEARE POEMS AND SONNETS A SCHOLAR?

BUT let us turn to a more pleasant subject. I have already expressed my opinion that the author of the Sonnets was an aristocrat by birth and feeling, and it can be shown, and has been often shown by numerous extracts from the Plays, that their author had in special a dislike to low, common people, and to vulgar tastes and habits. I do not think there is need to press this point. But there is another point much disputed, which requires to be settled definitely if possible, and that is:

Was the author of the Plays and Poems a scholar?

Much depends on this, and I, for one, am much surprised that it has been so long in dispute; it seems such a clear and certain matter. But we must hear both sides. First take the Shakespearians: they are not all agreed among themselves on this matter, but the majority of them assert that the author of the Plays was *not* a scholar, and was not well read in languages ancient or modern, but that he was a born genius and picked up sufficient general and special knowledge to be able to write the Plays, even such masterpieces as *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*, by the force of his natural genius. His mind was a remarkably receptive one, they say; he would easily get his law from his Stratford experience and his father's conversation, for the old gentleman was obstinately litigious. He would get his Spanish and Italian and French from the natives of those countries whom he chanced to meet at the inns and taverns and other public places of the metropolis. He would get his knowledge of Venice or of Denmark from sailors or travellers who had been there, and so on. He was no

erudite scholar or linguist, but he had been to an excellent country grammar-school, and that fact, along with his receptivity of mind, and above all, his heaven-sent genius, would be quite sufficient to account for Shakespeare being the author of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and the rest of the Plays and Poems, without being at all a great scholar or linguist.

Gerald Massey puts this view of the majority of Shakespearians as strongly as any one, and as his *Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (100 copies for subscribers only, 1888) is a very uncommon book, I will reproduce his words here. "To suppose," he says, "that a college education and a profound acquaintance with the classics are necessary to the bringing forth of a Shakespeare is to *miss the lesson of his life* (the italics are his), the supreme lesson of all literature; because in him it was triumphantly demonstrated once for all, that these are not necessities of the most real self-developing education; that nature grows her geniuses like her game-birds and finer-flavoured wildfowl, by letting them forage for their own living, to find what they most need. It was learning in the school of life that was the best education for him, and in that school, as he says of Cardinal Wolsey—

> 'From his cradle
> He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one.'

Probably he had not many books to read; but he was not made out of books. When Nature wants a new man it is not her way to make him out of old books. Books are too often used as the means of getting our thinking done for us. Shakespeare did his own. He could transmute, but his genius preferred to work on Nature, and drew his drama directly from the life."

So the opinion of the majority is that the author of Shakespeare's Plays and Poems was not a bookish scholar at all, but a born genius. However, the Shakespeare party is not unanimous on this question. Many orthodox Shakespearians cannot get over the difficulty of the learning and linguistic acquirements, which seem to them

so evident throughout all that Shakespeare wrote; so they hold the opposite view that Shakespeare *was* a bookish student, and say in addition "there is nothing to prove that Shakespeare did not read languages with as much ease as Bacon." * But the great drawback for these people is, that they can tell us nothing about Shakespeare's books, and nothing about his skill in languages; they cannot refer us to one book of the bookish Shakespeare's library, nor can they show us a single line of his writing in any foreign language, and nothing but his own name in his own language!

Now, when we come to the Baconians, we find that on this question they are all in unity, and unity is strength as a rule. They say, with one accord, that the author of the Plays and Poems was a good scholar, an excellent linguist, especially in French (he having lived in France for some years), and a man of the highest intellectual ability and most deep philosophy, with an unparalleled vocabulary. The Baconians say this, and have said it for many years, and have backed up their assertions with an immense amount of illustration and lucid proof. I need hardly say that on this point I thoroughly agree with them, and am of the opinion that the intellectual acquirements of the author of the Plays, on almost any subject that comes before him, can hardly be estimated too highly. He touches nothing that he does not adorn with the elegant knowledge of an expert, a scholar, and a gentleman. The arguments and facts showing his well-nigh universal knowledge, as though he had taken all learning for his province, are numerous and powerful; but I shall not adduce them here, for I wish to go over as little old ground as possible, on this much-debated question. But I will give two instances of the author's bookish scholarship which have not been hitherto much noticed, if at all, and these point strongly to the real authorship.

The first turns on the subject of the "Gardens of

* Cf. *Is there any resemblance between Bacon and Shakspere?* p. 209. (An anonymous work.)

Adonis." We find in 1 *Henry VI.*, i. 6, the following lines :

> "Thy promises are like Adonis' gardens,
> That one day bloomed and fruitful were the next."

This allusion was so deep and scholarly that it puzzled even the learned Alexander Schmidt in his excellent Shakespeare Lexicon, where, *s. v.* Adonis, his comment is—"Perhaps confounded with the garden of King Alcinous in the Odyssey." And another Shakespearian scholar, Richard Grant White, says there is "no mention of any such garden in the classic writings of Greece and Rome known to scholars." But both these gentlemen stumbled over a comparatively easy obstacle. Liddell and Scott would have removed it from their path, if they had been consulted. Adonis' Gardens (*οἱ Ἀδώνιδος κῆποι*) were quick-growing plants, seeds, or herbs, put in pots for use at the annual festival of Adonis, and hence used proverbially for anything pretty, but fleeting and unreal. Plato makes Socrates refer to them in the *Phædrus* (p. 276, Jowett). Milton, too, speaks of them :

> "Those gardens feigned,
> Or of revived Adonis or renowned
> Alcinous." —*Paradise Lost*, ix. 439.

Here a passage in Pliny's *Natural History* seems to be the original source : "*Antiquitas nihil prius mirata est quam Hesperidum hortos, ac regum Adonidos et Alcinoi*," *i.e.* the ancients admired no gardens more than those of the Hesperides and of the kings Adonis and Alcinous.

From other references it is gathered that in the flower-pots of Adonis were placed seeds, cuttings of wheat, fennel, lettuce, &c., all quickly drawn up by heat and as quickly faded. They so became an emblem of the swift fading away of the life of mortals—"It cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down." Erasmus, in his well-known *Adagia*, has a long account of these gardens, with all the original Greek passages and a Latin translation following them.*

* Erasmi *Adagia*, 1599, fol., p. 1047.

All the above goes clearly to show that the author of the play of *Henry VI.*, when he fitly compared promises to the gardens of Adonis, was writing as a scholar would write who knew his Plato and Pliny, or at least knew his Erasmus. But from what we know of Shakespeare's education and opportunities, should we be inclined to give him the credit of such a neat and learned allusion? I think not. How about Bacon, we next ask; would he be likely to mention Adonis' gardens? Why, certainly, a most likely man; and he *has* mentioned them twice—once in his *Promus*,* 806, where he took the thing from Erasmus, and once in his *Lord Essex's Device before the Queen* (1595),† where he speaks of "the gardens of love, wherein he now playeth himself, are fresh to-day and fading to-morrow."

My other instance is taken from the last two Sonnets. They are outside the scope of the rest of the Sonnets, and have nothing to do with the "Lovely Boy," or the "Dark Lady." They are, as Mr. Wyndham rightly calls them, "exercises on a Renaissance convention." They seem to be early essays of the author's "pupil pen," for they both contain the same poetical fancy, but differently versified. They seem to me to be a very good proof that the author was a scholar, and I have taken them as my second instance of "scholarship," partly to correct a mistake that every later commentator on the Sonnets has made, even such thorough ones as Dowden and Tyler. They all say that Herr Hertzberg, in 1878, was the first to trace the original source of these Sonnets to a Greek Epigram of the Palatine Anthology. But I can say with confidence that I knew their origin in 1865 when I was

* Strange to say, Mrs. Pott, who has so carefully and laboriously illustrated Bacon's *Promus* by parallel passages from Shakespeare's Plays, has omitted to quote *Henry VI.* as above, although it is by far the most striking instance, and, as it seems to me, one of the best Baconian proofs that the *Promus* offers us.

† Spedding, viii. 379; where the speeches written by Bacon for the several characters are given in full. We only know by internal evidence, and the fact of a chance copy with rough notes in Bacon's handwriting being found in the Gibson Papers, that Bacon was the author. All the contemporary references quite ignore Bacon, and give the credit to Essex.

at College, and that other Englishmen knew it as early as 1849, so that it is rather a shame that the modern German Hertzberg should get all the credit. The truth of the matter is, that in 1849 Dr. Wellesley, the learned Principal of New Inn Hall, Oxford, published his *Anthologia Polyglotta*, which was a choice selection of versions in different languages of some of the best Epigrams in the Greek Anthology. I bought a copy of this in 1865, which I have now, and I well remember my surprise to find on page 63 that William Shakespeare was down for a version of a very fine Epigram, in company with Grotius, Thomas Gray, Pagnini, and Herder, this being William Shakespeare's sole appearance in the 464 pages of learned versions which the book contained. What astonished me was to find Shakespeare among such an array of Greek scholars, for I knew even then what Ben Jonson had said of his Greek qualifications. A little farther on, at p. 133, I found "Lord Bacon" down for a version in company with Ausonius, Maittairi, Ronsard, and some old English authors of 1530–1550. This did not surprise me half so much, although it was my first inkling that Bacon was a poet. I knew he was a Trinity man and a thorough student, and therefore not absolutely unequal to tackling a Greek Epigram—but Shakespeare!! Well, it staggered me quite; but I had other problems, more mathematical than literary, to study in those days, so I just found out in what part of Shakespeare's works this version from the Greek appeared, which, I remember, took me some time to discover (for Dr. Wellesley gave no reference, and I began to look in the Plays), and after that, for many years thought no more about it. But now it strikes me as a strong proof that the author of the Sonnets was "a scholar" in a higher sense than any one has ever claimed that title for Shakespeare. In fact, it strongly suggests to me that Shakespeare was not a likely person to edge himself in just once among such a learned crew, and that Bacon was a much more probable author, especially as he had tried another Greek Epigram, and had expanded it in a similar way to the one in question.

If necessary, a large number of proofs of scholarship and book-learning could be adduced from the Plays and Poems attributed to Shakespeare; but I think it would only be useless repetition of what has been before inquirers for many years. It is not, I think, too much to say that the author we seek was a profound student both of books and men, and one who set before him as his aim and object an almost universal scholarship. He was indeed a searcher after *omne scibile*. But we have no biographical hints that Shakespeare was a man of this stamp at all.

Moreover, even if we leave out of all consideration the numerous identities and literary parallels which Mrs. Pott and Ignatius Donnelly have so laboriously piled up, having dug them out one by one from the rich mine of the Plays;—if we reckon all these as mere *scoriæ*, as so much dross that has no marketable value with literary experts, even then there remains in the mine a rich asset in the shape of a most extensive and scholarly vocabulary, such as hardly any other mine ever possessed.

Max Müller, an authority surely of considerable weight, declares that "Shakespeare displayed a greater variety of expression than probably any writer in any language." He estimates Milton's vocabulary at 8000 words, Shakespeare's at 15,000 words; nearly double!

Again, there is no proof that Shakespeare ever crossed the Channel, and he certainly had neither time nor opportunity to become a polyglot student, or a scholar in living languages. He came up to London early in life as a "utility man" in connection with Burbage's stable-yard first, and his theatre afterwards, and if the elder Burbage had found his young fellow-townsman conning foreign dictionaries and grammars instead of doing his proper work—he would have had somewhat to say.

That the author of the Shakespeare Plays was an Italian scholar has been shown by George Brandes. He finds imitations of Berni's *Orlando Innamorato* and other Italian poems which must have been used in the original, but his most telling example is from Ariosto, who is used

evidently when Othello, talking of the handkerchief, says :

> " A sibyl that had numbered in the world
> The sun to course two hundred compasses,
> *In her prophetic fury* sew'd the work."

In *Orlando Furioso* (canto 46, stanza 80) we read :

> " Una donzella della terra d'Ilia
> Ch' avea *il furor profetico* congiunto
> Con studio di gran tempo, e con vigilia
> Lo fece di sua mano di tutto punto."

The agreement here cannot possibly be accidental. And what makes it still more certain that Shakespeare had the Italian text before him, is that the words *prophetic fury*, which are the same in *Othello* as in the Italian, are not to be found in Harington's English translation, the only one then in existence. The author must thus, whilst writing *Othello*, have been interested in *Orlando*, and had Berni's and Ariosto's poems lying on his table.*

There are several proofs that the author was a French scholar, but the two best are (1) The gravedigger's case in *Hamlet* about " crowner's quest " law, taken from the French of Plowden's *Commentaries ;* and (2) The play of *Henry V.*, where one entire scene and parts of others are in French. But the French of Stratford-on-Avon was not likely to be much better than the French of Stratford-atte-Bowe.

William Rawley, Bacon's first and last chaplain, and his literary executor, said of him : " I have often observed, and so have other men of great account, that if he (Bacon) had occasion to repeat another man's words after him, he had a use and faculty to dress them in better vestments and apparel than they had before : so that the author should find his own speech much amended, and yet the substance of it still retained."

What is meant is that Francis Bacon was a most elegant and ornamental paraphraser of other men's phraseology, and certainly the marvellous alchemy by

* G. Brandes, *W. Shakspeare*, ii. 122.

which the baser metal of other men's thoughts and words was changed in the Shakespeare Plays to ever-shining and imperishable gold is without a parallel in literature. Was it Bacon or Shakespeare who did this ?

