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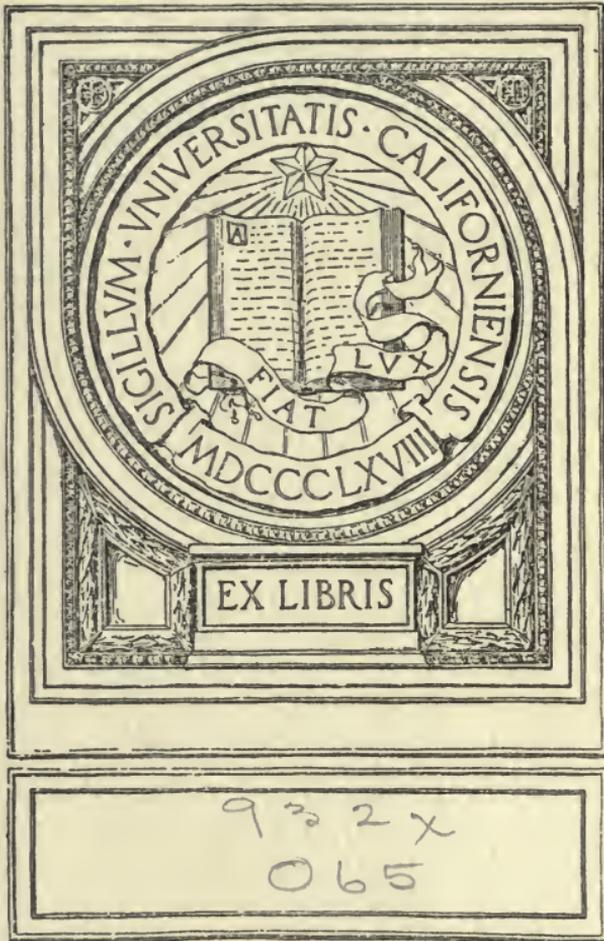


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CHAUCER
AND THE RIVAL POET
IN SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS
HUBERT ORD



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CHAUCER
AND THE RIVAL POET
IN SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

LONDON SHOWN BY SHAKESPEARE
POEMS OF PEACE AND WAR
THE STORY OF GREENWICH & BLACKHEATH
IN TIMES OF WAR
FRENCH GRAMMAR REVISION

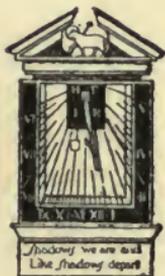
EDITED BY THE SAME AUTHOR

STUDENTS' EDITIONS
QUENTIN DURWARD
HENRY IV

QUENTIN DURWARD
IN THE "CONTINUOUS READER" SERIES

CHAUCER & THE RIVAL POET IN SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

A NEW THEORY BY
HUBERT ORD, M.A.



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NO. 1000
AMERICAN

P R E F A C E

THE various books to which I am under obligation for much of my information have been duly mentioned in the text. I should also state that I have found very valuable Dr. Caroline Spurgeon's *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism*. I have to express my best thanks to my friend Mr. F. G. Rucker for so kindly looking through the proofs.

It was thought better to modernise some of the spelling of Chaucer, and that of the Sonnets almost entirely, for the sake of those readers who are not familiar with Middle or Elizabethan English. In some cases it seemed better to preserve the old spelling. It is regretted that it was not found possible to adopt any consistent plan in doing this, but it was felt that whatever interest or value the book might possess was not dependent upon etymological exactness:

BLACKHEATH,
July, 1921.

495648

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CHAUCER

AND

THE RIVAL POET IN SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

I. INTRODUCTORY

THE Sonnets of Shakespeare and the problems they contain afford one of the most absorbing and important studies in all literature. Their poetic value and charm are of course immense, but apart from these they are the only revelation we have of the personal feelings and thoughts of our greatest writer. That they contain the expression of much emotion and reflection of a general character is obvious, but in addition there are many specific allusions to certain friends, to certain influences, and to certain inspirations, and their sentiment can only be appreciated—nay more, the full force of the poetry measured, by a sure comprehension as to who these friends, these influences may be. However, unfortunately, although the subject has had the attention and labour of countless scholars, the allusions are still to a certain extent enigmatic; solutions have not been achieved that are acceptable to everybody, and the results are consequently a little tantalising. For example, one of the most interesting and elusive points has been the identity of that

Rival Poet to whom Shakespeare seems to refer in varying terms of estimation and scorn. How delightful it would be if one knew for certain for whom Shakespeare intended his winged phrases of approval or of criticism. We should read with renewed zest the author whose writings Shakespeare calls "great verse," and with curiosity him of whom our great dramatist states:

" Yet what of thee thy Poet doth invent
He robs thee of . . .
Then thank him not for that which he doth say,
Since what he owes thee thou thyself dost pay."

Moreover, if we found by many resemblances that Shakespeare had evidently been attentively reading some other great English writer, it would be very interesting to see how his ideas were embodied or transmuted in the alembic of the genius of our great dramatist. It is to attempt to deal with such topics as these, and incidentally to try to throw further light upon the life and literary standpoint of Shakespeare, that the following pages have been written.

Moreover, the influence of one writer upon another is always intrinsically very interesting and of great importance in the history of literature. Evidence of such influence, apart from direct knowledge, generally rests upon (1) similarity of theme and treatment, (2) verbal similarity. Such similarity is to be found in two of the greatest writers, Chaucer and Shakespeare, in two books by each respectively which have not hitherto been con-

sidered in this relation, namely the *Roman de la Rose* by the former, and the "Sonnets" by the latter.

These two works both deal with the topics of love and friendship in a philosophical way; moreover they both put emphasis in clear language on the same moral lesson, namely the evil effects of a wrong kind of love and friendship, and the ennobling effect of these passions when rightly employed.

The full resemblance of the two writers in this respect can only be properly estimated by reading their books together. However, some of the verbal and topical similarities are so remarkable that a glance at the most striking may be a strong inducement to the reader to follow up a fuller exposition of the theme.

CHAUCER

"That not I love, but that I
hate alle men:
If I it leve in hatred ay
Live and void love away."

And so on for many lines contrasting love and hate.

"With that word Reason
went her gate,¹
When she saw fer no sermonising
She might me from my folly
bring."

"And though I thought upon
Boëce,
That writ a thought may fly
so high
With featheres of philosophy."

SHAKESPEARE

"Love is my sin and thy dear
virtue hate,
Hate of my sin, grounded
in sinful loving."

"My love is as a fever ling'ring
still,
My reason the physician to
my love,
Angry that his prescriptions
are not kept,
Hath left me."

"That taught the dumb on
high to sing,
And heavy ignorance aloft
to fly,
Have added featheres to the
learned's wing."

¹ Went away.

CHAUCER

Narcissus is described and introduced.

Chaucer had an editor who published his edition about the same time Shakespeare was composing his poems, and speaks of himself grandiloquently in verse, one line of which runs:

"Speght is the child of Chaucer's fruitful braine."

At the end of the dedicating verse the editor of Chaucer speaks of himself:

"Then be he loved and thanked
for the same,
Since in his love he hath re-
vived his name."

It is scarcely possible to doubt from these extraordinary resemblances that the later writer Shakespeare must have been strongly influenced in these poems—the Sonnets—by Chaucer. In what way this came about, further remarkable resemblances, the story of the particular book of Chaucer with which Shakespeare was so fully acquainted, and the probable elucidation of the personality of the Rival Poet, I now proceed to try to explain further.

