

The  
Problem  
of the  
Shakespeare  
Plays

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THE PROBLEM  
OF THE  
**Shakespeare Plays**

BY  
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## THE ARGUMENT.

**I**N a letter which appeared in "The Times" on 28th December, 1901, I suggested the following points relating to the authorship of the Shakespeare plays, as deserving thoughtful consideration.

1. According to Halliwell-Phillipps, Shakspeare's most complete biographer, Shakspeare, when he left Stratford at the age of twenty-one or twenty-three, was "all but destitute of polished accomplishments," and "could not have had the opportunity of acquiring a refined style of composition."

2. There is no evidence that he was addicted to study, but much to the contrary.

3. The plays show an acquaintance with Latin, Greek, Italian, French and Spanish; and with many works in these different languages.

4. Also an exact knowledge of law, in its various branches, and of medicine, natural history, horticulture and natural philosophy, up to and beyond the limit of learning of the age.

5. One man there was, of surpassing genius, who, by laborious study, had acquired all these forms of knowledge. Was there another who had attained exactly the same various knowledge by intuition?

6. Macaulay, Shelley and Spedding recognize that the poetical faculty was powerful in Bacon's mind. He was also devoted to the drama, and declared that "dramatic poesy would be of excellent use if well directed, for the stage is capable of no small use, both of discipline and corruption";

“a kind of musician’s bow, by which men’s minds may be played upon.”

7. The vocabulary of the plays is a new development of English speech. Max Müller declares that “Shakespeare displayed a greater variety of expression than probably any writer in any language.” He estimated Milton’s vocabulary at 8,000 words; Shakespeare’s at 15,000 words. Bacon’s vocabulary is practically the same as that of the Shakespeare plays.

8. Not only the learning, but also the errors of the plays are identical with those of Bacon’s works.

9. Parallelisms of thought and expression exist throughout the plays and Bacon’s works, hard to explain save by unity of authorship. More than a thousand of such parallelisms have been collected.

10. Bacon kept a notebook, containing over 1,600 quotations, proverbs and turns of expression, called the “Promus of Formularies and Elegancies.” These are largely used in the plays.

11. There is strong evidence that several of the plays appeared before William Shakspeare left Stratford.

12. The plays fit curiously into the life of Bacon, but show scarcely a point of contact with Shakspeare’s life. The scenes of nearly all the plays are foreign. The scenes of several of the earlier plays are laid in France, where Bacon had resided for two and a half years. Others, as “3 Henry VI.” and “Cymbeline,” have their scenes at St. Albans, Bacon’s home. “The Merchant of Venice” was acted when Anthony Bacon had just delivered his brother Francis from the Jews. The “dark period” of the plays coincides with the death of Essex and of Anthony Bacon in 1601. “The Tempest” appeared when the ships sent out by the Earls of Pembroke, and Montgomery and Bacon were wrecked at the Bermudas. “Henry VIII.,” “Corio-



lanus" and "Timon" appeared seven years after Shakspeare's death; but, appropriately to their subjects, after Bacon's fall.

13. The death of William Shakspeare in 1616, leaving neither books nor manuscripts, did not stop the production of new plays, nor prevent the rewriting of old ones: but when Bacon became Solicitor-General in 1607 the plays diminished; and when he was appointed Attorney-General in 1613 they ceased; but to be resumed after his fall in 1621.

14. Two arguments support William Shakspeare's claims. First, common repute; but we learn from Greene's "Farewell to Folly," that it was the practice of play-writers of "calling and gravity" to "get some other to set their names to their verses."

15. The main, nay, the sole substantial argument is the Folio of 1623 and Ben Jonson's preface. But Ben Jonson up to 1616, the year of Shakspeare's death, was bitterly jealous of him, and lost no opportunity of a sneer. In 1620 he became Bacon's literary assistant in latinizing Bacon's works, and suddenly became a worshipper of the author of the plays, expressing the same profound admiration which he also expressed for Bacon, and in similar terms. Ben Jonson was the chief editor of the Folio—Heminge and Condell appear to have been nominal editors, seeking no profit and undertaking no charges. But Jonson was, at the same time, Bacon's literary assistant. The Folio must, therefore, have been published with Bacon's knowledge, and it may well have been under his control.