If we, in this way, come somewhat to the same point of view as Emerson, and find ourselves unable to marry Shakespeare to his works, to whom are the works to be irrevocably joined ? Here we have not much power of selection, for there is absolutely but one competitor in the field. If Shakespeare should appear to us unequal to that intellectual task of the very highest order, which meets the eye and ear so vividly throughout his supposed works, then there is but one alternative—Bacon was the man ! He is the only one who at all suits the situation ; the only key that has the slightest pretence to fit the lock, and open the secret chamber. That this key does fit has been shown unanswerably again and again, on such points as " identities of expression," " parallel passages," and " similar mistakes " both in Bacon and in Shakespeare ; but the effect on the public has been most inadequate, for the reason that many of the Baconians who have brought so much incontrovertible evidence before the public have either mixed it up with some unintelligible or incredible cipher theory, or, as in the case of Mrs. Pott's edition of Bacon's *Promus*, have spoilt the whole effect by overdoing the illustrations, and piling together a heap of material for the most part irrelevant and worthless.

I myself could add a few extra pieces of undesigned coincidence between Bacon and Shakespeare which I have come across quite casually, but they are not worth the trouble of writing down. Such evidence, if well chosen, is really forcible, but no one seems convinced by it, and every one evades it ; and if both writers are shown to make the same extraordinary mistakes, or the same recondite remarks, why then the common reply is : " Oh, that's nothing, no proof at all ! one clearly copied from the other." Or else the argument is, if the *Promus* discovery be mentioned : " Oh, can't you see how it

happened? Bacon went to hear *Romeo and Juliet*, and jotted down his notes and reminders in his *Promus* when he got home." And so on. I do not say that my few pearls of coincidence are either fine or costly, but I would prefer them kept out of the mud, and not trampled on.

But to return to direct Baconian evidence. Quite apart from literary and other identities, and similar phraseology—a kind of proof which, as I allow, can be much abused—we have abundant evidence left, whereby we can show, that if Shakespeare was not scholar enough, in spite of his transcendent genius, to write the Plays and Poems, there was undoubtedly a man fully equipped for the great work. That man was young Francis Bacon.

I do not suppose that any one living in Bacon's time was able to give a truer account of the kind of man Bacon was than his lifelong friend, Sir Toby Matthews. Fortunately we have his account in *A Collection of Letters made by S^r Tobie Mathews, K^t*, which was edited by John Donne, son of Dr. Donne, in 1660. He is praising his native country for possessing such four excellent and rare minds as Cardinal Wolsey, Sir Thomas More, Sir Philip Sidney, and Sir Francis Bacon, and he thinks England can "pose any other Nation of Europe" in this respect. He reviews their great abilities, and coming to Bacon he says: "The fourth was a Creature of incomparable Abilities of Mind, of a sharp and catching Apprehension, large and faithfull Memory, plentifull and sprouting Invention, deep and solid Judgment, for as much as might concern the understanding part. A man so rare in knowledge of so many severall kinds, endued with the facility and felicity of expressing it all, in so elegant, significant, so abundant, and yet so choise and ravishing a way of words, of metaphors, and allusions, as, perhaps, the World hath not seen, since it was a World. I know, this may seem a great Hyperbole, and strange kind of riotous excesse of speech; but the best means of putting me to shame, will be for you (the reader) to place any other man of yours, by this of mine."

To feel the full force of such remarks as these, we

must remember that if any man at that time really knew the literary secret, it was assuredly Sir Toby. Bacon used to write to him and submit his compositions to his friend's criticism, which he valued highly. "I have sent you," Bacon tells Sir Toby in one letter, "some copies of my Book of the *Advancement*, which you desired, and a little Work of my Recreation, which you desired not." In another letter Bacon writes: "And I must confesse my desire to be that my Writings should not court the present time;" and in another he confesses that a certain past "businesse" is not quite clear to his memory, and gives this reason—"my head being then wholly employed about Invention."

Do not all these facts seem to point out the very man who *could* write the wonderful Plays; the very kind of head to do the work and not to speak of it, but to leave its fame and good effects to a later time? And as all who are interested in this literary problem well know, it was Sir Toby who, having received some favour or present from Francis Bacon about the time that the first folio was being brought out, wrote back that enigmatical reply, that the greatest wit he knew across the Channel was "of the same name as his Lordship, though he went by another." This used to be thought a Baconian proof, a gem of the first water, until some Shakespearian suggested that the greatest wit in question was Southwell the Jesuit, whose proper name was Bacon, and that the gem of the first water was in fact a worthless paste imitation. But what made Sir Toby mention such a circumstance at all—what led up to it? I think the gem is really as valuable as ever, although I believe Southwell *was* the man referred to. For surely there must have been talk of some double authorship, or some author concealed by an *alias*, or we should not have had such a postscript at all.

Having thus heard one good witness speak to the *fitness* of Bacon, let us hear, by way of contrast, one good witness bear evidence as to the *unfitness* of Shakespeare to fulfil such remarkable qualifications as are everywhere

noticeable in the immortal works, especially in the early plays and poems, mostly written when Shakespeare had not long left the wilds of Warwickshire.

A strong argument against Shakespeare's authorship can be drawn from " the first heir of " his " invention," the *Venus and Adonis*. He could not have left home very long when he began to write this successful and popular poem ; possibly he was ostler and odd-man at James Burbage's livery-stables at Smithfield when he thought out the first few lines. Surely, then, we may expect some Warwickshire expressions in it. Country dialect is not easily shaken off all at once. Now, a well-known American, Appleton Morgan, has devoted much labour to tabulating the Plays and Poems with a view to find the percentage of provincialisms (especially Warwick ones) in each. The dialect column for *Venus and Adonis* was absolutely blank ! not a single Warwickshire word to be found in the poem, unless *urchin* for hedgehog could be counted, but urchin was common to many counties besides Warwick. And then, in spite of the risky subject of the love of Venus for the bashful youth, the whole poem is written with such an air of aristocratic grace, culture, and refinement, that could hardly be attributed to the young man William Shakespeare. He could hardly have seen much fashionable society or elegant court ladies yet. He was but an honest, facetious actor and stage factotum who had not written any popular poetry so far, nor had his name been at all in the mouths of men.

He had been promoted, no doubt, very soon, as I hope to show, from the stable-yard of John Burbage to the inside of Burbage's theatre, and was working his way up, but he was not in a position to address Southampton or any other young nobleman as " my lovely boy," either in public or in private.

Neither was he qualified (we believe) to read that voluminous and rather crabbed French writer, Saluste du Bartas, in his original language. But the celebrated picture of the horse in *Venus and Adonis* is borrowed

word for word from Du Bartas, that well-known French poet, afterwards in Milton's days so popular in Sylvester's translation. But there was no translation for more than five years after *Venus and Adonis* appeared!

Therefore the author must have read the work in its French original. Bacon could do this easily, as a perfect French scholar; but whether the Stratford man could is very doubtful.*

Some Shakespearians no doubt will argue that when we attempt to give the authorship of the sensuous *Venus and Adonis* to the philosophic and studious Bacon we are open to the very same objection that was so forcible against the Shakespearian authorship of *Hamlet* and *Lear* and *Love's Labour's Lost*—the objection, I mean, that "the man cannot be married to his muse," that his life and surroundings effectually forbid the banns. I admit the objection in Shakespeare's case but not in Bacon's. Bacon was a friend and close associate of Essex, Southampton, Perez, and many others of the Elizabethan highest social grade—and that grade abounded with the wayward children of the Renaissance, who thoroughly accepted one of the principal new doctrines floating in that new atmosphere, the Rehabilitation of the Flesh. Neither Essex, nor Southampton nor Raleigh would hesitate one moment about seducing a maid of honour, or carrying on an intrigue with two or three ladies at the same time, if the chance occurred. The state of feeling in the high and cultured circles of renascent Italy in the preceding generation or two had its counterpart in the high and cultured circles of Elizabethan England, especially among those who had travelled beyond the boundaries of their island home and had seen many men, cities, and manners.

A reversion to the unrestrained and joyous life of the natural man—as he was so finely depicted in pagan art and classic story—must have been evident to all travellers. The very pictures and statues, the glories of the new Italian art, told the tale to the eyes

* Cf. *Quarterly Review*, April 1894.

in a livelier and more vivid manner than could ever reach the ears.

Both the Bacon brothers were intimately connected with men of this class. Lady Anne Bacon often wrote to her sons warning them against the character and conduct of their aristocratic associates. She mentions in one letter "thy Earl's unchaste manner of life." This Earl was Essex, who had been a married man for years. Indeed the names of at least four ladies of the court were coupled with his in a rather compromising manner: (1) Elizabeth Southwell, who bore to him a son, described in a law paper at the S. P. O. as "Walter Devereux, the base reputed son of Robert, Earl of Essex, begotten on the body of Elizabeth Southwell"; (2) Lady Mary Howard; (3) Mistress Russell, who was Bacon's cousin; and (4) the "fairest Brydges." This last was a peculiarly disgraceful amour, for Lady Essex, his wife, was with child at the time, and we hear in a letter, dated 11th Feb. 1598, that "it is spied out by some that my Lord of Essex is again fallen in love with his fairest B. It cannot chuse but come to her Majesty's ears, and then he is undone." Apparently the intrigues did come to the Queen's ears, for her wrathful Majesty "treated her and Mistress Russell with words and blows of anger: they were put out of the Coffer Chamber and took refuge in Lady Stafford's house for three nights." However, they promised to be more careful and were restored to their former position. The excuse given for the royal displeasure was that these young damsels had neglected their duties, had taken physic, and had one day gone through the privy galleries to see the gentlemen play ballon. Lady Mary Howard's punishment was rather a spiteful piece of temper on the Queen's part, for Lady Mary had a velvet dress with a rich border, powdered with gold and pearl, which was probably intended, among other purposes, to help to captivate the fascinating Earl. Anyhow it roused the envy of the Queen and others. The Queen one day sent for this dress privately, put it on, and came out among the ladies, and being much taller than Lady

Mary, it was too short for the Queen, and was therefore quite unbecoming. The Queen went round asking the ladies whether it was not short and unbecoming, to which they agreed, and when the question came to be made by the Queen to the real owner of the dress, she too was forced to agree with what the others had said. "Why then," said the Queen, "if it become not me as being too short, I am minded it shall never become thee as being too fine, so it fitteth neither well." So the dress was put away and never worn till after the Queen's death. So the Queen effectually prevented *that* dress captivating the Earl.

CHAPTER VI

BEN JONSON AND BACON

THE next piece of evidence I shall bring forward is, to a great extent, new and unnoticed, but, if I may venture to say so, by no means unimportant. It has mainly to do with Ben Jonson and his early attitude towards Shakespeare and Bacon, especially during the "War of the Theatres," or the *Poetomachia* as it is sometimes called, which lasted two or three years from 1600 onwards.

I am afraid the evidence cannot be fully appreciated without a careful reading of two or three of Ben Jonson's plays, right through from prologue to epilogue. This is rather too much to ask in these days, when writing is so often done *currente calamo*, without stopping to think, and reading is so often got through *currente oculo*, by just glancing at the pages as we turn them over.

However, after a few preliminary remarks I will endeavour to extract some of the more important allusions from their context, and thus save the hasty reader the trouble of reaching down another book from his shelves.

A great deal depends on getting a proper appreciation of Ben Jonson's treatment of Shakespeare and Bacon—for he knew them both well, and also knew Pembroke more intimately than we have any reason to believe that Shakespeare did. In Ben's plays there are such evident satirical comments on actors having arms from Heralds' College and becoming "gentlemen born," that we cannot avoid the conclusion that Ben Jonson is aiming at and satirising Shakespeare. And there are equally strong adverse allusions pointing against Bacon. I know that Gifford, and many critics more recent than he, would not allow either a word or a proof connected with Jonson's

rancour or malignity against Shakespeare. They were both sworn friends and boon companions all their lives, so that school of criticism declared. My own views may be gathered from the present chapter.

It is difficult to give a short, yet clear, account of this War of the Theatres, which lasted quite four years (1598–1603), and involved in it Ben Jonson, Marston, Dekker, and in a certain less degree, Shakespeare and Bacon. But it is important to have a general idea of its course. It began, I believe, with Marston in 1598 or 1599, who was merciless in his *Satires*, and railed so universally that many libels might be accepted without being really intended. Jonson, however, thought Marston had attacked him for youthful indulgence in the sports of Venus, and henceforth Jonson brought his enemies and slanderers, as he thought them, continually into his plays, which were full now of concealed personalities and bitter remarks, Jonson himself figuring in them too in the various characters of Asper, Crites, Horace. Marston was one of the first to receive Ben's onslaught. In *Cynthia's Revels* (1600) Jonson attacked both Marston and Dekker as Anaides and Hedon; and again, next year, Jonson laid about him vigorously all round as Horace in the *Poetaster*, which we consider more closely elsewhere. About now a useful piece of evidence on this War of the Theatres comes to us from *The Returne from Parnassus*, a play acted at St. John's College, Cambridge, when the War was almost at its height. In Act IV., sc. 5, Burbage and Kemp, Shakespeare's fellow-actors, are brought on the scene and discuss theatrical and other matters, especially the talents of the "University pens." Kemp does not think much of these persons. "Why," says he, "here's our fellow Shakespeare puts them all downe, I (*i.e.* Aye) and Ben Jonson too. O that Ben Jonson is a pestilent fellow; he brought up Horace giving the Poets a pill, but our fellow Shakespeare hath given him a Purge that made him beray his credit." So Jonson had a nasty reply from Shakespeare according to this undeniably good Cambridge authority. We know from other

sources that Ben had the *Satiromastix* written against his *Poetaster*, but this was clearly not by Shakespeare but by Dekker; so we must look for Shakespeare's Purge somewhere else. Where shall we find it? I think, for several reasons, we shall find that strange play *Troilus and Cressida* to be the Purge meant. It was "our fellow Shakespeare's," for it was acted at his theatre by his company, and he no doubt took a part and did a good business with gag. It was also against Jonson, who was satirised in a not very cleanly manner under the character of Ajax (=a jakes), who went running about the field of battle asking for himself. This was a Purge indeed. It seems to have been put together by Shakespeare, the play-broker, in a more miscellaneous manner than was usual with him, for it may have been founded on an earlier play of the same title by Dekker and Chettle, which Henslowe's Diary refers to May 1599; and as it appears in the folio of 1623 there may be pieces of Bacon in it and touches of Shakespeare as well, although the folio editors seemed to look askance at one at least of the earlier quartos. But whatever else it was, *Troilus and Cressida* was undoubtedly a manifesto of the New Romantic school against the Jonsonian Classical school of Ben and his "tribe," and was written as a reply to the *Poetaster*, for the Prologue to *Troilus* begins with an *armed* Prologue entering upon the scene, just as there was an *armed* Prologue in the *Poetaster*, a circumstance unusual, and the subject of some remarks at the time. So we may opine that Bacon, Shakespeare, Dekker, and Chettle all stood together to give the Classical school of Jonson, Chapman, and the rest a good blow in this very strange composite play. Marston would be with Jonson's tribe in this matter, for Marston was steeped in the classic satirists and rather despised the new romantic and pathetic tragedies that were rising in the popular favour. Sometimes Marston and Jonson were sworn foes, and then next year or sooner they would be fulsomely lauding each other's plays; and at different times in Jonson's career the same thing happened to him both

with Bacon and Shakespeare. At least that is my belief. It was a very peculiar characteristic of "rugged Ben," for Dekker, who ought to know, wrote thus of him: "'Tis thy fashion to flirt ink in every man's face; and then crawle into his bosome." This remark was in the *Satiromastix* of 1601. It was some long time after this that Jonson crawled into Bacon's bosom, but he did eventually, and apparently into Shakespeare's too, if he and Drayton really had that last carouse with Shakespeare at Stratford in 1616.