SHAKESPEARE

The story of Narcissus referred to in detail.

In certain poems of Shakespeare which refer to authors and compositions in possibly ironical terms, occur the words:

"Brains beguiled,
Which, labouring for invention,
bear amiss
The second burden of a
former child."

"Whose children nursed, delivered
from thy braine."

"Was it the proud full sail of
his great verse,
Bound for the prize of all too
precious you,
That did my ripe thoughts in
my brain inhearce,
Making their tomb the wombe
wherein they grew?"

Shakespeare at the end of one of his ironical poems says:

"Then thank him not, for that
which he doth say,
Since that he owes thee, thou
thyself dost pay."

The discovery in the course of my reading of these striking verbal resemblances between the Sonnets and the edition of Chaucer to which I have referred, has suggested a theory which subsequent study and comparison of the two authors has confirmed. The especial points I venture to lay claim to establish are:

First. That the allusions in a good many of these Sonnets are of a literary and not erotic character as has been supposed.

Second. The identification of the Muse, of whom Shakespeare speaks in veneration.

Third. A proof of the personality of that Rival Poet, reference to whom figures so prominently in many of the poems.

Fourth. That in writing some of them Shakespeare was influenced by a certain book written by his Muse, whose philosophy he embodies, and hence that many of the Sonnets must have been written after 1602, the date of the particular edition Shakespeare used.

The combined effect of these various conclusions seems to render more improbable than ever—and this is my *Fifth* point—the theory so largely held by German commentators that Shakespeare in these poems is giving a connected revelation of love affairs of his own.

As these various points seem important as affecting Shakespearean knowledge, it seems fitting that they should be put before students in a concise form. Theories without evidence are little worth, and therefore I have had to include a large number

of references and quotations. As these in themselves, apart from their value as affecting my problems, are of a curious and striking character, it is hoped that this pamphlet may prove of interest to the general public also.

II. METHOD OF STUDY

THERE is a vast amount of literature upon the subject of the Sonnets which to a certain extent is inclined to be rather baffling to a new investigator.

Perhaps he could not do better than follow the advice of Professor Saintsbury in his introduction to the *Cambridge History of Modern Literature*, and approach the study of the Sonnets as though it were a new book. With this idea in my mind I have endeavoured to state my theories from evidence taken from the authors themselves without too much reference to what has been written by others.

In adopting this method I have been confirmed in my decision by the feeling that some of the other theories tend to answer or contradict themselves: thus if the Rival Poet was Barnes, as has been suggested by some, he could not be Raleigh as is the theory of some one else; I feel that if I establish my own as correct I have given a better proof of incorrectness of others than by minute examination of their position.

The general trend of thought and opinion upon the main purport of the Sonnets may be divided into two camps. In one are those whose plea is in the main expressed by Professor Dowden and largely adopted by German commentators who seem

to see some definite connecting thread running through nearly all of them, a thread which, if unravelled, gives us a revelation of Shakespeare's soul, and his intimate relations with one or two personalities.

The other view, adopted strongly by Sir Sidney Lee, is inclined to doubt this assured interpretation, and to regard much of the sentiment and emotion as characteristic of the art of sonnet writing in general, and not as a means of story telling.

The view with which my remarks seem to be linked is the latter, which maintains the absence of definite connection and arrangement throughout the poems, though, on the other hand, I do maintain that incidentally, as it were, in *separate* sonnets there is considerable reference to one or two definite people, and that the Sonnets as a whole do bring out Shakespeare's views on special topics.

To make myself clear I will state in a few words my general impression of the way in which the Sonnets as a whole were written, which view I shall endeavour to support in this brochure by the facts I put forward relating to some of them.

I hold that Shakespeare has written, on different occasions, sonnets referring to many different subjects and people, and has not combined them with any design to work out a revelation, but has put them down as representing his emotions from time to time, without any definite connection between them all.

This idea of course permits and even renders probable the notion that several of the Sonnets

might have some connection between themselves, and refer also to a *variety* of topics and persons.

To support this initial proposition I propose to follow the method suggested in the Preface, and turn to Shakespeare himself to find out his opinion on the art of sonnet writing by examining his own references to the subject. As far as I am aware this has never been done before. Such an examination may give the key to many problems of the Sonnets.

The problems, as we know, in the Sonnets are many. To serve the purpose of aiding their elucidation one does better work in confining oneself to a few. I have chosen two which seem to be closely related.

The first is of a general character and discusses whether there is a philosophical notion underlying many of these poems, such as we see underlying most of Shakespeare's other work; the second is the identity of that writer popularly known as the "Rival Poet" or the "Other Poet."

In treating these I shall endeavour to have recourse as much as possible to Shakespeare's words themselves to give information, and in so doing I find that the two problems I am studying are bound up together; and that the discovery of another poet to whom he refers is a great aid to see the drift and underlying idea of many of the poems.

III. SHAKESPEARE'S OWN ALLUSIONS TO SONNET WRITING

I BEGIN my evidence by collecting Shakespeare's own references to sonnet writing.

They are few but much to the point.

They are as follows:

“ Tangle her desires by wailful sonnets.”

Two Gentlemen of Verona, III. ii. 69.

“ I have a sonnet that will serve the turn
To give the onset.”

Two Gentlemen of Verona, III. ii. 93.

“ Will you then write me a sonnet in praise of my
beauty? ”

Much Ado about Nothing, V. ii. 4.

“ A halting sonnet of his own pure brain.”

Much Ado about Nothing, V. iv. 87.

“ Assist me some extemporal god of rhyme, for
I am sure I shall turn sonnet.”

Love's Labour's Lost, I. ii. 190.

“ She hath one of my sonnets already.”

Love's Labour's Lost, IV. iii. 15.

“ Did never sonnet for her sake compile.”

Love's Labour's Lost, IV. iii. 134.

“ Give me a copy of the sonnet you writ to Diana.”

All's Well that Ends Well, IV. iii. 355.

“ It is with me as the very true sonnet is, ‘ Please one, please all.’ ”

Twelfth Night, III. iv. 24.

“ I once writ a sonnet in his praise and began thus: ‘ Wonder of nature.’ ”

I have heard a sonnet begun so to one’s mistress.”

Henry V., III. vii. 40.

“ I had rather than forty shillings I had my book of songs and sonnets here.”

Merry Wives of Windsor, I. i. 206.

From these examples, of course put into the mouths of different characters, but still probably Shakespeare’s thought, one cannot help concluding that he looked upon sonnet writing as a method of expressing thoughts and emotions experienced from time to time, chiefly connected with ideas of love and friendship, which was the ordinary use made of this form of poetic composition. This idea of sonnet writing is borne out by Meres in his reference in 1598 to Shakespeare’s “ sugred sonnets among his private friends.” There is no indication that he looked upon them as a means of self-revelation, or that they possessed any long connecting thread of story. However, it would scarcely be possible for a writer to compose such themes without having certain definite ideas as to love and friendship, which would naturally find expression.

IV. SHAKESPEARE'S READING

THE just mentioned ideas would probably be influenced by the writer's reading at the time, especially by any works that strongly appealed to him.

Moreover, one would naturally look among the Sonnets to see some allusion to other writers, and it is equally likely that the writers might be some whom Shakespeare had been studying himself.

In the Sonnets too he is constantly speaking of a Muse; and of some great writer, who surely was hardly likely to be a contemporary.