If the publication of the Folio was, in fact, controlled by Bacon, the presumption of authorship may be reversed!

In the following pages endeavour is made to give to these several points some of the consideration they deserve.

GEORGE C. BOMPAS.

LONDON, *February*, 1902.



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# THE PROBLEM OF THE SHAKESPEARE PLAYS.

The Inquirie of Truth, which is the Love-making or Wooing of it ; the knowledge of Truth, which is the Presence of it ; and the Beleefe of Truth, which is the Enjoying of it ; is the Sovereigne Good of humane nature.—FRANCIS BACON, *Essay of Truth*.

## I. THE PROBLEM.

THE most interesting, perhaps, of literary problems, and not the least intricate, is that of the authorship of the Shakespeare plays.

That the plays, or most of them, were attributed to William Shakspere<sup>1</sup> in his lifetime is not doubted, nor that this gave him a high reputation with many of his contemporaries. Yet the difficulty of reconciling the production of works of such consummate genius, and such various knowledge, with the known facts of Shakspere's life, has been profoundly felt by many thoughtful men.

Many of the keenest intellects of the last century have expressed their doubts of Shakspere's authorship of the plays.

Lord Byron and Lord Palmerston shared these doubts ; Hallam sought in vain the true author. Lord Beaconsfield in 1837 put the same doubt in the mouth of one of the characters in "Venetia." "And who is Shakespeare? We know

<sup>1</sup> "Shakespeare," is the spelling used throughout when referring to the plays ; "Shakspere" for the reputed author.

as much of him as we do of Homer. Did he write half the plays attributed to him? Did he write one whole play? I doubt it." In 1852 appeared in "Chambers' Edinburgh Journal" the first English essay on "Who wrote Shakespeare?" expressing the same doubts. In 1856 Delia Bacon in America questioned Shakspeare's claim. Nathaniel Hawthorne aided the publication of her book, and wrote its preface. In the same year William Henry Smith wrote his letter to Lord Ellesmere, and in 1857 a short treatise pointing out Francis Bacon as the probable author. Lord Campbell in 1859 elaborately showed that the author must have been a trained lawyer, which there is no evidence that Shakspeare was or could have been. In 1867 Judge Holmes in America, in 1883 Mrs. Pott in England, advocated Francis Bacon's title to the authorship of the plays. James Russell Lowell speaks of "the apparition known to moderns as Shakespeare." Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote: "I would not be surprised to find myself ranged with Mrs. Pott and Judge Holmes on the side of the philosopher against the play-actor." John G. Whittier wrote: "Whether Bacon wrote the wonderful plays or not, I am quite sure the man Shakspeare neither did nor could." Sir Edwin Arnold argues for Bacon's authorship. Gladstone stated thus his opinion: "Considering what Bacon was, I have always regarded the discussion as one perfectly serious and to be respected"; and John Bright said bluntly: "Any man who believes that William Shakspeare of Stratford wrote 'Hamlet' or 'Lear' is a fool!"

Excepting William Shakspeare, if he was the author of these plays, the most towering intellect of that age was Francis Bacon, who had, Macaulay writes, "the most exquisitely constructed intellect that has ever been bestowed on any of the children of men"; and whom Hallam styles "the wisest and greatest of mankind."

If William Shakspeare did not write the plays, no other



than Francis Bacon could be suggested, as having the various attainments possessed by their author. The problem to be solved therefore is—Was William Shakspeare, or Francis Bacon the true author of these plays?

To examine the question thus arising, to weigh impartially the evidence on both sides, is a deeply interesting inquiry; yet the inquiry is by most men treated with scorn: and notwithstanding the eminent doubters just named, and many others, Mr. Sidney Lee, Shakspeare's recent and very able biographer, ventures to pronounce that the theory of Bacon's authorship of the plays has "no rational right to a hearing"!