I have dwelt longer than I should on this War of the Poets, but the better knowledge we have of these matters, the more likely we are to take a correct view of the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy, which cannot, and should not, be dismissed with such words as, "Ridiculous!" "Impossible!" "Irrational!"

Ben Jonson published the *Silent Woman* in 1609, and in Sir John Daw we seem to see Bacon drawn to the life as near as "rare old Ben" dared to do it.

Whether the fact of the Shakespeare Sonnets being published about this time had anything to do with these daring public allusions, I know not, but I cannot help seeing several artfully concealed allusions to the events of the Sonnets and to the male love therein dwelt upon. Anyhow, the first seventeen Sonnets are most likely meant when Sir John Daw's "Ballad of procreation" is jeered at. It is also said of Sir John Daw that he was not a professed poet, for he had more caution than to be that; "he 'ill not hinder his own rising in the state so much," says one of the characters. Surely this looks like a hit for Bacon. It will be further considered when we come to the Sonnets. Indeed, that Sir John Daw = Bacon will be proved conclusively.

Ben Jonson's allusions in the *Poetaster* are a puzzle to critics. However, with much diffidence, I will put, as succinctly as possible, what appears to be a likely explanation of the relative positions of some of the combatants in the *Poetomachia*, or War of the Player-poets. It is a most important and neglected part of the Bacon-Shake-

speare question, and Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*, Dekker's *Satiromastix*, Marston's *Satires*, and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, all help to throw light on the true author of Shakespeare's Plays; for although Bacon's name does not appear once in the conflict, nor have the Baconians (with one exception) tried to bring him into the fight at all, still I believe he is there in an Ovidian domino, and that Ben Jonson knew the Great Secret as early as 1600–1, or even before that date.

What I mean is that in the *Poetaster* we have Francis Bacon depicted in a vein of Aristophanic banter by Ben Jonson, and attacked with jealous and bitter humour in the character of Ovid junior. Nay more—and this is evidence hitherto altogether unnoticed—Ben Jonson seems to hint at the scandal connected with Bacon's character, as well as to recognise the rising lawyer and political aspirant as the gay young Ovid of the Shakespeare Poems, and the provider of plays "at request" though "not known unto the open stage." He also aims at a play-writer that was mixed up with the suspicious and treasonable play *Richard II.*, and was banished from court for the share he was supposed to have in it; and who could that be but Bacon?

Moreover, it appears that the *Poetaster* was threatened with a prosecution by some persons of rank and position, and part was suppressed. Upon this I will only remark now, that if this was only a paltry squabble between literary hacks and play-actors, who would care to go to the Star Chamber or King's Bench about it? If, however, Bacon or his noble friends were involved in the scandalous satire it would be a different matter altogether.

The *Poetaster* has exercised the wits of many searching critics, but no one, as far as I know, except the anonymous author of *Shakespeare-Bacon, an Essay*, 1899, has attempted to connect the play with the rising lawyer.

As I have made several additions to his argument, I will proceed to give the main points of the *Poetaster*, so far as it seems to aim at Francis Bacon.

The curtain rises with Ovid junior discovered in his study putting the finishing touch to some verses he has been composing. This young Ovid is a lawyer by profession, but has no "stomach" for law, and he is heard reciting with evident pleasure the last two lines of his poem:

> "Then when this body falls in funeral fire
> My name shall live and my best part aspire";

to which he adds self-complacently, "It shall go so." To him then enters Luscus, and says hurriedly, when he sees what young Ovid is occupied with, "Young master, Master Ovid, do you hear? Away with your songs and sonnets * . . . get a law book in your hand." He tells him that his father, Ovid senior, will be coming presently, and ends with a tragic warning that "this villainous poetry will undo you yet, by the welkin." † Ovid's reply is, "What, hast thou buskins on, Luscus, that thou swearest so tragically and high?" Ovid senior is possibly Lord Burghley, to whom Bacon looked for preferment when he had lost his own father; and we know that Lord Burghley was much against time being wasted over sonnets and plays and such frivolities, and thought that Bacon should look to the law steadily for his rise in life. Luscus entreats young Ovid again and again to give up his verses, and not to be "Castalian mad." ‡ But finding it in vain, he finally says: "God be with you, sir, I'll leave you to

* Sonnets! This was not Ovid's line of poetry.

† This fanciful and unusual oath, "by the welkin," and the succeeding question, "What, hast thou buskins on, Luscus?" both, I suggest, emphasise an allusion to Shakespeare the Player, whom Luscus seems to represent both here and elsewhere. It is in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* (I. iii. 101), and only there, that we find a similar oath. Pistol says, "Wilt thou revenge?" Nym replies, "By the welkin and her star." So I certainly think Ben is here getting a joke against Shakespeare the Player and his way of bombasting out blank verse with the metaphorical buskins on, and is here giving us one of the "locks of wool" or "shreds" which the Player contributed to the Baconian fleece.

> To Poet-ape.
>
> Fool! as if half eyes will not know a fleece
> From locks of wool, or shreds from the whole piece.

‡ Referring probably to *Venus and Adonis*, which had the Castalian spring in its motto from Ovid: "*Pocula Castaliâ plena ministret aquâ.*"

your poetical fancies and furies. I'll not be guilty, I. (*Exit* Luscus.)" Young Ovid thus left to himself recites his poem, which turns out to be that very part of the *Elegies* of Ovid from which the motto prefixed to *Venus and Adonis* had been taken by the supposed Shakespeare. Just as Ovid finishes there come upon the scene Ovid senior, Luscus, Tucca (a braggadocio of the army), and Lupus. Ovid's father, seizing the situation at once, attacks :

> Is this the scope and aim of thy studies? Verses! Poetry! Ovid whom I thought to see the pleader, become Ovid the play-maker?
>
> *Ovid Jun.* No, sir.
>
> *Ovid Sen.* Yes, sir ; I hear of a tragedy of yours coming forth for the common players there, called Medea.

Luscus here interposes a remark that he did "augur all this to him (young Ovid) beforehand," whereon Tucca turns on him with angry contempt, and with other abuse tells Luscus (Shakespeare the actor ?) to "talk to tapsters and ostlers, you slave, they are in your element, go : here be the emperor's captains, you ragamuffin rascal, and not your comrades. (*Exit* Luscus.)"

On this I would only say that if Shakespeare came up from Stratford and first obtained work in connection with the stables of old Burbage's inn, and afterwards rose to be an actor, then Ben Jonson would be the very one to know it and make a point of it.

Even when Luscus has departed, Tucca continues his venomous remarks : "They forget they are in the statute, the rascals ; they are blazoned there ; there they are tricked, they and their pedigrees ; they need no other heralds, I wiss." This is surely another of the many thrusts at the Shakespeares aspiring for a grant of arms from the Heralds' College. Presently young Ovid tries to excuse himself thus :

> *Ovid Jun.* They wrong me, sir, and do abuse you more
> That blow your ears with these untrue reports.
> I am not known unto the open stage,
> Nor do I traffic in their theatres :

Indeed, I do acknowledge, at request
Of some near friends, and honourable Romans,
I have begun a poem of that nature.

Ovid Sen. You have, sir, a poem! and where is it? That's the law you study.

Ovid Jun. Cornelius Gallus borrowed it to read.

Ovid Sen. Cornelius Gallus! there's another gallant too hath drunk of the same poison, and Tibullus and Propertius. But these are gentlemen of means and revenues now. Thou art a younger brother, and hast nothing but thy bare exhibition; which I protest shall be bare indeed, if thou forsake not these unprofitable by-courses. Name me a profest poet that his poetry did ever so much as afford him a competency.

I suggest that Ben Jonson aims at Francis Bacon in all the above allusions. Bacon was a *younger brother*, disliked his profession of the law, and (if my supposition is correct) took to poetry instead, and, what was considered much worse, wrote for the public theatres. His intimates were wealthy gallants, Southampton, Pembroke, Essex, and others, and some of them were given to poetry as well. Ben Jonson names them not, but as Cornelius Gallus, Tibullus, &c., and thus was able to defend himself in his "Apologetical Dialogue" to the *Poetaster*, which was prohibited through some powerful influence (perhaps Bacon) and not printed till some time after. The author there says:

"I used no name. My books have still been taught
To spare the persons and to speak the vices."

And I am afraid the vices of young Ovid are here spoken out, for Lupus and Tucca both advise young Ovid to stick to the law. "He that will now hit the mark must shoot through the law," says Lupus; and Tucca adds that it is easy enough as a profession, a little talk and noise and impudence will serve, "and the less art the better: besides when it shall be in the power of thy chevril conscience to do right or wrong at thy pleasure, my pretty Alcibiades." I think Ben Jonson knew how those words, *chevril* and *Alcibiades*, were like to gall Bacon far better than we do, but we may be sure of this, they are not meant to allude to his *virtues*.

In the suppressed "Apologetical Dialogue" we have some further vicious allusions. Ben says of the authors who had attacked him:

> "I could stamp
> Their foreheads with those deep and public brands,
> That the whole company of barber-surgeons
> Should not take off, with all their art and plasters,
> And these my prints should last, still to be read
> In their pale fronts."

And some lines before we read:

> "Not one of them but lives himself, if known,
> *Improbior satiram scribente cinædo.*"

This looks like attacking "scandals" in pretty plain language, so plain indeed that some "cheveril" lawyer (perhaps Bacon) either went, or threatened to go, to the Star Chamber about the libel, as Ben Jonson tells us himself in two of his Epigrams, to be quoted presently.

Then later on there is a great deal about some treason, conjuration, or conspiracy that was to be brought forward by some of the poet-players, and Ovid among them, at a theatre, and we are told how Histrio, an actor, informs the authorities of the state, and how eventually it comes to the emperor's ears, and Ovid is banished from court. The information that Histrio supplies is to the effect that a letter was directed to him and his fellow-sharers in the theatre, asking to hire some of the stage properties, a sceptre, crown, caduceus, petasus, &c. As soon as Lupus, who seems to represent some state official, hears of it he says: "Player, I thank thee: the Emperor shall take knowledge of thy good service; this is a conjuration, a conspiracy, this." *

* There are some passages and characters in the *Poetaster* by Ben Jonson which throw, I believe, some interesting fresh light on Shakespeare and Bacon, and especially upon the well-known acting of *Richard II.* on the eve of that day when Essex sought to recover his position by stirring up a rebellion in the city. We know that the play was ordered to be performed that evening specially by command of the heads of the Essex faction, and that a sum of 40s. was paid to the company to induce them to revive this play, now some time out of vogue. It was thought to be treasonable, and all the more so on account of the circumstances attending the performance, and the particular time chosen. The matter was brought up as evidence against Essex at his trial, and told

Now all this fits in with what we know of the play of *Richard II.* being acted by arrangement before Essex and his party the night before they made their mad attempt on the city. Bacon was placed in an awkward predicament at the trial of Essex, as is well known, by having to help in the prosecution of his old friend and patron, and also to bring in constructive treason in connection with *Richard II.* being played the evening before to encourage the conspirators. Bacon did not like his position at all, for, as he suggested, it might be bruited abroad that he was bringing in evidence one of his own tales.

There was certainly suspicion raised against Bacon about this time (1601), and he was under a cloud, virtually banished from court, although the Queen took his legal advice when necessary. The *Poetaster* was written shortly after these events, when they were still occupying men's

against him very much, and embittered the Queen, who, feeling that she was aimed at in the plot of the piece, treated it as a personal matter. However, strange to say, the players of this supposed treasonable plot got off scot-free, and Shakespeare was not so much as once named in connection with the play, though he took a prominent part both in the composition and acting of the play, and the matter was apparently well sifted at the trial. But if we take the play to be an old one written by Bacon some time previously, we shall find that Ben's allusions to the matter in the *Poetaster* all fit in excellently, and we shall understand, in a way never understood before, what most probably happened in regard to this one memorable revival of *Richard II.* on the eve of the foolish rising of Essex. There are two characters in the *Poetaster* called by the stage names of *Histrio* and *Æsop*, and the first seems by a particularly clear allusion to be Alleyn, who made so much money as builder and manager (in part) of the *Fortune Theatre*.