Taking these probable ideas as a preliminary hypothesis, one has not to look very far to think of an author who has evidently always been very largely in Shakespeare's mind.

It is known that the story of the play of *Troilus and Cressida* is very largely taken from the poem by Chaucer; that the Theseus and Hippolyta scenes of *Midsummer Night's Dream* show strong resemblances to the incidents of the *Knight's Tale*; that the language of *Venus and Adonis* is much like to that of Chaucer, and the metre is Chaucer's Rhyme Royal; the stories of *Cleopatra* and *Lucrece* are found in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* and are reproduced in a drama and poem of Shakespeare; and moreover, scattered about in various plays there are a large number of verbal similarities and allusions to Chaucer's works.

Professor Hales in the *Quarterly Review* of January, 1873, says that Shakespeare's knowledge of Chaucer has not yet received proper attention.

To give this attention in its entirety would be a very large undertaking, and moreover, various writers have from time to time contributed to this subject, so that a complete statement would necessarily have to embody much that has been written by others. Other writers, however, seem not to have looked for the influence of Chaucer upon the Sonnets; though indirectly certain connections have been seen through Shakespeare's own play *Troilus and Cressida*.

V. THE "ROMAN DE LA ROSE" AND ITS STORY

THE work of Chaucer's which seems to have had most influence upon the Sonnets is the *Roman de la Rose*.¹ The connection between it and the Sonnets I shall strive to show, as has been suggested in the Introduction, in three principal ways: first, in general philosophical outlook: second, in direct allusion to plot and incident of the *Roman*: and third, in certain verbal phrases and similarities. Incidentally, the connection between them seems to establish the identity of reference in the Sonnets to a greater poet; not necessarily a rival, though the other is subsequently introduced.

Before proceeding to refer to the evidence of these statements, it would be well to mention certain opinions as to the Sonnets which are assumed to meet with general recognition:

First, that Sonnets 1-17 are evidently in their main argument intended as advising marriage to some friend.

Second, that some of the last sonnets (127-142) seem to be inspired by some gloomy strain with reference to some individuality of dark complexion.

¹ This poem is a free translation by Chaucer of a long allegorical French work begun by Guillaume de Lorris, and completed by Jean de Meung.

Returning to the connection between the *Roman de la Rose* and the Sonnets, it is necessary to state the outline of the plot of the *Roman*.

A young man in a dream is wandering through the country in the month of May, and he comes upon a garden enclosed with walls; entering in, he meets various allegorical characters of whom the principal is Cupid, the god of love. After some conversation with him and the others, he comes to a well, and looking in, by the direction of the god, he sees a beautiful rose which he fain would possess. As he lingers there, the god shoots at him with his arrow, and he feels an enchantment spreading through his veins. He renders homage to Cupid, who explains to him the nature of his service, and the respective qualities and states of mind he will have to cultivate, such as mirth, generosity, sweet thinking and sweet speaking. Thus instructed, he endeavours to approach the rose more nearly, but is prevented therefrom by Danger, who threatens him with many penalties, and takes away from him a companion who had welcomed him to that portion of the garden. In great tribulation the lover is consoled by Pity, and finally he invokes the aid of Reason, and here begins the philosophical part of the work. Reason points out to him the two descriptions of love—the love of sense whereby gratification of the passions is the only object, a love which mere riches may win, and the higher love of friendship as between man and man which sustains and comforts in all trials. Reason also laments that indulgence in the former is hostile to

the fulfilment and higher aim of nature—the increase of the race.

A friend is introduced to him, and the joys and advantages of true friendship are made clearer. At first the young man will not accept the advice of Reason, who leaves him, but finally he is converted by her words, and after some counsel upon the dangers and deceits of riches and fortune, this portion of the poem comes to an end.

The rest of the poem is very probably not translated by Chaucer, and there is not much reference to it in the remainder of the Sonnets.

VI. RESEMBLANCES BETWEEN CHAUCER'S AND SHAKESPEARE'S THEORY OF LIFE

THE first lines of Sonnet 1 seem immediately to refer to the main lesson of the *Roman*—that inculcated by "Reason": *i.e.* the aim of Nature in love:

" From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's *Rose* might never die,"

and the probability of the thought being borrowed from the *Roman* is still more strongly impressed by the introduction of the word *rose* in Italian script in the original lettering.

Roses indeed have constant reference in the Sonnets: employed in the allegorical sense of the *Roman*, for example, in Sonnet 54:

" The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
For that sweet odour which doth in it live,"

and Sonnet 67:

" Why should poor beauty indirectly seeke
Roses of shadow, since his *Rose* is true? "

or 109:

" For nothing this wide Universe I call,
Save thou, my *Rose*; in it thou art my all."

Here, supreme Love and the *Rose* are identified, as in the manner of the *Roman*. It is not contended

that this allusion to *roses* is any very definite proof of connection with the *Roman*, but still, with other points of resemblance established, it at least may strengthen the links.

As has been referred to before, the main philosophical lesson of the *Roman* is the excellence of good love, and the turpitude of sensual love. This surely is the underlying philosophy of the Sonnets and stands out in far greater distinctness than the various interpretations of Shakespeare's mood, or allusions to his friends.

Sonnets 1-17, as we have seen, are a direct exhortation to the right ordering of life that love may have its fruition in parenthood. In Sonnets 26 to 126 love and friendship are praised. These ideas, moreover, are to be found exactly parallel in the *Roman*. The *Roman* puts into the mouth of Reason:

“ If love be serched well and sought,
It is a sykenesse of the thought,

.

Of other things love recketh naught
But setteth her herte and all her thoughte
More for delectation
Than any procreation

.

Which love to God is not pleasing”;

and so on for about three hundred lines more.

The Sonnets are so well known that it is scarcely necessary to quote lengthy examples to convey the sort of line I mean; of such a character are:

Sonnet 29:

“ For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings ”;

or the argument of the Sonnet (91) beginning:

“ Some glory in their birth, some in their skill ”;

or:

“ Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments.”

From these and similar ones there can be little doubt that Shakespeare is extolling the highest form of real affection, love of body, soul and spirit.

But in Sonnets 127 to the end there is a strong animadversion on the evils of sensual love. In my opinion no particular woman is actually referred to: the descriptive epithets, mostly referring to darkness—in which some critics have seen indications of some one individual—appear to me to only indicate the moral quality of a person in the abstract of such a character as indicated. The term of “blackness” or “darkness” is constantly employed by Chaucer and Shakespeare himself to signify the characteristics imputed to the woman.

In fact in Sonnet 127 Shakespeare almost explains this usage:

“ In the ould age blacke was not counted faire,
Or if it weare it bore not beauties name ”;

and in Sonnet 144:

“ Two loves I have of comfort and despair,

.

The worser spirit a woman coloured ill.”

These lines are not necessarily to be taken to mean the person referred to in Sonnet 127, yet their language seems only typical.

In Sonnet 147 Shakespeare is evidently not thinking of material colour when he says:

“ For I have sworn thee fair and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.”

The *Roman*, B 4755, speaks similarly of “amour-ettes in mourning black” with an obvious reference to their characters.

In the play by Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, which, as we shall come to consider, has many similarities to the Sonnets, blackness is referred to as being indicative of this idea; *e.g.* I. i. 57:

“ All whites are ink, writing their own reproach.”

In fact “blackness” was at that time a favourite word of symbolism for bad qualities.