The arts of criticism and of historic inquiry, and also the just appreciation of the genius of the plays, are of modern growth; no wonder, therefore, that the authorship of the plays has until lately remained unquestioned. Evelyn in 1661 reports that the plays "begin to disgust the present age." Pepys described "Midsummer Night's Dream" as the "most insipid, ridiculous" play, and "Romeo and Juliet" the "worst" he had ever seen, and "Twelfth Night" as "silly." Hume charged both Shakspeare and Bacon with "defective taste and elegance." Addison found the plays "very faulty." Dr. Johnson declared that Shakspeare had not perhaps produced "one play which, as the work of a contemporary writer, would be heard to the conclusion." Dryden considered Shakspeare as "below the dullest writers of our own or any precedent age." From the beginning of the eighteenth century Shakspeare's reputation steadily rose in England. Lessing in Germany claimed for him in 1759 the first place. But Voltaire in 1776 described Shakspeare as a barbarian, whose works, "a huge dunghill," contained some pearls!

The genius of these plays is now everywhere acknowledged; yet few, comparatively, seem aware of the existence

of a problem concerning their authorship, and fewer still of the evidence relating to it. To gather up and present concisely this evidence and weigh its effect is the task before us, and all who love the plays should welcome the inquiry.

An impartial hearing is invited from all who sincerely seek truth, and say with Polonius: "I will find out where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed in the centre."<sup>1</sup> To such "Truth will come to light—in the end truth will out."<sup>2</sup>

First, then, it has been said that the doubts are unfounded, for that the powers of genius cannot be limited, and that the genius of the author of the plays was unrivalled. A wide sympathy with humanity, an intuition of character may be allowed, but the character of the plays should have some correspondence with the character of the man, and there is no royal road to learning.

Suppose while the authorship of the Waverley Novels, works of undoubted genius, remained a mystery, someone had announced that the greatest genius in Scotland was Robert Burns, that he therefore wrote the Waverley Novels, would anyone have believed it? Robert Burns, an illiterate ploughman, notwithstanding his undoubted genius, "warbling his native wood-notes wild," could not have written the novels. These showed evidence of high education, of varied knowledge of law, history, archæology and geography, and of society modern and mediæval, which no illiterate genius could possess. The novels reflected the life, not of Robert Burns, but of Walter Scott.

A similar incoherence exists between the life of William Shakspeare and the plays which bear his name; a like consonance may be found between those plays and the life and intellect of Bacon.

The genius of the plays is admitted, and also the variety, the universality of the knowledge they display. What

<sup>1</sup> "Hamlet," II. ii. 157.      <sup>2</sup> "Merchant of Venice," II. ii.

branch indeed of knowledge is there which they do not illustrate, up to the limit of the attainment of that age.

Treatises have been written upon the knowledge shown in the plays of law, medicine, trees, flowers, natural history and philosophy. They show a knowledge of Latin, which pervades the language of the plays, and of many Latin authors, of Plautus and Tacitus, Virgil, Horace, Ovid and others; of Greek, of Plato and Lucian; to which Malone adds Lucretius, Stautius, Catullus, Seneca, Sophocles and Euripides; a colloquial knowledge of French; an intimate knowledge of Italian language and literature, from which, and often from untranslated novels, so many of the plays are taken; an acquaintance with Spanish, from which one play and many sayings are derived; and generally a wide knowledge of literature, both classical and contemporary, English and foreign.

One man then lived, of surpassing genius, who took all knowledge for his province, who by laborious study had attained and possessed all this various knowledge.

Was there another, who had also attained it, by intuition?

To form any judgment the facts of Shakspeare's life must be considered.