In Act III. sc. 1 Captain Tucca, a swaggering *militaire*, sees Histrio pass by him without due deferential salute; so he has him called back and rates him for it: "No respect to men of worship, you slave! Ha! you grow rich, do you, and purchase, you two-penny tear-mouth, you have FORTUNE and the good year on your side." Histrio would thus appear to point to Alleyn of the prosperous Fortune Theatre, where he acted and was joint owner with his father-in-law, whereas Henslowe, who did not act, does not answer to the description. And in Act IV. sc. 2 and elsewhere we have *Histrio*, or Alleyn, telling a certain high official either of the court or city that there is a conspiracy being hatched in connection with a certain play by young Master Ovid (Francis Bacon), and that he (Alleyn) discovered it by reason of a letter directed to him and his fellow-sharers of his theatre (the Rose and the Fortune were both his at this date), begging to be allowed to hire some of his stage properties—a sceptre, crown, and a petasus, &c. This sets the official in a mind to look

minds, and therefore likely to be introduced into a new satirical comedy. For the theatres took, to a great extent, the place of newspapers and society journals in the Elizabethan days. Moreover, there is a long love scene between Ovid and Julia (his "dear Julia, the abstract of the court") which the annotators of the play can make nothing of; it is called by one of them "a kind of metaphysical hurly-burly, of which it is not easy to discover the purport or end." But this high-flown lover's dialogue between Ovid below and Julia at her chamber window is very likely a striking and clever parody on *Romeo and Juliet*, and so fits in with the rest of Ben Jonson's allusions throughout his *Poetaster*, and gives us good grounds for thinking that he, at least, as early as 1602, had got to know that Bacon was the author of *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Richard II.*

into the matter, and he seems to have obtained further information from a player named Æsop, who can be identified for several reasons with Shakespeare. The official tells Cæsar (Elizabeth the Queen), and Æsop is brought upon the stage to answer before Cæsar, and Captain Tucca describes him thus (Act V. sc. 1):

"'Tis a gentleman of quality this, though he be somewhat out of clothes, I tell ye.—Come, Æsop, hast a bay leaf in thy mouth?* Well said; be not out, stinkard. Thou shalt have a monopoly of playing confirmed to thee and thy covey under the emperor's broad seal for this service."

The result is that Cæsar orders him to be taken away, and adds this injunction to the satellites who hurry him off:

"Gag him that we may have his silence."

If we read between the lines correctly it looks as if Shakespeare's company at the Globe, when asked on short notice to perform *Richard II.*, an old play, at once sent off to Alleyn at the Rose Theatre, not far off, to beg the hire of such old stage properties of the piece as they might still have about the theatre. Thereupon Alleyn, who was no friend to his rising rival the Globe, suspecting what was about to be done, eventually informed the authorities. Then Æsop, or Shakespeare, was questioned, and he cleared himself by showing he was not the real author. Silence was imposed upon him—he was gagged, and the matter allowed to drop into oblivion. If *Richard II.* passed as one of Shakespeare's Plays in 1601, it has always puzzled commentators to explain why, when there was a judicial investigation into this important matter, it so happened that Shakespeare's name was not referred to throughout the inquiry. I think Ben Jonson in the *Poetaster* lets us somewhat into the secret of the matter: Ovid, *i.e.* Bacon, was at the bottom of it.

* A bay leaf was thought to be conducive to eloquence if placed under the ongue—the bay, too, was sacred to Apollo.

But the whole play should be carefully read; it is full of contemporary allusions, and the quick-witted theatre-goers of the day would seize upon them with avidity.

Anyhow, Shakespearians all allow that the author of the Poems was a great admirer of Ovid, and Professor Baynes has shown at great length * that Shakespeare was familiar with Ovid to a degree formerly little suspected; that Shakespeare was independent of English translations of the Elegies, for they had not yet been made; and that quite early in life, before he left Stratford, Shakespeare knew his Ovid pretty intimately, and with the perception of a scholar. I must say I would rather take Jonson's word that Shakespeare "knew little Latin," and accept Jonson's allusions as meaning that the true Ovid of the Poems, of *Romeo and Juliet*, and of *Richard II.* was Francis Bacon, the needy "younger brother" of Gray's Inn, who had no "stomach to digest this law," but who had friends who were "gentlemen of means and revenues," and was himself well-nigh "Castalian mad," and in addition nearly got himself into trouble over the play of *Richard II.* We know well enough from Ben Jonson's *Epigrams* who it was that stirred up the authorities against the *Poetaster* and its *Epilogue*. It was Cheveril, the Lawyer.

EPIGRAM LIV

Cheveril cries out my verses libels are;
And threatens the Star-Chamber and the Bar.
What are thy petulant pleadings, Cheveril, then,
That quit'st the cause so oft, and rail'st at men?

EPIGRAM XXXVII

On Cheveril the Lawyer

No cause, nor client fat, will Cheveril leese,
But as they come, on both sides he takes fees,
And pleaseth both; for while he melts his grease
For this; that wins, for whom he holds his peace.

The sobriquet "Cheveril" was probably given from a common saying, used by Stubbes, *Anatomy of Abuses*:

* *Shakespeare Studies*, 1894, pp. 195-249.

"The lawyers have such cheveril consciences," *i.e.* they stretch as easily as a kid glove. Or else the omnivorous Ben had noticed the word "cheveril" two or three times in the Shakespeare Plays, and thought it would be a capital word to turn against Bacon, and to hoist him with his own petard, for in the matter of the Essex treason it was generally felt that Bacon's conscience had been of a most yielding, soft, and ultra-expansive kind—and so on *Cheveril the Lawyer* would score a hit.

As is well known, Ben Jonson eventually (*c.* 1617) became on friendly terms with Bacon, and at the latter end of the Lord Chancellor's life, and after his disgrace, the friendly terms rose to personal intimacy, and Ben was very useful to Bacon in literary matters and Latin translations, and undoubtedly had a large share in bringing out the First Folio of 1623, and arranging and writing the prefatory matter.

I have already given my view that Luscus stands for Shakespeare the actor in Marston's *Scourge of Villainie*, and that Luscus also stands for the same famous Stratford player in Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*, just considered. If we accept this we shall get some interesting addition to our very scanty budget of facts about Shakespeare's personal characteristics. According to Marston, the actor-manager, Shakespeare was thoroughly taken up by his profession, and he

> "Ne'er of ought did speak
> But when of plays and players he did treat."

This sounds very likely, and would account for the little we hear of Shakespeare publicly or in society. He stuck close to his routine of theatrical work, and was frugal and careful about money, as we can judge by results. Marston hints also that he was a critic of plays, and transferred the passages he admired into his commonplace book, that he was much applauded "by curtain (*i.e.* the Curtain Theatre) plaudities," that he was a fine delineator of character, and that he managed to do all this

> "From out his huge long-scrapèd stock
> Of well-penn'd plays."

This seems probable enough, and would account very well for the contemporary views which we meet with concerning him. Shakespeare was a busy, important, actor-manager, with his heart in his work, with a gift of flowing, felicitous language, and possibly a power of gag in addition; all this impressed the audience and the public, and it did not occur to any of his contemporaries that the plays, attributed to him openly in print, were beyond his powers—except those few, such as Jonson, Marston, and Hall, who had discovered the secret, as I contend. Looked at in this light, the proof of the Shakespearian authorship inferred from the contemporary assent to it is by no means a weighty proof, and yet this is the grand, incontrovertible, and decisive proof that the orthodox critics rely upon.

I hope that the evidence adduced so far throws a little new light on the way in which Ben Jonson viewed Shakespeare and Bacon. But we still get Ben's view of Shakespeare best from the Epigram on the Poet-ape, and when we remember that this was first published in the collected edition of Jonson's works in 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death, we shall have to consider it, I am afraid, as Ben's final judgment on his contemporary, and we shall have to conclude that both Ben Jonson and Greene thought very little of the Player's talents or literary methods. As late as the eve of Shakespeare's death, Ben Jonson seems to have had as little respect for Shakespeare's genius as he had in 1602, and this certainly leads me to think that he knew very well that *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Lear*, and many other remarkable dramas that were then being brought forth, were not from the brain of Shakespeare the player and parcel-poet. Not even in a moment of envy could Ben have called such productions "the frippery of wit." He was a better critic than that, although I believe his theory of art did not quite agree with the art as displayed in the plays—it was not classic enough in form for the learned Ben; and that is what he meant when he told Drummond of Hawthornden, in 1618, that Shakespeare wanted art.

But let us read again his Epigram :

" Poor Poet-ape that would be thought our chief,
Whose works are e'en the frippery of wit,
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."

Does not this look as if Ben Jonson knew that Bacon supplied the fleece, and that the successful player " grown to a little wealth " was only responsible for certain shreds or locks of wool in it ? I name Bacon for the fleece, because there are no hints in any of Ben's Aristophanic allusions of any other possible provider for such a remarkable article, and because all the hints that are given seem, as we have just seen in the *Poetaster* and other plays, to point directly to Bacon. We gather also from this important Epigram that Shakespeare the Player had become a " credit in the scene "—that he was now not merely a Johannes Fac-totum full of conceit, who supposed that he could " bombast out a blank verse " (*i.e.* write or fill one out) as well as any one, as Greene said in 1592, but a good and capable actor as well. This quite does away with the foolish tradition that his best effort was the Ghost in his own *Hamlet*, and also should prevent Baconians from making the too-wide assertion that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, which we can plainly see from this present Epigram is not strictly correct. Shakespeare the Player had a hand in the Plays ; his shreds are there, though no one can pick them out now *for certain*. He was a " broker " of old or unfinished plays, and a " gleaner " in other men's fields, and he did not care if people taxed him with it. " He slights it." He was making money

in a legitimate way, and some such "factotum" there must be in every company that wants to keep alive in the public estimation. Such literary bantlings as other men did not care to bring up, or were partly ashamed of, he would "take up"; and when they came to maturity under his hand, by what name should they be presented to the public unless it were his name? True, when he wrote his own name he did not spell it Shake-speare, and these bantlings appeared under that form of spelling, but as he had been called Shake-scene in 1592, he was not likely to care much for being called Shake-speare in 1598. Perhaps one of the "grand possessors" of the plays who had a talent for mystifying the public preferred that form. The Stratford man could afford to "slight" this mere detail, and if Poems were sent forth to the world in 1593 and 1594 with William Shakespeare at the foot of the dedications, well, he "slighted" that too, even if the surly "Ben" should call him "Poet-ape" on this very account.

But the Stratford man was responsible for some of the work in the Plays—not the best of it—and perhaps was responsible also for more of the facetious vulgarity than we shall ever know about. There are certainly a good many shreds in the fleece that do not look as if they ever belonged to Bacon. Just take some of the names of the inferior characters, in connection with the following fact. During the year Nov. 1591–Nov. 1592 the country was searched for recusants. In some counties more than one commission was held. This was the case in Warwickshire, where we find there was a second commission in this year 1591–2. At the head of this we find the names of Sir Thomas Lucy and Sir Fulke Greville, who were active persecutors of the Papists. There is a long list of recusants and others who did not come to the parish church for divers reasons, and John Shakespeare, the father of William Shakespeare, is one of them. Strange to say, there are seven of the characters of the Plays among these Warwickshire recusants, viz. Page, Fluellen, Gower, Bates, Court, Bardolph, and Bolt. According to

Aubrey, the names of the poet's dramatic personages were often taken from the circle of his acquaintance, for he and Ben Jonson gathered humours wherever they went; thus the original of Dogberry was a constable Shakespeare met one midsummer night at Crendon in Bucks.

The authority for the above is Father Bowden,* who endeavours to show that Shakespeare was of the Old Religion and a good Roman Catholic. I assume that his list of recusants is correct, and therefore admit that for seven Stratford or Warwickshire recusants to have their names put in the Plays is a curious fact that wants explanation. It certainly looks as if Shakespeare put them there, or supplied the names to Bacon. But our theory does not exclude the supposition that Shakespeare touched up for the gallery whatever MSS. he obtained.

But now the question arises, and a very important one it is, if Ben Jonson so depreciates Shakespeare as the Poet-ape, how can it possibly have happened that in 1623, only seven years afterwards, this same broker of old plays, and patcher of shreds, this parcel-poet with his frippery of wit, became at once in Ben's eyes the

> "Soul of the Age!
> The applause! delight! the wonder of our Stage!
> My Shakespeare!"

How can it be that we have in 1623 the full-page portrait of the maligned Player William Shakespeare prefixed to the collected Plays, and opposite to the portrait some more lines by his quondam maligner Ben, who now calls him "Gentle Shakespeare," whereas of old he called him anything but "gentle," and was continually deriding his claims on the Heralds' College? "They forget they are i' the statute, the rascals; they are blazoned there; there they are tricked they and their pedigrees, they need no other heralds I wiss." † Is it possible that the surly, cantankerous, envious, and independent Ben assumes the office of a Herald in the folio and calls

* *Religion of Shakespeare*, p. 83.

† *Poetaster*, Act I. sc. i.

Shakespeare "gentle" to his face? It must be admitted that it seems so, and has seemed so from the time it was written until the present day.