The general philosophical groundwork of this part of the teaching of the Sonnets seems to be contained in that one quoted above, 144; 142 and 145 have also close resemblance.

For comparison with the wording of the *Roman* they may be written out almost in full.

SONNETS

SONNET 142, LINES 1-4

“ Love is my sin, and thy dear virtue hate,
Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving;
O, but with mine, compare thou thine own state,
And thou shalt find it merits not reproving.

SONNET 145

" Those lips that Love's own hand did make
 Breath'd forth the sound that said, ' I hate,'
 To me that languish'd for her sake:
 But when she saw my woeful state,
 Straight in her heart did mercy come,
 Chiding that tongue that ever sweet
 Was used in giving gentle doom;
 And taught it thus anew to greet:
 ' I hate ' she alter'd with an end,
 That follow'd it as gentle day
 Doth follow night, who like a fiend
 From heaven to hell is flown away.
 ' I hate ' from hate away she threw,
 And sav'd my life, saying—' not you.' "

ROMAN DE LA ROSE

FRAGMENT B

4702-5:

" To here of love descripcioun.
 ' Love, it is an hateful peace,
 A free acquitaunce, without relees,
 A trouthe, fret full of falshede.' "

4729-30:

" Bitter swetnesse and swete errour,
 Right evel savoured good savour.'

4743-4:

" Also a swete helle it is,
 And a sorrowful Paradys."

5158-71:

" That I not love, but that I hate
 Alle men, as ye me teche?
 For if I do aftir your speche,
 Sith that ye seyn love is not good,
 Than must I nedis say with mood,
 If I it leve, in Hatrede ay
 Liven, and voide love away
 From me, (and been) a sinful wrecche,
 Hated of all that (love that) tecche.
 I may not go noon other gate,
 For either must I love or hate.
 And if I hate men of-newe
 More than love, it wol me rewe,
 As by your preching seemeth me."

The verbal similarity here, to which I shall refer again, is certainly very great. The alternation of the words "love" and "hate" both by Chaucer and Shakespeare is very striking.

It should be noted that in Sonnet 145 Shakespeare is constantly referring to the woman of dark deeds, of whom, in Sonnet 144, he says:

" The worser spirit a woman coloured ill
 To win me soon to hell,"

while Chaucer in reference to women of similar character says:

" Such soules goeth to the devil of hell."

Roman, B 5810.

Here it will be noted in Sonnet 144 that the better love, the love of comfort, is a man—an angel.

In the *Roman*, A 916, Cupid is referred to as an angel:

“ He seemed as he were an angel
That down were comen fro’ hevене clere.”

It will be suggested later on, that Cupid in many cases is the “love” about which Shakespeare is writing. Here compare also the lines from *Troilus and Cressida* of Chaucer, Book IV. 1552:

“ That ilke day that ich untrewe be
To Troylus myn owene herte free,
That thou retorne backwarde to thy welle,
And I with body and soule sinke in helle.”

In this juxtaposition between good and bad, Shakespeare makes clear that there is a strong contention between the forces of right and wrong in the soul of man, his reason acting strongly for the good. Sonnet 147:

“ My love is as a fever longing still

.

My reason the physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
Hath left me . . .
Past cure I am, now reason is past care.”

This temporary banishment of reason is a particular feature of the *Roman*. Cf. *R.R.*, B 3332-44:

“ With that word Resoun wente hir gate,
Whan she saugh for no sermoning
She might me fro my foly bring.

Than dismayed, I lefte al sool,
 Forwery, forwandred as a fool,
 For I ne knew no chevisaunce.
 Than fel into my remembraunce,
 How Love bade me to purveye
 A felowe, to whom I might seye
 My counsel and my privete,
 For that shulde mucche availe me.
 With that bithought I me, that I
 Hadde a felowe faste by."

This friend comforts him as we have seen in the summary. A curious parallel is established to the passage in *Troilus and Cressida*, Book IV. 163-7:

" Love him made al prest to doon hir byde,
 And rather dye than she sholde go;
 But resoun seyde him, on that other syde,
 With-oute assent of hir ne do not so,
 Lest for thy werk she wolde be thy fo."

It is to be noted too in these quotations given, that in addition to the philosophic outlook there is considerable verbal similarity.

VII. RESEMBLANCES OF INCIDENT BETWEEN THE "ROMAN" AND THE SONNETS

HAVING shown a considerable resemblance in general idea between some of the Sonnets and the *Roman*, I now proceed to similarity of incident and allusion.

In the story of the *Roman* what strikes one as a leading feature is the constant introduction of the personalities of the god of love, who either as Cupid is shown to be originator of the misfortunes of the Lover, or incidentally is spoken of as superintending the various evolutions of the story and giving advice at different times.

For example (*R.R.*, A 39):

" For Love it prayeth and also,
Commandeth me that it be so.
And if ther any aske me

.
How that this book the which is here
Shall hote that I rede you here
It is the Romance of the Rose
In which al the art of love I close.

Shakespeare says in Sonnet 76:

" And you and love are still my argument;
So all my best is dressing old words new,
Spending again what is already spent;

32 RESEMBLANCES OF INCIDENT

For as the sun is daily new and old,
So is my love still telling what is told."

Other striking examples of the appearance of the god of love from the *Roman* in addition to his appearance in the beginning, giving the impression that he is a guiding personality:

R.R., B 1927:

"The gode of love deliverly
Came lepard to me hastily,"

and then he proceeds to give him several homilies as to how to conduct himself.

Love is also referred to without the affix of "god," as a great principle, as it were, with the term "god" implied, for example:

R.R., B 333:

"Then fel into my resemblance
How Love bade me to purveye
A fellow."

This view of love and reverence for the god of love is common in Chaucer, see *Troilus and Cressida*:

Book V. 143:

"O god of love in sooth we serven bothe,
And, for the love of god, my lady free."

Book III. 1746:

"Love that of erthe and see hath governance,
Love that his hestes hath in hevене hye";

or again, "caught in Love's lace," and a large

number of similar usages. In fact throughout the god of love is the *deus ex machina* of the above story.

Shakespeare seems to refer to the term "the god of love" with similar reverence, either as in the person of Cupid, or as a great principle which can be regarded as personified.

In fact I take numerous references to a person, whom some commentators regard as some living friend, to refer simply to the god of love. In certain cases no doubt a man friend is spoken of; but many of these so-called allusions, one must be convinced, with the analogy of the *Roman* before one, are but allusions to Cupid. There are a large number of these, and as a proper comprehension of these goes far to establish my theory of the more general and varied outlook of the Sonnets as contrasted with the personal theory, I quote several of the most important in their order as printed:

In Sonnet 18:

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

.

But thy eternal summer shall not fade."

This language seems far too strong for application to any human being.

Sonnet 23:

"The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
And in mine own love's strength seem to decay."

Here there is the distinction between Love as a

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principle, and the love of a person—a distinction so often made in the *Roman*.

Sonnet 40:

“ Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all;

.
I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief,
Although thou steal thee all my poverty.”

In Sonnet 53 the adoration is obviously to a heavenly being:

“ What is your substance, whereof are you made,
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?

.
Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit
Is poorly imitated after you.”

Sonnet 76:

“ O know, sweet love, I alwaies write of you,
And you and love are still my argument.”

Sonnet 82:

“ I grant thou wert not married to my Muse,
And therefore mayest without attainit o'erlook ”

(the Muse probably being Chaucer, or even himself, *vide* the remarks on this sonnet in speaking of the rival poet).