This portrait of the Player, and the laudatory verses accompanying it in the first collected edition of the Shakespeare Plays, have, taken together, effectually precluded all argument or doubt about authorship for quite two hundred and forty years, and they still are the great stronghold of the orthodox party. They reason thus: Whatever kind of man Ben Jonson might be, rugged, cantankerous, Aristophanic, or even libellous, yet he was of such a bold and independent nature that he could not possibly become such a mean, sycophantic liar as to declare Shakespeare the Player to be the author of the immortal Plays, when he knew all the time that Bacon was the right man. Now, the strength of this argument is very great; in fact this portrait and the title-pages accompanying it have been called Shakespeare's title-deeds to his property, and they certainly are the best that his admirers can produce before the court of public opinion. They have been brought up and verified again and again, and those who produce them have always maintained, and still maintain, that the disputers of Shakespeare's title have absolutely "no case." The leading critics and the leading newspapers with one voice shout out "No case"; or if they do not shout, they enter into a conspiracy of silence.

The argument certainly seems decisive, and at first sight one would suppose there was no more to be said. But the more this particular matter is examined, the more suspicious does it become. There seems some juggling with words and phrases here. There seems some "mystery," and what Ben Jonson wrote concerning Bacon, who was celebrating his sixty-first birthday at York House—"Thou stand'st as though some mystery thou didst"—may well be retorted upon Ben's lines that face the famous Droeshout engraving of Shakespeare. The lines do not seem to say what they mean. I certainly had no suspic on of anything misleading in

the lines until the suggestion was made to me some years ago, and then a somewhat similar case of hoodwinking by phraseology came into my mind which had happened within my own knowledge long before. A friend of mine was applying for a mathematical tutorship, and sent round to his old College friends and tutors for testimonials as to fitness and ability. He received one from a very distinguished mathematician in these words:

"GENTLEMEN,—Mr. X. has applied to me, on the ground of our former acquaintance and friendship, for a testimonial as to his mathematical abilities. I am not in favour of verbose or elaborate testimonials, and therefore I hope it will be sufficient for me to say that I always have valued and do still value his mathematical attainments quite as highly as I do his friendship. I knew him during several years, so my opinion has the merit of being founded at least on some experience."

Mr. X. was very pleased with this, and showed it to me with some degree of pride as coming from so eminent a man. I remember at the time that it seemed to me rather curt and indefinite; but eminent mathematicians have their little peculiarities as I knew well enough, and so I thought no more about it, especially when I heard that X. had been chosen for the post he sought, mainly, as he thought, on the weight of this particular reference. Some time afterwards I heard that the eminent mathematician had "given himself away" by remarking in an unguarded moment that he really didn't care a button either for Mr. X.'s mathematics or his friendship, one was no better than the other. In fact, neither Mr. X. nor I, nor yet, as it appears, the gentlemen of the committee, had any suspicion of the *bona fides* of the distinguished reference. They took their first impression, and retained it.

Now I think this is exactly what people have been doing for a long term of years with Ben Jonson's testimonial to Shakespeare. They have taken for granted that it was intended in a good sense, and do not suspect for a moment that it *may* be a kick rather than a compliment. It was just so with Mr. X. The more I read

these "commendatory verses" of Ben Jonson, the less sure I am that they *are* commendatory, the less sure I am that Shakespeare the Player is meant, and the more likely it seems that Shakespeare here = Bacon. The very first lines are puzzling:

> "To draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name,
> Am I thus ample to thy book and fame."

Envy has to do with the living more than with the dead—the lines might be *à propos* in Bacon's case, but hardly so in Shakespeare's. Envy here seems to mean ill reputation, or the wagging tongues of enemies. These could tarnish Bacon's name, and his revealed connection with writing plays for the theatres would be harm to him rather than good. But it would be different in Shakespeare's case, and he too was out of the reach of wagging tongues of envy. And further on the lines about "crafty malice" pretending to praise, and yet intentionally ruining the object of that praise, would bear some rational meaning if applied to Bacon, who would be ruined for a seat in the House of Lords if it leaked out that he was a play-writer; but the application to Shakespeare is much less clear. Then Ben goes on to say that Shakespeare is "a Monument without a tomb," and that he is alive still—which is rather startling until we read on, "while thy Book doth live." Which sounds rather like word-jugglery.

And when we come to the famous words facing the portrait,* matters seem to get even still more suspicious and mystifying. That word "brass" does not sound very complimentary; we think of a brazen-faced impostor, or we think, perhaps, of those well-known lines in the play of *King Henry VIII.*:

> "Men's *evil manners* live in brass; their virtues
> We write in water."

And we feel the wooden-headed effigy has had a downright kick. Moreover, we are told not to look at it:

> "Reader, look
> Not on his picture, but his book."

* Given in Appendix, with curious matter connected therewith.

This seems, too, a strange injunction, and if we break it, and carefully inspect the picture, what do we find? We shall find, so Mr. Lee tells us, that only twenty of these figures (out of two hundred copies extant) are *printed on* the title-page; the rest are either inlaid or in some way imperfect. This again looks as if there was something wrong originally, or that another portrait had been intended for the space. And what is still more singular, the dress of the figure that faces Ben Jonson's lines looks more like the dress of an aristocrat or court-gallant than the plain dress of a *bourgeois* Player. Altogether we cannot help feeling that there is more here than meets the eye. And the way in which Ben Jonson, who after Shakespeare's death seems to have been permanently reconciled to Bacon, clearly took the leading part in ushering the book to the public, and quite put Heminge and Condell in the background, adds much to the singular mystery surrounding the whole production of the contents of that renowned book—perhaps the most wonderful single volume in the whole of literature—the first folio of 1623.

One more remark before we dismiss this famous Droeshout woodcut. As Ben Jonson was necessarily much at Gorhambury when he was helping Bacon to get his works translated into Latin (a year or two before the 1623 folio), we may take it for granted that he had seen or knew of Hilliard's picture of young Francis in 1578, round which the painter had inscribed—"*Si tabula daretur digna, animam mallem*," *i.e.* Would that I could paint his mind! Would that I had a material or canvas worthy of such a subject!

The very fact of this same rather unusual idea being brought into Ben's lines, seems to point towards Bacon, or at least to Jonson having Bacon's picture in his thoughts when he wrote his mystifying lines. But how courteous and lucid is Hilliard; there is no suspicious "brass" in *his* eulogy. How different when we come to Ben's verses, and the hydrocephalic-looking figure which faces them. Surely such a head never brought forth Pallas Athênê

fully armed and *shaking her speare* against Ignorance and Folly.

Besides, this figure-head is not *like* the head on the Stratford tomb; you would hardly believe they could both be the same man. The orthodox party will persist in seeing "a kind of likeness," but many, who have compared the two, think (and I with them) that the only marked resemblance is the baldness on the top of the head!

Perhaps now is the best time to say a few words about the Shakespeare monument in the chancel of Stratford-on-Avon's parish church. This too is considered one of the "indubitable proofs" that William Shakespeare, who was buried there, wrote the immortal Plays.

If we knew who put the monument where it is, and who composed the inscriptions that are upon it, then some very strong evidence might be gathered from it. But we are in utter ignorance on both points, and are therefore left somewhat in suspense as to our judgment in this matter. We do not hear a word about it till 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, and then the first mention of it appears in that famous first folio which has so many remarkable and suspicious circumstances connected with its publication.

These peculiar circumstances detract considerably from the weight of evidence which such a monument would generally afford. The crowds of Americans and other people who are constantly passing before this shrine and god of their pilgrimage as a rule hold but one opinion on this subject, and that is, "The tomb settles the question." But does it really? Is the Baconian stream of evidence, which has of late years so increased in volume, and is rushing on daily with increasing force, to be dammed at once and for ever by a tomb. Can a piece of sculptured masonry, prepared and put up by "no one knows who," be strong enough to resist or turn back such a swelling torrent? My own answer would be, "Certainly not," and I would remark in addition that the first line of the famous Latin inscription on the tomb looks very much as if it was composed and placed there by some one who

knew the Great Secret and Mystery of the problem that faces us.

What does this line tell us? It says that the man there buried was:

"*Judicio Pylium, genio Socratem, arte Maronem,*"

that is to say, he was:

"A Nestor in experienced judgment,
A Socrates in philosophical genius,
And an Ovid in the Poetry of Love."

Could the mind of mortal man earn higher meed of praise than that? Where else could these three great, yet diverse, merits be found to exist together in supreme excellence in one man? I made my first pilgrimage to the tomb in my undergraduate days, and I well remember how that Latin line, and its trebly condensed praise, arrested my attention:

"And still I gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head should carry all he knew."

I was strictly orthodox, for in those days no one ever caught even a whiff of heresy, and while I stood in reverential awe before that shrine I thought of no one but the Stratford genius, and that other genius of ancient Greece—that "blind old man of Scio's rocky isle," who was the only parallel instance of such God-given powers of mind that then occurred to me. Ah! *quantum mutatus* —now that famous Latin line on the tomb seems far more appropriate to Bacon than to Shakespeare; and as for the Stratford Player being either a Nestor or a Socrates, I must confess I have found hardly a tittle of corroboration for this in any account of him either by friend or foe.

Judicio Pylius—a Nestor in judgment! The quality for which Nestor was chiefly famed in antiquity was his wisdom, or judicious advice, in the council-chamber of heroes. I do not quite see where this quality shows itself in any special manner in Shakespeare's life. On the other hand, there are few persons in all history to whom

the words are more applicable than to the great Francis Bacon. He, if any man, was a Nestor in wisdom and in judgment; wise, as he sat and thought in his study; wise, as he sat on the seat of judgment and of law, and passed decrees concerning which Rushworth said, "Never any decree made by him was reversed as unjust." Not even after his fall and disgrace were his decisions overruled. Nowhere could a more judicious counsellor or giver of advice be found in Elizabethan England; and he was always ready with his advice, be it to his Queen, to his fellow-aristocrats, or to his private friends. He had the courage of his opinions when quite a young man, and when in later life he sat in his arm-chair at Gorhambury meditating, he was indeed *Judicio Pylius*—a Nestor in judgment—lacking nothing but Nestor's years.

Take the second historic parallel of the tomb. *Genio Socratem*—a Socrates by his genius. I cannot see that there was much of the "Socratic method" or the Socratic philosophy displayed in any part of the life of William Shakespeare the Player, so far as we know it. His marrying before he could support a family was not Socratic; nor yet his rather sordid money-getting ways as actor-manager. Socrates was an accurate logician, and had an exalted opinion of a good and valid argument; but when Shakespeare was discovered upon the premises of a London citizen where he had legally no *locus standi*, he came to the conclusion that the best way to deal with Burbage, his fellow-tragedian, who was knocking for admittance (and also seeking a *locus standi*), was to give him a piece of Shakespearian logic, which was to the effect that William the Conqueror was before Richard III.; *ergo*, or rather, *argal* William had a present *locus standi*, and Richard therefore must wait for a future one. I cannot call this Socratic either in logic or morals, and I think the great friend of Plato would have objected to the premises he occupied, the conclusion he came to, the *locus standi* he illegally took, and above all, the bastard logic by which he tried to defend it. Now the great Lord Chancellor had somewhat of the true logical and

philosophical spirit of Socrates in him, and he has left us good proof of it in the *Instauratio Magna*, the *Novum Organum*, the *Essays*, the *Apophthegms*, and other acknowledged works of his ; but to put in the first line of William Shakespeare's epitaph that he was *genio Socratem* was a most strange choice of words, and by no means what one would expect. Besides all this, the words contain a howling false quantity, and will not scan. The antepenultimate of Sōcrates is as long as one's arm, and therefore cannot get into a hexameter at all. If a Greek Omega is not long, I don't know what letter can be. It has been thought that Ben Jonson or some London friend, or possibly Dr. Hall, the son-in-law, composed this precious line. It could hardly be the classic Ben, unless, perchance, he made the slip on purpose that posterity should *not* credit him with such vile prosody and such inappropriate praise. Nor do our difficulties end here, for there is another mystery ; no one knows when the monument was erected, who paid for it, and who arranged the inscriptions. There may have been no monument at all until about a few months before the folio of 1623 was ready for publication, for anything we know to the contrary. Leonard Digges is the first writer who tells us a single word about it, and that is not till Shakespeare had been in his grave seven years. In some commendatory verses prefixed to the first folio of 1623, Digges tells us that Shakespeare's works would be alive when

"Time dissolves thy Stratford monument,"

and that is all the information we get.

I have, some may think, dwelt longer than necessary on this monument and its epitaph. My reason has been this ; so many people think it definitely settles the question we are considering, whereas I think it does little more than leave us in suspense when we have considered all the evidence, and the singular circumstances connected with it. We really do not know enough how and when it came into existence, or who placed it where we now see it. It is by no means impossible, or even utterly improbable,

that the persons who arranged and edited the first folio also arranged and edited this monument, and are responsible for the "writing on the wall." This requires an interpreter quite as much as did that other writing at Belshazzar's Feast, and we are not likely to be sure of our interpretation until we know for certain who wrote the inscription, and with what object it was thus strangely conceived and worded.

And so once again and finally, neither the Figure in the Folio nor the Effigy in the Stratford Chancel *definitely* settles the authorship of the Shakespeare Plays. And the curious laudation of Shakespeare by Ben Jonson seems so full of double meanings and mystifying expressions, that it is bereft of most of its evidential value. "But," some one may say, "Ben calls Shakespeare the 'Swan of Avon'; that's plain enough in all conscience." No, not even that is without suspicion, for the Avon flows by Cheltenham, where Bacon had an estate, as well as by Stratford, at least so the Baconians say. I cannot vouch for the Cheltenham Avon myself; all I know is that when I was at Cheltenham many years ago, I did not hear of any river Avon there, but of course there may be—Avons are common enough.

CHAPTER VII

PROGRESS AND PREJUDICE

THE preceding chapter on Ben Jonson and Shakespeare was written before Judge Webb's excellent book, *The Mystery of William Shakespeare* (1902), was published. I have since read that book carefully, and especially the chapter on Ben Jonson and Shakespeare. I was glad to find nothing to make me modify or alter what I had already written.

There is nothing of the "crank" about Judge Webb, nor is it very likely there would be in a Regius Professor of Law. His arguments and pleas are carefully considered, and there is but one really bad mistake, as far as I can see, and that is, he thinks the "noted weed" allusion in Sonnet LXXIV. intimates that Shakespeare was not the author's real name. This interpretation cannot stand. But certainly such a well-timed, well-prepared, and well-directed blow has never before been given against the Shakespearian authorship of the Plays. But will this knock-down blow make the other side throw up the sponge and accept defeat cheerfully? I augur nothing of the kind. I do not suppose the critics and the newspapers are likely to give up their pet traditions merely because some judge has cleverly arranged his words so as to tell against them. They have had experience of this kind of thing in the law-courts, and they know well enough how an experienced advocate can make the worse appear the better reason. Moreover, nearly all these arguments and facts have been before the world for the last twenty years or more, and have convinced no one but a few cranks. "Have not these same bricks been lying about the Baconian brick-fields for years and years for any to examine that cared to do it; and now because

a clever judge collects them together and presents us with a rather imposing edifice which he has made up from them, are we to be taken in by it?"

People who have strong views of their own and argue as above are not likely to be convinced. In Judge Webb's case it turned out as I thought; all the critics and irresponsible reviewers attacked him at once. They all fastened their fangs on his one evident mistake, and having discharged the full venom of their rhetoric on that, they finished up by sneering and laughing at his carefully built edifice, treating it as a mere house of cards, with no solid foundation and no lasting cohesion. Having dislodged one of Judge Webb's cards or bricks, they assumed the airs of a conqueror who had brought the whole edifice to the ground in ruins. They scored the first point in the literary fight, and thought the fight was as good as finished.

But many a literary pugilist gets the worst of the first round and yet proves after all the better man. I remember well, years ago, seeing and hearing Bradlaugh get a knock-down blow from Father Ignatius on the Hall of Science debating platform, Bradlaugh's own castle where he was king, somewhere in the City of London. The Anglican monk cleverly got S. Irenæus into the argument, and Bradlaugh, who would persist in calling the sainted bishop by the name of High-Reenyus, and evidently got quite at sea with regard to him, was clearly floored. But, though Bradlaugh lost this round in spite of (perhaps partly by reason of) his vigorous *aspirations*, he certainly scored a logical victory in the sum total of debate, as most of the audience admitted irrespective of their own convictions. It seems to me that when the whole controversy is properly thrashed out, Judge Webb, like Bradlaugh, will be shown to be the logical victor.

One singular and useful result of this Regius Professor of Law appearing on the side of the Baconian heretics, has been the imposing spectacle of a triangular duel between three Professors—all of the same college and University, and all most distinguished in their several

capacities. As it helps to show that the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy is getting beyond the range of vulgar abuse, and as neither the irresponsible pressmen nor the cocksure experts are likely for their own reputation's sake to brand Regius Professors as fools or asses, I will give names and titles :—

1. TYRRELL, ROBERT YELVERTON, Regius Professor of Greek, Dublin, since 1880; Litt.D., LL.D., D.C.L., Fellow of Trin. Coll. Dubl., Professor of Latin, 1871; Gold Medallist in Philosophy and Classics.
2. DOWDEN, EDWARD, Professor of English Literature, Dublin, since 1867; Litt.D., LL.D., D.C.L., Clark Lecturer in English Literature, Trin. Coll. Camb., 1893–96; Editor of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, &c. &c.
3. WEBB, THOMAS E., Regius Professor of Law, Dublin, 1867; Public Orator, 1879; Q.C. (1874), LL.D., Judge of the County Court of Donegal, and Chairman of Donegal Quarter Sessions since 1887.

In the triangular duel, No. 3 fired the first shot in his *Mystery of William Shakespeare*, whereupon No. 1, an inveterate theatre-goer and lover of the drama, and No. 2, an experienced Shakespearian critic, at once got their pistols ready and firing began in earnest.

Professor Tyrrell (No. 1) fired off three columns in *The Pilot* of July 19, 1902, finishing thus: "I would rather believe all the fables of the Talmud and Alcoran than that the author of the *Novum Organum* was the author of the plays and poems of Shakespeare." He uses the old arguments, and uses them very forcibly. He says that Bacon does not "show a scintilla of that humour with which Shakespeare bubbles and boils over. Conceive for a moment Bacon as the creator of Falstaff, Shallow, Dogberry, the gravedigger in *Hamlet*, and Launcelot Gobbo. It would be as easy to imagine Mr. Herbert Spencer as the author of *Pickwick*."

But in the course of his arguments he makes an admission which cuts the ground from under his feet. He thinks that "no candid reader can refuse to admit" that "the author of the Plays was very familiar with

the works of Bacon, especially the *Sylva Sylvarum* and the *Natural History*, which were not published till after Shakespeare's death." He admits it himself, and accounts for such an extraordinary miracle of literature by the theory which he puts forth. "There is no reason why Shakespeare should not have known Bacon just as he knew the Earls of Southampton and Pembroke." So Judge Webb's coincidences are admitted, but they only show "that Shakespeare had access to the works of Bacon years before they were published."

Judge Webb (No. 3) now fires his shot at No. 1, and wellnigh disables him; for, as the Judge rightly says, if the coincidences between Bacon and Shakespeare are admitted, then the strongest existing evidence that the Baconians have is also admitted, and that is quite enough for them.

Meanwhile Professor Dowden (No. 2) has fired *his* shot, and has shown that there were really no coincidences between Bacon and Shakespeare in the sense that the Baconians required for their argument. Unfortunately, this shot hit his own Shakespearian ally (No. 1), and in *The Pilot* for Aug. 30 Professor Tyrrell (No. 1) had to leave the field as best he could. This is how he does it. "When I read that article (Prof. Dowden's shot) I would gladly have recalled my paper (his shot), but it was then too late. I am not versed in the literature of the Shakespearian era (a Litt.D.!), and I assumed that the Baconisers who adduced the parallelisms had satisfied themselves that the coincidences were peculiar to the writings of the Philosopher and the Poet. Professor Dowden showed that this was not so. . . . Thus my theories were completely superseded, and the one specious argument of the Baconisers demolished. . . . I, for one, have now said my last word on the Shakespeare-Bacon question." *Exit* Professor Tyrrell badly wounded by *each* of the other combatants, while Professors Dowden and Webb remain on the field still fighting.

I am not a duellist on the field of the Plays, and therefore shall not attempt to occupy the corner of the

triangle left vacant by Professor Tyrrell. But if my proofs of the authorship of the Poems and Sonnets be allowed, Professor Dowden will be in a hot position.

There is hardly a more obstinate or difficult critic to convince or to reason with than the thoroughly ingrained scholar-critic who has been absorbing the traditional and orthodox views of any subject during the whole course of his life. The fact seems to be that the Shakespearian authorship has become a kind of "vested interest" in the eyes of the English-speaking race, and we all know how people hang on *per fas et nefas* to a vested interest. Critics have declared the "Divine William" to be the Eternal Glory of the British race, and their readers, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, have fully accepted this great treasure as their own by right and prescription; and this has been going on for some hundreds of years. Here is a vested interest which dates back earlier than the licence of the oldest public-house in the kingdom. Can we be surprised that people fight for it?

As all the orthodox Shakespearians make so much of Ben Jonson's testimony, and are constantly repeating that "it settles the question," I made some more researches into Ben's life, and found a letter of his addressed to Lord Salisbury which was new to me. Gifford does not mention it in his Life, but it is published in the *Calendar of State Papers*, Domestic Series, 1603 to 1610, London, 1857. It is too long to quote, but it shows that Ben Jonson, who, when he wrote this letter, was a Roman Catholic, was quite willing to play the spy and informer among his fellow-Catholics, and covered this mean and detestable offer by the plea of patriotism justifying it. And what made him turn Roman Catholic? Well, he was in prison, and, as he told Drummond afterwards, he was not convinced, but he "took the priest's word for it." But why should he, unless he was to get something by doing so? If so, what opinion must we hold of him? Would he be a stickler for truth persistently, no matter when or where? Is it not more probable that he would be just the kind of man who would be

easily induced by Bacon to assent to a *suppressio veri* if required of him. As for Bacon, no one who has any acquaintance with his "Life and Letters" would venture to deny that one of this great man's favourite literary devices was the *suppressio veri* combined with the *suggestio falsi*. Instances are very numerous, but one of the best that I can call to mind now is in a letter of Jan. 28, 1616, when the King had asked Bacon's advice regarding the attack by Coke on the Lord Chancellor's (Ellesmere) jurisdiction over cases decided at the King's Bench. Bacon replied: "I do think it most necessary, seeing there is some bruit abroad that the Court of King's Bench do doubt of the case, that it should not be treason, that it be given out constantly, and yet as it were in secret, and so a fame to slide, that the doubt was only upon the publication in that it was never published."

Now, I hold that a man who could so ingeniously advise how to throw dust in the eyes of the public, and how to circulate false reports, would not have much difficulty in doing the same in the case of the first folio, and would do it with greater gusto and care, as it was here a personal matter. What I wish to emphasise is that since Ben Jonson and Francis Bacon were both wonderfully shrewd men, and held the *peculiar views as to truth* described above, we should not reject as a "monstrous impossibility" the view that *between them* they succeeded in deceiving the world of letters as to the authorship of the first folio for several hundred years.

Nor must we forget that the Dedication and Address over the signatures of Heminge and Condell, fellow-actors with Shakespeare, are both open to grave suspicion and serious objections. Here too we cannot marry the style to the men. The phraseology differs much from what we should expect from ordinary actors. It has been plausibly suggested by such high authorities as the Cambridge editors, that both the Dedication and the Address may have been written by some literary man in the employment of the publishers, and merely signed by the two players. This seems probable enough, and in that

case I should suggest Edward Blount as a very likely man. But there are strong internal indications of a well-read Latinist and good classical scholar, which seem to point beyond these ordinary players and Blount also, and lead us to think rather of Ben Jonson. For there is a curious passage concerning "country hands that reach forth milk and cream and fruits," that is evidently taken from the dedicatory epistle to Vespasian, prefixed to Pliny's *Natural History*, and is an independent scholarly translation such as we might expect from Jonson rather than any one else. What would Heminge and Condell be likely to know of such a passage? Blount, who had a fancy for dedications and prefaces, might have come across it and kept it for his own future use, but not men like Heminge and Condell. Judge Webb mentions this part of their prefatory matter as being unlike the phraseology we should expect from them, but did not notice the peculiar classical source I have given above, although he refers to another passage of the Address which he regards as conclusive for the Jonsonian authorship. However that may be, I claim we are fully entitled to say that there is strong evidence of some literary chicanery in this part of the vestibule of the first folio, where Heminge and Condell give their signatures and evidence. This being so, we have a corroboration of the literary chicanery we have suspected in the other parts of this famous vestibule, and it becomes much easier to hold the opinion that this vestibule was originally arranged "to oblige Bacon" and to conceal him. That is, I confess, my own conviction on this debated point, and I rather fancy that Blount and Jaggard were mixed up with it as well as Jonson.

Look again at the secret of the "Waverley Novels." It should teach us a lesson surely. There were several shrewd guesses at the right author, but they were repressed somewhat in the way that the shrewd Baconian suggestions are repressed. People were hoodwinked by what was considered "good authority," and this lasted several years. The Ettrick Shepherd says, in his Auto-

biography, that when he saw certain words about long and short sheep used near the beginning of *The Black Dwarf*, he said to himself: "How could I be mistaken of the author? It is true Johnnie Ballantyne persuaded me into a nominal belief of the contrary for several years following, but I could never get the better of that and several similar coincidences." For Johnnie Ballantyne read Ben Jonson, and we have the very kind of influence that produces nominal belief in Shakespeare's authorship. J. B. and B. J. were both in a tale for throwing dust in the eyes of the inquisitive and curious public, and both succeeded, B. J. holding his tale up even to the present day.

But why, after all, are Baconians treated so discourteously? I suppose it is because they are heretics, and because the firm believers in the cult of the "Divine William" do actually feel that their higher religious instincts are being impudently trifled with. Bacon enthroned as our literary Paragon and Deity? Never! 'Tis flat blasphemy as ever was committed. Away with such cranks! nothing is too bad for them! I am reminded of a famous utterance of Dr. Wace (D.D.) before the Church Congress of 1888: "It is," he said, "and it ought to be, an unpleasant thing for a man to have to say plainly that he does not believe in Jesus Christ." Many people nowadays seem to hold the same views as to disbelief in Shakespeare, and the attempts to disenthrone him from his lofty position. Such is the view of the more ordinary man who plods to his work along the public thoroughfares of our cities and towns. He knows hardly anything of the subject, and cares less. As to the orthodox Shakespearians of cultivated tastes, the heresy is to them "literature of a peculiarly uninviting kind," as they often say. Naturally so, for it upsets all their past ideas on the subject; throws ridicule on all their beautiful devotion to "Sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child," and the "native wood-notes wild," which they fondly imagined he had learned to "warble" in Warwickshire; and, perhaps worst of all, leaves one

of their special shrines positively empty. No substituted image can fill that shrine, for it is against human nature to blot out the lifelong devotion that has been bestowed on one great literary ideal, and then to transfer it restored to another idol or ideal of a very different description.