Sonnet 95:

“ How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame
Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,
Doth spot the beautie of thy budding name!

.
That tongue that tells the story of thy daies,
Making lascivious comments on thy sport.”

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This is language hardly applicable to a man or woman friend. The sport of the love-god is the theme of every poet.

So in Sonnet 96:

"Some say thy fault is youth, some wantonness:
Some say thy grace is youth and gentle sport:

Thou mak'st faults graces that to thee resort."

In Sonnet 108, the language of homage to divinity seems clearer still:

"Nothing, sweet boy; but yet, like prayers divine,
I must each day say o'er the very same;
Counting no old thing old, thou mine, I thine,
E'en as when first I hallowed thy faire name."

Sonnet 110 seems to state as definitely as possible this theory:

" . . . to trie an older friend,
A god in love, to whom I am confin'd."

Sonnet 114 has the same idea:

"Such cherubins as your sweet self resemble,"

continued in 115:

"Love is a babe; . . ."

The language of Sonnet 126 is no less appropriate to this idea:

"O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power
Dost hold Time's fickle glass, his sikle, hour;
Who hast by waning grown, . . ."

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In Sonnet 144, the reference to the "better angel" has already been indicated as referring to Cupid.

Sonnets 153 and 154 mention Cupid by name, and give two little stories about him.

It is not contended that some of the numerous Sonnets are not addressed to a friend or a mistress, but from the examples quoted, bearing in mind the Elizabethan vogue of veneration of the love-god as a person, in which Shakespeare himself in various places openly indulges, it seems more than probable to me that various of these amorous sonnets are intended to refer to him: and, composing them with this intent, Shakespeare had in his mind the book of Love, the *Roman de la Rose*, by the author whom he had read so much.

In this connection it is curious to note similar references to the god of love in *Troilus and Cressida*, the possible association of which with the Sonnets is mentioned later on.

Other incidents have connection with the *Roman*. An important one is line 5 of Sonnet 1, which clearly has reference to the story of Narcissus, which is given at length in the *Roman* (A 1470); Narcissus being mentioned by name.

Sonnet 29,

"When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes," gives a conversation which is but a simple poetical poem of the value of friendship stated in the *Roman de la Rose*, B 5510:

"And singe, 'Go farewel feldefare.'
Alle suche freendis I beshrewe,

For of (the) trewe ther be to fewe;
But sothfast freendis, what so bityde,
In every fortune wolen abyde;
They han hir hertis in suche noblesse
That they nil love for no richesse;
Nor, for that Fortune may hem sende,
They wolen hem socoure and defende;
And chaunge for softe ne for sore,
For who is freend, loveth evermore”;

though, with a curious discrepancy, the lark or fieldfare is made by Chaucer, not as by Shakespeare, the emblem of infidelity.

VIII. THE RIVAL POET

THE subject, however, referred to in the Sonnets, which perhaps presents the most poignant interest of all, is that concerned with the other poet.

I do not desire to attempt to combat the view that Shakespeare on several occasions may be referring to Chapman. In fact it has been fairly conclusively proved from reference to the plays by Professor Minto, Mr. Acheson and others that there was some rivalry between Shakespeare and Chapman, and that he refers to him in the Sonnets. This view has the support of Sir Sidney Lee and others. However, in the Sonnets the only two which are quoted by Mr. Acheson as having a distinct parallelism with Chapman are 20, 21, and possibly 78.

The chief evidence resting on the lines in Sonnet 21 and the mention of "gold candles fix'd in heaven's air," which has a slight parallelism to Chapman's *Envoi to the Amorous Zodiac*. Hence it is inferred that "that Muse" spoken of in the first line of the Sonnet (21) is Chapman.

Pursuing the line of thought I have adopted, this opinion does not affect the idea that, although Shakespeare has a definite view of Love, the Sonnets are often disconnected. I can quite conceive the above to be fairly conclusive evidence of reference to Chapman, but maintain that it seems more

likely that Shakespeare has spoken of several poets: one of these I believe to be Spenser; the allusion to suicide and "the coward conquest of a wretch's knife" in Sonnet 74, seems a strong parallel with that passage in the *Faery Queen* where Despaire offers the Red Crosse Knight a rusty knife.

The theory I wish to try to make absolutely is that many of the allusions to the so-called other poets are undoubted references to Chaucer and his editor Speght.

The passage in Sonnet 38,

"How can my Muse want subject to invent,
While thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my verse
Thine own sweet argument, too excellent
For every vulgar paper to rehearse?"

seems obviously a tribute to a great writer and not to a lover at all.

Sonnet 59:

"O, that record could with a backward look,
Even of five hundred courses of the sun,
Show me your image in some antique book,
Since mind at first in character was done!"

The words "course of the sun" in Elizabethan times—I have this on the authority of an official of the Royal Observatory—indicated the progress of the sun from his furthest depth in winter to his highest point in summer—hence half a year: five hundred courses would therefore be 250 years, and going back from 1604, would roughly bring us to

the time of Chaucer. The antique book containing the image of Love is surely the *Roman de la Rose*.

In Sonnet 67,

“ Why should poor beautie indirectly seeke
Roses of shadow, since his rose is true?

.

O, him she stores, to show what wealth she had
In days long since, before these last so bad,”

seems to be another allusion to the glorification of the rose in days gone by.

The next sonnet runs in a similar vein, and seems to make certain reference to Chaucer:

“ This is his cheeke, the map of daies outworn,
When beauty liv'd and died as flowers do now,
Before these bastard signs of fair were born,
Or durst inhabit on a living brow;

.

In him those holy antique hours are seen,
Without all ornament, itself and true,
Making no summer of another's green,
Robbing no old to dress his beauty new;
And him as for a map doth Nature store,
To show false Art what beauty was of yore.”

Another sonnet which shows very definite association with Chaucer and Shakespeare and also some reference to another writer, is Sonnet 78, lines 1-8:

“ So oft have I invoked thee for my Muse,
And found such fair assistance in my verse,
As every alien pen hath got my use,
And under thee their poesy disperse.

Thine eyes, that taught the dumb on *high* to sing,
 And heavy ignorance aloft to *fly*,
 Have added *feathers* to the learned's wing,
 And given grace a double majesty”;

which has strong verbal resemblance to *The House of Fame*, Book II., line 972:

“ And tho I thought upon Boece
 That writ ‘ a thought may flee so hye [*fly* so *high*]
 With *fetheres* of Philosophye.’ ”

These sonnets seem to bring in for the first time reference to a particular edition of Chaucer.

In 1602 a second edition of Chaucer was brought out by one T. Speght, who was a literary character of that time. In this edition he translated Latin sentences of the original, re-spelt some of the words, and added a glossary explaining the unknown words in addition to a life and genealogy of Chaucer. For this book he took no small credit to himself. The extent of his exaltation is conveyed by the quotations from the introduction and dedication given below, by some verses of F. Thynn, and more especially by two poems, one in dialogue form, which, though the first was signed “ H. B.,” are more than probably by Speght himself. There is also a commendatory letter from Francis Beaumont, whose praise, however, as may be gathered from the quotation, is on the faint side. The first edition of this work in 1598 contained all the above features (the dedication in slightly different wording), except the short anonymous poem, which only occurs in the 1602 edition. This poem bears most specially

on my argument. Shakespeare, we know, had been reading and studying Chaucer about this time and obtaining material for his several allusions to that author, and more especially for the play of *Troilus and Cressida*. There is no doubt that he must have been acquainted with Speght's book, and, as we must suppose Shakespeare to have been a true critic and appraiser of poetic value, he would probably have been somewhat irritated by the conceit shown in the laudatory phraseology of the introduction, more especially if he had considered himself at all as one who was re-introducing Chaucer to popular notice. We know too that Shakespeare was often involved in wit-rivalries with other poets; and that he, in some of his plays, refers scathingly to some of their works, especially Chapman in *Love's Labour's Lost* (*vide* Mr. Acheson's work on the Rival Poet).