Appeals to Zoilus are quite out of date nowadays, but I will frankly say this: that, if any slashing critics or snarling cynics try to make matters "unpleasant" for me, I in turn will suffer them gladly. If they "grin like a dog" I too will grin—and bear it.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME ORTHODOX SHAKESPEARIANS PUT IN THE WITNESS-BOX

At this point it seems only fair to listen to the Shakespearians, who, no doubt, have for some time been muttering *audi alteram partem*. I will therefore now put Sir Theodore Martin, who is one of their best and most courteous and amiable witnesses, into the box and report his evidence. It is also to be read in *Blackwood's Magazine* (1888). He says :—

"Have they (the Baconians) ever tried to picture to themselves what was the position of an actor and dramatic writer in a theatre of those days? By necessity he was in daily communion with some of the sharpest and finest intellects of the time—men like Marlowe, Dekker, Chapman, Middleton, Heywood, Drayton, and Ben Jonson. We might as soon believe that a man who pretended that he had written *Vanity Fair* or *Esmond* could have escaped detection in the society of Charles Butler, Tennyson, Venables, or James Spedding, as that Shakespeare could have passed himself off as the author even of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* or *Love's Labour's Lost*—we purposely name two of his earliest and weakest plays—or that any of that brilliant circle of Elizabethan poets would have given credit for ten minutes to such a man as the Baconians picture Shakespeare to have been for the capacity to construct one scene, or even to compose ten consecutive lines of the blank verse—the exquisite blank verse which is to be found in those plays."

This is excellently put, and has convinced in its time thousands of sensible people. But it is a fallacious argument after all. We have no reason to believe that Shakespeare ever did manage to deceive those people who were in the best position to judge. I do not think that he deceived Ben Jonson, or Greene, or Marston, or

Dekker, or Henslowe, or the actors of his own company, for one moment. They knew him as an adapter of old plays, and no doubt he could from his stage experience make them very presentable to the audience; he knew the popular taste, and had a "facetious grace of writing." This I think we must allow him. It was the saying of an impartial contemporary, and there is no reason it should not be accepted. But he was a "broker" of plays, and either bought or appropriated other people's feathers to add to his own natural plumage. If those who knew charged him with it, it did not seem to trouble him; he "slighted" it,* and took it all in the day's work, so long as it brought him money and success, for he was a careful man, with a good eye to the main chance. I think he was generally credited with the poems *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, and very likely he claimed and maintained his authorship there, for he had put his name to the dedication; and there may have been other reasons why he should do this, reasons best known to Bacon, Southampton, and himself. But I maintain, as against Sir Theodore Martin's apparently weighty argument, that his contemporaries, who, from their position and relation to him, ought to know, were not deceived, nor did Shakespeare try to deceive them. Shakespeare as the promoter and producer to the public of a number of popular and successful plays. They were pirated and printed without his collaboration and without his authority. Some had his name put to them, and some had not. He did not trouble much, so long as the money came in to the theatre, and possibly there was a private arrangement with the real "inventor," who did not care to be publicly associated with them. A new play was acted by his company; he was known to be the active *factotum*, and so, when successful and put in print by the speculative booksellers, it was attributed to him—often, too, when it was not his at all. He was no dunce, and had sufficient natural quickness and flow of language

* I assume that Ben Jonson's "Poet-Ape" was Shakespeare. The evidence seems very strong to me.

and facetious grace to impress outsiders, and people who were not great critics (as Ben Jonson really was), that he was quite equal to producing the marvellous beauties of *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and the rest, because for one reason they were not at that time perceived to be such marvellous creations as the verdict of after ages has decreed.

But enough has been said to show that Sir Theodore's argument is not by any means so convincing as it at first appears to be. However, let us now hear another champion on the Shakespearian side. Allow me to introduce Professor Alfred Russel Wallace, a man of the keenest and most original intellect, an LL.D. and F.R.S., a competitor with Darwin for the honour of discovering Natural Selection, and one of the sanest defenders of modern Spiritualism in the matter of its evidential proof that we have had in this country. The occasion of his testimony was this. The *Arena*, a high-class American periodical, some years ago invited the opinions and verdict of distinguished men on the Shakespeare-Bacon problem. I need hardly say that the general result was an almost unanimous verdict for Shakespeare. As the *Arena* is not much known in England, and as Professor Wallace gave stronger reasons, perhaps, than any one else, they may suitably find a place here.

"When we are asked to believe that the whole of the plays and poems attributed to Shakespeare were not written by him, but by Lord Bacon, we naturally require evidence of the most convincing kind. It must be shown either that Bacon did actually write them, or that Shakespeare could not possibly have written them, in which latter case somebody else must have done so; and we then demand proof that Bacon could possibly, and did probably write them.

"First, then, is there any good evidence that Bacon did write them? Positively none whatever: only a number of vague hints and suggestions which might perhaps add some weight to an insufficient amount of direct testimony, but in its absence are entirely valueless; and then we have the enormous, the overwhelming improbability, that any man would write, and allow to be published or acted, so wonderful a series of poems and plays,

while another man received all the honour and all the profits; and though surviving that man for ten years, that the real author never made the slightest claim to them, never confided the secret to a single friend, and died without a word or a sign to show that he had any part or share in them. To most persons this consideration alone will be conclusive against Bacon's authorship.

"The reasons for Shakespeare not being able to write them are weak in the extreme. They amount to this:

1. He had no University education.
2. His early associates were mostly illiterate.
3. No single letter or MS. exists in his writing.

"But 'transcendent genius' is sufficient to remove all such difficulties. Moreover, he lived near to the lordly castles of Warwick and Kenilworth, and 'at times of festivity such castles were open house, and at all times would be accessible through the friendship of servants or retainers; and thus it may be that Shakespeare acquired some portion of that knowledge of the manners and speech of nobles and kings which appears in the historical plays.'

"The endearing terms applied to him by his London friends after he had left Stratford show he was an attractive personality, and we may therefore infer he was acceptable in many grades of society. The law-courts were open; he would there have ample opportunities of getting that knowledge displayed in the plays; and as for French and Spanish, he could easily pick up from his travelled friends or from foreign visitors enough for his purpose.

"Lastly, putting Shakespeare out of the way, could Bacon have written the plays, &c.? No; the man who wrote the Essays on 'Love' and 'Marriage,' and did not allow one spark of love or sentiment to appear in them, could not possibly have conceived and delineated such characters as Portia, Juliet, Imogen, and a score of others, not to speak of the 'pouring forth of the soul' in the Sonnets.

"Never, surely, was there so utterly baseless a claim as that made by the advocates of Bacon against Shakespeare.

"A. R. WALLACE.

"Verdict for the defendant—Shakespeare."

This verdict is given as strongly and as tersely as the most devoted Shakespearian could wish. As the reader has already seen, and will, I hope, continue to see further

on, I do not leave such arguments unconsidered. Therefore I will now simply refer to the argument of the Professor that Bacon was not the man to "conceive or delineate such characters as Portia, Juliet, Imogen," nor yet the man to pour forth his soul in the Sonnets. At first sight the argument seems insuperable, and the incongruity of such a philosophical and serious brain as that of Bacon evolving the marvellous lovers' ecstasies of *Romeo and Juliet*, together with the pure, graceful, bright and lovable maidens that meet us in the various plays, must seem to most people so enormous and so insuperable that it is to some extent an excuse for the unrestrained language they use to those who think differently.

No, Bacon was most distinctly not the kind of man we should credit with the creation of a Juliet, a Portia, a Beatrice, or a Rosalind. I admit the statement and agree with Professor Wallace's remarks on this point, but I would add a saving clause. I would say, "Bacon is impossible, *as we know him*." In his mature life Bacon is known to the world of culture as a deep-thinking and far-reaching philosopher, a most wise and suggestive essayist, a sane, serious, sober-minded man, and apparently somewhat of a misogynist and a time-server. But what of his youthful days, when he was in the heyday of spring and of "sportive blood"; what of the time before he was on the shady side of thirty-five or forty; how much do the best of us, or even the wellnigh omniscient Spedding, *know intimately* of his inner life and emotional feelings then? He did not publish anything with his name of much importance till his *Essays* in 1598, when he was nearly forty years old, and his greater works were reserved till he was nearly sixty. Are we to judge his natural bias and his emotional instincts solely by such records as are left us in this way? Maturity is not often wont to lay bare the secrets and follies of its undisciplined and inexperienced youth; nay, rather it is apt to conceal or obscure them. Moreover, his Essays on Love and Marriage were not in the first edition of 1598, and did not appear till 1612, when Bacon was over fifty, and were

not finally put into shape till 1625, when he was sixty-four. We must not expect the exuberance and florid rhetoric of the tender passion at such ages of life; but among much excellent advice we get this: "Nuptial Love maketh mankind; Friendly Love perfecteth it; but Wanton Love corrupteth and imbaseth it."

In the friendly love that is the perfection of the great passion, may there not be a reminiscence of the ardours of the Sonnets? Anyhow, the *Siren* is there in the essay (*cf.* "What potions have I drunk of Siren tears?" Sonnet CXIX.), and Marcus Antonius too, the hero of *Antony and Cleopatra*; and he is the only lover named in the essay except Appius Claudius, the Decemvir. And so I say to Professor Wallace and all who rely on this apparently invincible argument, "Be not too dogmatic concerning that portion of Bacon's life and history of which we know so little intimately; your invincible argument may after all be nothing but invincible ignorance."

And after all, what are Juliet, Beatrice, or Miranda, but creations of the fine human intellect which a genius can throw off from himself into space, and then embody them, so to speak, in the domain of the intellectual and literary world; but it does not necessarily follow that they represent any actual analogies to the personal character of the genius who created them. Just as a man "may smile, and smile, and be a villain," so, I suppose, an author may produce the sublimest and purest conceptions of the human mind without being so very sublime and pure in his own personal and intimate life. A man's lofty conceptions, and pure aspirations, do not necessarily find a counterpart in himself. "Colonel Newcome" is a beautiful conception, a fine character, but I don't suppose that Thackeray much resembled him.

Besides this, the emotional, the sensual, and the spiritual natures of men and women, be they great or small, vary considerably at different stages of their life. Look at Milton, for instance, and compare him in youth and middle age, in regard to his expressed views on the master passion love and the fair sex generally. If ever there was a

chaste, serious, and self-respecting man, a severe student delighting in books, Milton was that man, and yet in the heyday of youthful emotion, and in the spring of life, what does he tell us of his first love, that girl he met, above and surpassing all her accompanying troop, on that long-remembered May Day in 1628, when he was but nineteen? Then it was that Dan Cupid drew his bow at a venture and smote the unsuspecting youth and pierced his unguarded breast:

> "Nec mora; nunc ciliis hæsit, nunc virginis ori,
> Insilit hinc labiis, insidet inde genis;
> Et quascunque agilis partes jaculator oberrat,
> Hei mihi! mille locis pectus inerme ferit;"

which Cowper translates unapproachably,

> "[With . . . quiver at his side,]
> Now to her lips he clung, her eyelids now,
> Then settled on her cheeks, or on her brow,
> And with a thousand wounds from every part
> Pierced and transpierced my undefended heart.
> A fever, new to me, of fierce desire
> Now seized my soul, and I was all on fire."

But later on in life, in 1645, when Milton was approaching forty, he would not put in print his youthful effusion without a demurrer or antidote, and so he appends his altered views when he was more matured, in the following fashion:

> "Such were the trophies that in earlier days,
> By vanity seduced, I toiled to raise,
> Studious, yet indolent, and urged by youth,
> That worst of teachers! from the ways of truth:
> Till learning taught me in his shady bow'r,
> To quit love's servile yoke, and spurn his pow'r."

And why may not this have been young Francis Bacon's case as well? When that fair Adonis, that eminent "child of state," the attractive young Earl of Southampton, came up about the year 1590 to be the young cherub of Gray's Inn, what more likely than that a "fever of fierce desire" should seize the soul of that more experienced and naturally sensitive member

of [the same Society, Francis Bacon? with whom, as we know, an early and long-continued intimacy sprung up. Some of the Shake-speare Sonnets show us, as only impassioned poetry can, a soul that was "all on fire," and the Cupid that supplied the torch is generally admitted to be this same young Earl. Does it not seem more probable that the author of these Sonnets was one who was fitted by birth, position at Gray's Inn, and opportunities of many kinds to enter into an ardent and romantic attachment to his young friend — all which qualifications are fulfilled to the letter in Francis Bacon —rather than the *bourgeois* lad from the country, William Shakespeare, who had about this time just risen from the stable-yard of old Burbage to do hack-work with old plays, and was perhaps honoured sometimes with the *rôle* of the original Ghost in the *Ur-Hamlet* of Thomas Kyd, which used to cry out, to the terror of the penny and twopenny sections of the audience, "Hamlet, revenge."

Bacon, like Milton, became devoted to more serious matters as life rolled on, and put aside the ecstasies and fancies, the "watching and pursuing the light that lies in woman's eyes," and that friendship for youth which he thought at one time to be the perfecting of love. Those spring days had passed. For "one hour" at least he had enjoyed spring's most glorious sun; but now the autumn had come, and he sat and thought (*sic sedebat*), and possessed with a philanthropy for his race and for posterity, he devised his new schemes of Philosophy and Natural Science, and left them and the other works of his invention that he had devised in a "despised weed" for the good of all men, and for future ages. From what Sir Thomas Bodley said about Bacon in later life, we may almost infer that Bacon had wasted (according to the Bodley view of the matter) much of his youth in frivolous literary work, such as plays and interludes, which Sir Thomas rigorously excluded from his famous Library.

Once more, then, and finally, the argument that Bacon could not possibly have depicted the love scenes and

Das Ewig-Weibliche of the Plays does not seem an invincible one.