If Shakespeare desired to write some verses in praise of Chaucer and at the same time to satirise the bombast of the new edition, such expressions as are given below, which summarise some of the Sonnets, seem extraordinarily apt. Of course, the name Chaucer, which is put in here to make the meaning clear, is not mentioned in the Sonnets; but the man, whom I conclude to be he, is spoken of in flowery terms of personal affection and love, as was the custom in those days when referring to people for whom one had attachment and reverence.

“ You, Chaucer, the tenth Muse, inspire many people but need no vulgar thanks.

“ ‘ The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise.’

Sonnet 38.

“ Wits, I am sure, of former times praised thee,
but if we could go back 250 years,¹ we should find it
so, and need no

“ ‘ *Brains beguiled,
Which, labouring for invention, bear amiss
The second burden of a former child.* ’ ”

Sonnet 59.

“ I trust, in spite of injurious time, I shall preserve
my veneration for you. In you, still can be seen
all the charms of antiquity, and no one need dress
you up with false art.

“ If you could live now, however, you would still
find

“ ‘ *These children nursed, delivered from the brains
To take a new acquaintance of thy mind,* ’ ”

Sonnet 77.

who study you earnestly. Indeed, I have looked to
you for inspiration, though with some dull ignorant
fellows you only mend the style. Formerly, I was
the only one who made much reference to you—
(my dear master). I grant that you deserve a better
writer than myself, but what thy new poet tries to
do, he can only borrow from you.

“ ‘ *Then thank him not, for that which he doth say,
Since that he owes thee, thou thyself dost pay.* ’ ”

Sonnet 79.

“ I know there is, perhaps, a better writer than

¹ N.B.—In the original text the wording is “ 500 courses of the sun,” but in Tudor times a course of the sun was from midsummer to midwinter: hence, 500 courses would mean 250 years.

myself who in thy praise *spends* all his might, and
I feel that my little attempts are quite unworthy.
Your greatness is such that you can afford me to
o'erlook

“ ‘The dedicated words which writers use
Of their fair subject blessing every book.’¹

Sonnet 82.

“ ‘*But he that writes of you, if he can tell,
That you are you, so dignifies his story.
Let him but copy what in you is writ
Not making worse what Nature made so clear,
And such a counterpart shall fame his wits
Making his style admired everywhere.*’ ”

Sonnet 84.

These words are a fair précis of the Sonnets 38, 59; 63, lines 1-3, 11-14; 68, lines 1-2, 8-11; 77, 1-4 and 10-14; 78; 79; 81, lines 8-14; 82, 1-6; 84, 1-12.

The lines of the sonnets quoted are taken verbatim from the original.

Their verbal similarity to the lines of the second poem by Speght quoted below, and also to those of Beaumont's letter, is so close as to leave it impossible to doubt that Shakespeare had Speght's edition of Chaucer in front of him, or at least strongly in his mind, when he wrote these six poems. It renders it probable that the other less close but still striking resemblances I have noted may be interpreted as I have done. They should be closely compared to the following verses and extracts from Speght's edition.

¹ N.B.—The italics are mine.

IX. THE VERSE OF SPEGHT

LINES BY F. THYNN UPON THE PICTURE OF
CHAUCER

“ THE same and more fair England challenge may
By that rare wit and art thou dost display,
In verse which does Apollo’s Muse bewray.
Then Chaucer live, for still thy verse shall live.”

Francis Beaumont in his letter says:

“ Furthermore by your interpretation of the universal words, that ancient hardness and difficulties is made most *cleare* and easy, and *in the pains* and diligence you have used in collecting his life . . . yet though every thing be not perfect in your own mind . . . yet since you have opened the way to others your endeavours herein cannot but be well accepted, unless of such as have better will without just cause to reprove others than either wit or skill to do well themselves.”

T. Speght in his own prose introduction to his second edition of 1602 writes:

“. . . I have reformed the whole work, whereby Chaucer for the most part is restored to his antiquity.

“. . . I commend to your wonted favour this our Poet, and what is here done for the Poet’s *sake*.”

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In the first edition he remarks:

“I was requested by certain gentlemen . . . to take a little pains in reviving the memory of so rare a man, . . . and in doing some reparation in his work which they judged to be much decayed by injurie of time.”

The first poem, presumably by Speght, signed H.B.:

“THE READER TO JEFFREY CHAUCER

READER

But who is he that hath thy bookes repaired
And added more whereby thou art more graced?

CHAUCER

The self same man who hath no labour spared
To help what time and writers had defaced,
And made old words which were unknown of many
So plain that now they can be known of any.

READER

Well fare his heart, I love him for thy sake,
Who for thy sake hath taken all this pains.

CHAUCER

Would God I knew some means amends to make,
That for his toil he might receive some gains,
I wot ye what, I know his kindness such
That for my good he thinks no pains too much,
And more than that, if he had known in time,
He would have left no fault in prose or rhyme.”

The second poem, occurring only in the 1602 edition, which is especially referred to by Shakespeare in the *Sonnets*:

“ OF THE ANIMADVERSIONS UPON CHAUCER

In reading of the learned praiseworthy peine,
 The helpful notes explaining Chaucer's mind,
 The abstruse skill, the artificial veine,
 By true analogie I rightly find
 Speght is the child of Chaucer's *fruitful braine*,¹
 Vernishing his works with life and grace,
 Which envious age would otherwise deface.
 Then he be loved and thanked for the same
 Since in his love he hath revived his name.”

¹ N.B.—The italics are mine.

X. "SPEGHT" AND THE PUNS

A CLOSE comparison of these passages, their wording and their general intention, with the wording and the sense of the sonnets quoted can leave little doubt that the writer of these sonnets had these passages in his mind.

Moreover, scattered about in several places in the Sonnets is the word *spight*, spelt thus in the original text, which looks as if it is introduced as a punning reference to Speght, as we know Shakespeare had a habit of punning on names; compare the puns on the names "Will" and "Hew" in the Sonnets.

For example, in Sonnet 40 he says:

"Take all my loves, my love, yea take them all;
What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?

.

Lascivious grace in whom all ill well shows
Kill me with *spights*, yet we must not be foes."

In Sonnet 76 he says:

"Oh, know, sweet love, I always write of you,
And you and love are still my argument;
So all my best is dressing old words new,
Spending again what is already spent";

which would certainly seem to refer to the phrase in Speght's introductory verses just quoted, namely:

"And made old words which were unknown of many
So plain," etc.

This sonnet also conveys the idea that Shakespeare is alluding to the fact that he has been reproducing, on several occasions, Chaucer, as he did most clearly in *Troilus and Cressida*, and, as we have seen, in the Sonnets also.

He seems to be speaking too of Chaucer in Sonnet 68:

“ In him those holy antique hours are seen,

.

Robbing no ould to dress his beauty new;
And him as for a map doth Nature store,
To shew false Art what beauty was of yore.”

To the writer, however, of such lines as Speght's just quoted, the implied irony in Shakespeare's sonnet,

“ My sausie bark—inferior farre to his

.

He of tall building and of goodly pride,”

is not one whit too severe.

In Sonnet 82 Shakespeare would seem to be referring again to the god of love:

“ I grant thou wert not married to my Muse
And therefore mayest without attaint ore-looke
The dedicated words which writers use
Of their faire subject, blessing every book.”

Also in Sonnet 83 the god of love may be the being of whom he says:

“ There lives more life in one of your faire eyes
Than both your poets can in praise devise.”

One of these poets, as the writer says, is a "modern quille," with the implication that the other is an ancient one.

Sonnet 85 confirms this idea, where Shakespeare writes:

"I think good thoughts whilst others write good
words,
And like unlettered clerk still crie 'Amen '
To every hymne that able spirit affords
In polished form of well-refined pen."

These lines expressing admiration in poetical form are evidently to be taken as true praise referring to a poet of eminence.

The same note of respect is struck in Sonnet 86:

"Was it the proude full saile of his great verse,
Bound for the prize of all too precious you,"
[the god of love]
"That did my ripe thoughts in my braine inhearce,
Making their tombe the wombe wherein they
grew? "

It should be noted here that the imagery of a "child born from the braine" is used *three* times by Shakespeare.

Here is an evidence of no rivalry between two poets, but a confession of inspiration by Shakespeare. There could scarcely be any writer to whom he could apply such remark, other than Chaucer or Spenser.

“ Was it his spirit by spirits taught to write
Above a mortale pitch, that struck me dead?

He, nor that affable familiar ghost
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence.”

If this was Chaucer there would be striking confirmation if one could find in the *Roman de la Rose*, or other work, any indication that he, Chaucer, was so aided.

Turning to the *Roman de la Rose*, in the opening lines we find that Chaucer was inspired to the *Roman* by dreams:

“ Ful many things covertly,
That fallen after al openly.”

In the beginning of *The House of Fame*, to which we have seen particular reference in this connection of authors, Chaucer says:

“ God turne us every dreame to gode
Or if that spirits have the might
To make folks to dream a-night ”;

and then the rest of the story is narrated as a dream.

Taking all these resemblances together, the case would seem to be made out that Shakespeare in these “ Rival-Poet ” Sonnets, where he is speaking of a man who has inspired him, is referring to Chaucer, and where he speaks bitterly and ironically—as was his wont at times—he is referring to Speght, whose conceited verse had aroused Shakespeare’s displeasure.

XI. MINOR VERBAL RESEMBLANCES BETWEEN THE "ROMAN" AND THE SONNETS

A CASE, strong in main resemblances, may yet be strengthened by small verbal similarities of words and expression. These by themselves would not perhaps serve to establish much relation between the Sonnets and the *Roman*, bearing in mind how largely poetic vocabulary was common to all writers of the period, but taken in conjunction with other evidence they certainly add links to the chain. Still further would this strengthening be established if one found these similarities between the Sonnets and other works of Chaucer, such as *Troilus and Cressida*, or even with Shakespeare's own play of that name, which commentators have generally agreed to place as written in the year 1601-2 (see R. Small, *A Stage Quarrel*). Such minor resemblances are very numerous, and should strike the ordinary reader: some have already been given. Other examples are as follows:

Sonnet 52:

"So am I as the rich, whose blessed key
Can bring him to his sweet up-locked treasure."

Compare with *Roman de la Rose*, B 2085:

"Then of his aumener he drough
A littel keye fetys ynough

.

And seide to me ' with this keye here,
Thyn herte to me now wol I shette.' ”

Sonnet 115:

“ But reckoning time where million'd accidents
Creepe in 'twixt vowes and change decrees of kings

.

Divert strongminded to the course of altring things.”

Compare with *Roman*, A 381 *et seq.*:

“ The tyme that may not sojourne
But goeth and never may returne.

.

The tyme eek that changeth all,
And all doth waxe and fostred be.

.

The tyme that eldeth our auncessours,
And eldeth kings and emperours.”

This in point of sense is very nearly the same as
the preceding sonnet.

Sonnet 129:

“ The expence of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action; and till action, lust

.

To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.”

Compare with *Roman*, B 5090:

“ Good love should engendred be

.

And not of such as sette her thought
To have her lust. . . .

So are they caught in love's lace,
Truly for bodily solace.”

54 VERBAL RESEMBLANCES

And in *Roman*, B 5809:

“ . . . their bodies selle,
 Suche soules goth to the devil of helle.”

Compare this idea again with *Venus and Adonis*, which we have noted to have been written in the same metre as the *Troilus and Cressida* of Chaucer:

“ Love comforteth like sunshine after rain,
 But lust's effect is tempest after sun.

.

Call it not love, for love to heaven is fled.”

Another verbal resemblance is:

Sonnet 142:

“ Love is my sin and thy deare vertue hate,
 Hate of my sin grounded on sinful loving.”

Roman, B 5164:

“ From me (and been) a sinful wrecche
 Hated of all that love that teche

.

For either must I love or hate.”

In Sonnet 147, which contains the line,

“ My reason, the Physician to my love,”

we have already noted the reference in the *Roman* to the contrasted idea of Reason and Love. This same contrast is found in *Troilus and Cressida*, IV. 162:

“ Love him made al prest to doon hir byde,
 And rather dye than she sholde go,
 But Reson sayde him on that other syde.”

Sonnets 27 and 28, referring to the difficulties of lover's sleep, have a striking resemblance to the *Roman* and also to *Troilus and Cressida*.

Sonnet 27:

“ Weary with toyle I haste me to my bed;
The deare repose for lims with travail tired.”

Sonnet 28:

“ How can I then return in happy plight,
That am debarred the benefit of rest?
What daies oppression is not eazd by night,
But day by night, and night by day opprest?
And each (though enemies to ether's raigne)
Doe in consent shake hands to torture me.”

In *Roman*, B 4131, we read:

“ Long wacche on nightis and no sleepinge,
Thought in wishing, torment, and wo
With many a turning to and fro,
That halfe my peyne I cannot telle,
For I am fallen into helle.”

In Sonnet 142 we notice the employment of the word “pity” and its reiteration,

“ Roote Pitee in thy heart that when it growes
Thy pitty may deserve to pitied be,”

has a kind of similarity of refrain to the line in the *Roman*, B 3575:

“ And haveth pite upon his peyn,
For franchise will and I pite,
That merciful to him ye be.”

Verbal similarities depend for their force, as a matter of argument in establishing a connection, upon their accumulation, but the juxtaposition and isolation of phrases apart from their context, unless the resemblances are very striking, gives them seemingly undue prominence. Really they are more impressive when two books between which it is sought to establish parallelism are read together in full, when the similarity of phraseology is noticeable as rocks of similar form would be—projecting out of two different rivers. Their likeness is due to their position in the stream; if the water is taken away, they would lose in similarity. Enough has already been shown as to the kind of general connection between the two books. Of course these verbal similarities are due to similar themes, and would not establish associations if there were not definite topics and subject-matter also in common, as has been pointed out before. Writing on such themes, with Chaucer's words ringing, as it were, in his ears, what more natural than that Shakespeare should from time to time use similar phrases?