I will next introduce one of the most experienced Shakespearians we have amongst us, as far as practical exposition is concerned—I mean, of course, Sir Henry Irving.

He has just been delivering the "Trask" lecture at Princeton University (March 1902), and he took the Bacon-Shakespeare question for his subject. He approached the matter from the point of view of the actor mainly, taking up two principal points. First, is it conceivable that Shakespeare's contemporaries would have allowed him to masquerade in borrowed plumes? Even as it was, Robert Greene was jealous of him, and called him "the upstart crow beautified with our feathers." Greene would have been only too glad to expose Shakespeare, had there been anything to expose. Secondly, it is equally as inconceivable that Bacon wrote the Plays, as that Shakespeare did not write them. They are the work of a practical playwright, conversant with all the business of the actor; and Bacon is not known to have had any knowledge of the stage. "If," said Sir Henry, "you have not studied the art of writing for the stage, you will never write a good play."

I must say I am astounded at the inaccurate statements which the newspapers have here given to Sir Henry, and would hope that he has been incorrectly reported. Surely all who have only read a little way into the subject know that (1) Shakespeare was charged over and over again at the time with patching up old plays, with dressing himself up for the public in borrowed plumes, and for "brokerage" or buying literary property from outsiders; and that (2) Bacon was known to be well acquainted with the practical work of getting up masques and plays at Gray's Inn, and was, to his mother's sorrow, a frequenter and lover of the theatre.

The *Globe* newspaper, commenting favourably on Sir Henry, goes a step further than the lecture, by stating that when Shakespeare "employed legal terms, he is

often wrong," and that "it is, in short, abundantly clear that the author was not a lawyer."

To which we can only say :

> "O ye chorus of indolent reviewers,
> Irresponsible, indolent reviewers."

Next take this good leading trump card from the other side : "Keats, though minus education in Greek, yet through the genius within him caused his poetry to be saturated with the spirit of Greek mythology ; and shall we deny to Shakespeare a similar transmuting power of genius, even on the assumption of a limited Latin scholarship ? "

I do not know who first said this, but it has been often repeated, and with most Shakespearians *decies repetita placebit.* I admit its *primâ facie* force and congruity, but fortunately we know much more about young Keats than about young Shakespeare of Stratford. Therefore let us, for the sake of comparison, hear what is known of Keats. He was sent in his eighth year to a school of excellent repute kept by John Clarke at Enfield. He gained the friendship of Charles Cowden Clarke, the master's son, and an usher of the school, and during his last two years the love of study so seized him that he could be hardly torn from his books, not only winning all the literary prizes of the school, but devouring during play-hours everything he could lay his hands on, especially classical mythology. He carried away from school a fair knowledge of Latin, and apparently a little knowledge of French, which he afterwards improved. He made plenty of spare time for himself in his teens and afterwards, and relinquished the profession of surgery and medicine for more congenial pursuits. He had many talented friends to stimulate him. Books were within his reach, to be consulted at pleasure.

Now compare Keats' works, their author being thus favourably handicapped, with Shakespeare's works. I can see neither wide learning nor philosophical knowledge in Keats, but I can see both in Shakespeare. I can see in Keats' works how he was enabled by his innate genius

to "build the lofty rhyme" and to produce most exquisite flowers of the finest poetry, from the groundwork, so to speak, of Lemprière and the current treatises on mythology, thoroughly mastered by a willing and interested reader. But when I see this splendid result, I do not view it as a miracle, or the man himself as *stupor mundi*. His natural genius and the special tendency of his mind would be sufficient, without a miracle.

But how very different in the case of Shakespeare. We do not know much about his educational advantages; but, taking the most favourable view, they could hardly be superior to those that were afforded to Keats. And yet where can there be found a man of wider, and, as a rule, more accurate knowledge, or of a greater vocabulary, or of a more beautiful or philosophical way of using it?

Genius can do much, but it is far from being able to make a man *omnibus numeris absolutus*, or "complete" in the sense that Shakespeare was. Genius alone can undoubtedly lift a man to a purer and a larger æther than ordinary mortals can breathe in. Instances are numerous enough in the annals of many a cottage home and lowly birthplace, but these self-same favoured mortals, even if, as with Milton, they could hope to soar

"Above the flight of Pegasean wing,"

still would soon find that their wings of genius are sadly clipped, confined, and weakened unless they are taught to rise and fly by the knowledge that is in books and by the varied wisdom that has descended from the ages of the past. Without these helps they may indeed rise somewhat from the brute earth of ordinary humanity, but they will never be able to make those glorious circling swoops in the lofty "circumambient air" which are ever the wonder of the earth-bound crowd below, the marvel of an admiring world.

Such an ever-living *stupor mundi* is Shakespeare—but not Keats, nor yet Burns, nor James Ferguson, as *Notes and Queries* would suggest when their critic remarks, "It is only in degree that Shakespeare is more of a

miracle than Burns or than James Ferguson." I cannot accept such a statement as this. The miracle of the Shakespeare Works is a different *kind* of miracle from that of Burns, or Ferguson, or Keats. Theirs is really after all no miracle, for *they* only went where their genius led them. But Shakespeare went where no natural genius ever did or ever could lead a man, and that is the miracle we are asked to believe. Put Bacon in Shakespeare's place, the miracle disappears and a much easier problem awaits us. And as it is a good standing rule, both in theology and common sense, that we should never multiply miracles if we can by any possibility find other explanations of a fairly satisfactory kind, I adopt the rule and accept Bacon until the other side give me a downright miracle to swallow in *his* case, and then he must go too, for miracles do not happen now either in the literary or physical worlds. But I must have a real miracle, better than any they have on their books at present.

I once had the privilege of a short casual conversation with one of the most distinguished Shakespearian scholars that England possesses. The Bacon theory being mentioned tentatively, I well remember his curt and decisive reply: "Absurd! Why, Bacon never wrote a humorous line in his life." At the time, coming as it did *vivâ voce* from such an authority, it appeared to me very convincing, and for a moment or two I seemed to feel certain that whatever Bacon wrote, he did *not* write the humours of Sir John Falstaff. Even still I often feel inclined to credit the Stratford man with some of the incidents and characters in the Falstaff plays. But the great critic's casual remark was not so strong as it sounds; for, allowing the assertion to be accurate, there still remains plenty of evidence that Bacon was a natural humorist, and very fond of indulging his vein. Ben Jonson, best of contemporary witnesses, declared: "His (Francis Bacon's) language, *when he could spare, or pass by, a jest*, was hotly censorious;" and Dr. Abbott, one of the best of Bacon's modern biographers, said: "If Francis owed his energy

to his mother, he was probably indebted to his father for his placid self-control and *his rich humour*." Such remarks discount considerably the value of the statement that, for the moment, rather nonplussed me.

I could go on and fill many pages with amusing and ridiculous extracts from the books and pamphlets of the privates, camp-followers, and facetious buffoons of the orthodox army. But it would take up too much space, and would not strengthen my own case, which is the main object to strive for. They spare not invective, they seem to think us all lunatics, and call us all the ridiculous names they can invent. I wish some one would invent one for them. When modern critics call the Bacon-Shakespeare theory a craze of semi-educated people, and a theory that is absolutely irrational, one hardly knows by what nickname to hit off such people. They certainly deserve one, and one that would stick to them. Perhaps some sympathetic reader will supply one.

CHAPTER IX

THE PROOFS OF BACONIAN AUTHORSHIP AS DEDUCED FROM THE HISTORY OF THE THREE PROMINENT ELIZABETHAN EARLS—SOUTHAMPTON, PEMBROKE, AND ESSEX

HAVING thus, for a change, heard some of the best Shakespearian champions in their own words, let us proceed with our own case.

Our next piece of evidence will depend upon three celebrated English noblemen—Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and the unfortunate favourite of Queen Elizabeth, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. These three men, of the highest aristocracy of the land, were all on terms of special intimacy with Francis Bacon. That is an historical fact which is not disputed, and does not admit of dispute.

It is also said that the first two noblemen were most closely bound by friendship and patronage to William Shakespeare, the poet-actor and part shareholder and manager of the Globe Theatre, and that the third nobleman was also, though more slightly, connected both with the Globe Theatre and its plays. But these latter intimacies with the actor-manager, which are of prime necessity for the Shakespearian orthodox theory, have been much disputed in the near past, and are being more strongly challenged every day in the present, and their force as an historical fact is being slowly but surely weakened.

The Bacon-Shakespeare controversy will revolve more and more round these three historic personages, so it seems to me. The future battlefield for the literary combatants will be the ground of the Sonnets and the Poems, and especially the respective territories (or counties) of Pembroke, Southampton, and Essex.

Strange to say, neither Southampton nor Pembroke

occurs in the index of what is perhaps the most convincing and important work of the whole controversy—a work of which the seventh edition revised (1897) is now lying before me, I mean "*Bacon* versus *Shakespeare*," by Edwin Reed, member of the Shakespeare Society of New York (pp. xxiv–296). But I hope to show now that these names, and their connection with the history and lives of Bacon and Shakespeare, are of the utmost importance as throwing light on the real author of the Sonnets and Poems and thence by inference of the Plays as well.

First, let us collect in as compact a bundle as possible the evidences and inferences that Shakespearians have given us (*fas est et ab hoste doceri*) of these young noblemen and their connection with the Sonnets. I assume, in agreement with the most eminent Shakespearian critics, that the Sonnets contain a partial autobiography of their writer, and I think I am justified in so doing. To take a merely symbolical, allegorical, or idealistic view of the Sonnets leads us anywhere or rather nowhere, and is contradicted very plainly by the author accusing himself of scandals and misdemeanours, a thing unheard of and without a parallel in this ethereal kind of literature. To make somewhat plainer this strange alternative theory of the Sonnets, I will quote a letter which one of these expositors has quite recently (March 22, 1902) written to *The Speaker* :—

> "In the Sonnets the ideal of Beauty, Truth, and Love, as an operative 'grace' (so the poet calls it) manifesting itself in his art, life, and love, is by him identified with his spirit or higher and truer self, and at the same time with the All of Nature. Thus Shakespeare in the Sonnets figures as one with the Ideal or Spirit, and the All of Nature."

If we wish to discover the real author, we shall have to tread on firmer ground than this. I think we can.

To begin with, we may state, as a matter of common knowledge now, that the great majority of the mysterious Shakespeare Sonnets are addressed to a high-born and beautiful young man, apparently a mere lad when some

of them were written. The smaller number of Sonnets are addressed, or have reference to a woman, generally known by critics as the Dark Lady of the Sonnets. "A woman coloured ill," a "female evil," not of the best reputation for strict chastity. To show that the word "mysterious" used above is justly applied to these poems, we have only to remember that for many years after they were first published, they were all supposed to be addressed to a woman, young and beautiful; and even as late as 1797 Chalmers endeavoured to show that this was none other than Queen Elizabeth, although her Majesty must have been close upon sixty years of age when the Sonnets were commenced. Coleridge thought the person addressed was a woman, and that Sonnet xx. and others, which speak so evidently of a man, were put in as a blind. Many other solutions more or less absurd have appeared in print for the last hundred years or more, and many still appear in the course of every few years.

The first critic who deserves the credit of directing the public to what is now generally believed to be the true solution, and of naming the right young man, was Dr. Drake, who in his excellent work, *Shakespeare and his Times* (1817), conjectured that Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, was the friend of Shakespeare who was addressed so affectionately in the Sonnets, as well as inscribed so lovingly in the dedication to his poems. Of course he was met in the later Sonnets by the difficulty that the adored friend's name was clearly Will, that is William, while Southampton's name was Henry; but he easily managed to get over this slight discrepancy, by announcing his entire conviction that the later Sonnets were not written to a *real* object at all! And a Mr. Heraud, a rather famous critic in his day, says: "After a careful re-perusal I have come to the conclusion that there is not a single Sonnet which is addressed to any individual at all." *

But enough of such barren surmises, which could easily be recounted in detail so as to fill more than an

* *Shakespeare, his Inner Life*, by J. A. Heraud. London, 1865.

hundred pages; I only refer to them here to show what a mysterious, difficult, and thorny subject critics have always found the Sonnets to be.

A Mr. Tyler attempted a new explanation in 1890, and was so very ingenious and successful that for a time he deceived the very elect; and Mr. Sidney Lee believed, with many other most distinguished Shakespearians, that the right man was a William, the Mr. W. H. of the dedication, and none other than William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and that the Dark Lady was Mistress Mary Fitton, maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth, a prominent performer in the Court masques and interludes, the secret, illicit mistress of William Shakespeare, William Herbert, and two or three other Wills, and the mother of a base-born child of which William Herbert was the putative father.

Mr. Tyler's very convincing book held the field for some years, and I believe some able Shakespearians still swear by his interpretation. It is certainly a learned and able attempt to throw light upon a very dark subject, one especially dark for all those who hold the Shakespearian hypothesis. Some points connected with the Dark Lady and her numerous "Wills" do seem much elucidated, and some novel evidence is given which, I believe, still holds good. But when the question of dates comes to be looked into, this William Herbert theory utterly comes to grief for the majority of the earlier Sonnets. It can be made very plain in this way: William Herbert was born April 8, 1580. Now the first seventeen Sonnets, or, as they are sometimes called, "The Procreation Sonnets" (*c.* 1592–3), are a strong appeal to a lovely youth to marry and beget a child that may reproduce and recall the fair lineaments of his father should death rob the world of such beauty:

> "Make thee another self, for love of me,
> That beauty still may live in thine and thee."
>
> —*Sonnet X.*

Cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 173, 174:

> "And so in spite of death thou dost survive,
> In that thy likeness still is left alive."