XII. "TROILUS AND CRESSIDA" AND THE SONNETS

THE probability of this Chaucerian atmosphere affecting the Sonnets is heightened, as has before been stated, by the various verbal connections between Shakespeare's own play *Troilus and Cressida*, which we know was written under Chaucerian influence, and the Sonnets.

For example, Act II., Scene ii.:

"*Tro.* I take to-day a wife, and my election
Is led on in the conduct of my will,
My will enkindled by mine eyes and ears;
Two traded pilots 'twixt the dangerous shores
Of will and judgment."

The reiterance and play on the word "will" has a striking resemblance to the famous "Will" Sonnets of Shakespeare.

In the play too, as is natural, there is a great deal of reference to the problems of love, and much personification of its principles in the person of either Cupid or a god of love, which ideas, as has been pointed out, occur so much in the Sonnets.

For example, Act III., Scene i.:

"*Helen.* Let thy song be love; this love will undo
us all. O! Cupid, Cupid, Cupid,"

and much more in a similar strain.

Act III., Scene ii., line 12:

" *Tro.* O gentle Pandarus,
From Cupid's shoulder pluck his painted wings,
And fly with me to Cressid."

And further on:

" *Cres.* Blind fear, that seeing reason leads, finds
safer footing when blind reason stumbles without
fear.

Tro. O let my lady apprehend no fear: in all Cupid's
pageant there is presented no monster."

In the *Roman* it will be remembered Cupid enters surrounded by a number of qualities, in procession as a pageant.

Act III., Scene iii.:

" Sweet, rouse yourself, and the weak wanton Cupid
Shall from your neck unloose his amorous fold."

In the same scene there is allusion to the idea of looking into the well like Narcissus in the *Roman de la Rose*. Achilles says:

" My mind is troubled like a fountain stirred,
And I myself see not the bottom of it."

In *Troilus and Cressida*, too, there are many allusions to the influence of the stars, to injurious time, etc., which we have already seen are a constant source of imagery in the *Roman*, and in other works of Chaucer. Another excellent example is in Sonnet 15:

" When I consider everything that growes
Holds in perfection but a little moment,

That this huge stage presenteth nought but shewes
Wherein the stars in secret influence comment.”

Again in Sonnet 14:

“ Not from the stars do I my judgment plucke;
And yet me thinks I have astronomy,
But not to tell of good or evil lucke,
Of plagues, of dearths, or seasons' quality.”

In *The House of Fame* we read, Book II. 993:

“ Wilt thou lere of sterres aught,

.

Quod he ' the sterres names lo
And al the heavens signes to,
And which they been . . .

For when thou redest poetrye,
How goddes gonne stellify
Bird, fish, beste, or him or here,

.

How alle these are set in heaven.' ”

There seems as much resemblance between these lines of Shakespeare and Chaucer on astronomy as between Sonnet 21 and the four lines of Chapman's *Amorous Zodiac* quoted below.

XIII. RESEMBLANCES BETWEEN CHAUCER AND SHAKESPEARE PREVIOUSLY NOTED IN OTHER WORKS

A GREAT deal of comparison has been made between Chaucer and Shakespeare, and the poems of Speght, to show their relationship.

The value of evidence of course is comparative.

Some of the resemblances I have noted are stronger than others, but for their force to be appreciated I should like, for the purpose of comparing their worth, to quote the chief examples of similarities between Chaucer and other portions of Shakespeare which have been given by other persons, and which have generally been accepted as conclusive.

Professor Hales in the *Quarterly Review* remarks on the fact that Theseus and Hippolyta go hunting after marriage, and both hear music of hounds and find couples in a wood, in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and also in *Palamon and Arcyte*. A lord of the court is named Philostrate in both. He also says the idea in the *Merchant of Venice*,

“ In such a night
Methinks Troilus mounted the Trojan walls,
And sighed his soul towards the Grecian tents,”

is taken directly from an incident in Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida*, as of course it is:

“ Upon the walles fast eke wolde he walke,
 And on the Greeke host he wolde see,
 And to himself right thus wolde he talke,
 Lo yonder is myn owne lady free.”

Then there are other similarities between Shakespeare's own play of *Troilus and Cressida*, and the poem of that name by Chaucer, which of course would be likely to occur: such a one is noted by R. Small in *A Stage Quarrel*:

“ The Grecian youths are full of quality,

 Flowing and swelling o'er with arts and exercise ”

—to be compared with Chaucer:

“ Ye shall eche see so many a lusty knight
 Among the Greekes full of worthinesse,
 And eche of hem with herte and art.”

Professor Hales also states that *Tarquin and Lucrece* and *Venus and Adonis* resemble *Troilus and Cressida* in youthfulness, absence of action in expression of passion, monologues, and so forth.

Then I would take the famous Chapman comparison quoted by Mr. Acheson.

Chapman:

“ Yet will I thee through all the world disperse,
 If not in heaven, among those braving fires;
 Yet here thy beauties, which the world admires,
 Bright as those flames shall glisten in my verse.”

Compare Sonnet 21:

“ So it is not with me as with that Muse
 Stirred by a painted beauty to his verse,
 Who heaven itself for ornament doth use

.

And then believe me, my love is as faire
 As any Mother's childe though not so bright
 As those gould candels fixed in heaven's aire.”

Other admitted likenesses are as follows:

Professor Hippisley has pointed out that the Sompnour “ has fiery features with ‘ knobbes ’ and ‘ whelkes ’ resembling those of Bardolph.”

He has also stated that apparently, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Mercutio's speech about Queen Mab,

“ She gallops night by night,
 Through lovers' brains and then they dream of
 love,
 O'er courtiers' knees that dream on courtesies
 straight,
 O'er lawyers' fingers who straight dream on fees,”

the idea is taken from the *Parliament of Fowles*:

“ The juge dreameth how his plees ben sped,
 The riche of gold, the knight fight with his
 foon,

.

The lover met he hath his lady wonne.”

Professor Hales gives also an example from

Romeo and Juliet of a parallel to Chaucer. *Cressida* states:

“ Full sharpe beginning breketh off at ende,”

while Friar Laurence in the former says:

“ These violent delights have violent ends,
And in their triumph die.”

In *Lucrece* comes the line which might refer to the *Canterbury Tales*:

))) “ As palmers’ chat makes short their pilgrimages.”

The two most noteworthy and distinct resemblances to Chaucer are, first, the several-times-repeated mention by Shakespeare of Partlet, or Dame Partlet the Hen, and Pertelote in the *Nonne Prestes Tale*; and second, in *Titus Andronicus* where the “ House of Fame,” with its noises, is actually named. These quotations are almost all the similarities between Shakespeare and Chaucer (excepting of course, as before mentioned, those in *Troilus and Cressida*) which have been accepted by scholars.

XIV. A COMPARISON OF EVIDENCE

THESE resemblances are taken from the whole of the works of Shakespeare, and they do not amount in quantity to one-third of those I have noted between Chaucer and the Sonnets only. The actual resemblances compare very favourably for similarity with those noted by other commentators just given, with the exception perhaps of the two where proper names are mentioned. Especially striking are those which I have pointed out between Speght's second poem and some of the Sonnets.

The accumulated force of them all seems to make clear without doubt that a large number of the Sonnets have direct reference to Chaucer, the *Roman de la Rose*, and T. Speght, of whom Shakespeare ironically says:

“ . . . A better spirit doth use your name,
And in the praise thereof spends all his might,”

and just previously:

“ Then thank him not for that which he doth say,
Since what he owes thee thou thyself dost pay.”

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