## II. WILLIAM SHAKSPERE'S LIFE AND EDUCATION.

**W**ILLIAM SHAKSPERE was born at Stratford on 22nd or 23rd April, 1564.

His father, John Shakspeare, was a well-to-do tradesman at Stratford, a glover, corn and hide merchant, and butcher. The rudeness which surrounded William Shakspeare's childhood is shown by his father being fined twelve pence in 1552 for maintaining a dirt heap in front of his house in

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Henley Street, instead of removing the filth to the neighbouring town-midden. The Stratford archives are said by Mr. Sidney Lee to show that John Shakspeare could write, but this is doubted by Halliwell-Phillipps, and he seems usually to have only made his mark; he had, however, some skill in accounts, and held in succession various municipal offices, until in 1585 he fell into debt and difficulty.<sup>1</sup>

His mother, Mary Shakspeare, though "well provided with worldly goods, was apparently without education; several extant documents bear her mark, and there is no proof that she could sign her name."<sup>2</sup>

There can be little doubt that William Shakspeare went for some years to the free grammar school of Stratford, for he did learn to write. At that school, in ordinary course, he would learn reading and writing and the rudiments of Latin. Of his writing five signatures alone remain, and these are the only certain evidence of the tuition he received, a tuition in this respect certainly imperfect or carelessly used. It is indeed hard to believe that the writer of those five crabbed signatures could have been a fluent and prolific author.

"The best authorities unite in telling us," his biographer Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps writes,<sup>3</sup> "that the poet imbibed a certain amount of Latin at school, but that his acquaintance with that language was throughout life of a very limited character." "It is not probable that scholastic learning was ever congenial to his tastes; and it should be recollected that books, in most parts of the country, were then of very rare occurrence. Lilly's grammar, and a few classical works chained to the desks of the free school, were probably the

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Shakespeare," by Sidney Lee, p. 5; Halliwell-Phillipps, "Outlines of Life of Shakespeare," ii. p. 369.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, p. 7; Halliwell-Phillipps, i. p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Halliwell-Phillipps, i. p. 53.

only volumes of the kind to be found at Stratford-on-Avon. Exclusive of Bibles, Church services, psalters and educational manuals, there were certainly not more than two or three dozen books, if so many, in the whole town. The copy of the black-letter English history, so often depicted as well thumbed by Shakspeare and his father, never existed out of imagination."

English was but little taught in such schools. The first English grammar was not published until 1586, some years after William Shakspeare left school.<sup>1</sup> Neither Italian nor Spanish would be taught at all.

He probably left school about 1577, at the age of thirteen, when his father's failing fortunes required the son's help in his then trade of butcher, to which more than one tradition recorded by Aubrey and Dowdall assert the son was apprenticed.<sup>2</sup>

There is no evidence that the boy was addicted to study, by which stores of varied knowledge could be acquired. His course of life seems rather that of an idle youth, caring neither for honesty, morality, nor good character.

A popular local legend attached to a tree long shown as "Shakspeare's crab tree" described him as sleeping off under it the effects of a hard drinking bout with the neighbouring village of Bidford.

"The independent testimony of Archdeacon Davies, who was vicar of Sapperton, Gloucestershire, late in the seventeenth century, is to the effect that Shakspeare was much given to all unluckiness in stealing venison and rabbits, particularly from Sir Thos. Lucy, who had him oft whipt, and sometimes imprisoned, and at last made him fly his native county, to his great advancement."<sup>3</sup>

Rowe in 1709 gives a like account.

Deerstealers were then subject to three months' imprison-

<sup>1</sup> Goadby, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

ment, but such seclusion was hardly favourable to study, or to a refinement of language.

“Removed prematurely from school; residing with illiterate relatives in a bookless neighbourhood; thrown into the midst of occupations adverse to scholastic progress, it is difficult,” Halliwell-Phillipps writes, “to believe that when he first left Stratford, he was not all but destitute of polished accomplishments. He could not, at all events under the circumstances in which he had then so long been placed, have had the opportunity of acquiring a refined style of composition.”<sup>1</sup>

The same writer supposes that in London the youth would find the means of self-education. It is hard to believe that, at the age of twenty-one or twenty-three, having shown no sign of studious habits in the leisure of his youth, he could, as horse-boy or prompter’s call-boy, or in the then despised trade of an actor, have acquired culture, education and learning. There were no night schools or free libraries in those days.

Books were scarce, and there is no sign, outside the plays and poems, that William Shakspeare ever possessed one, the genuineness of his supposed signature in the copy of Florio’s Montaigne in the British Museum being at least disputable.<sup>2</sup>

If he had been an enthusiastic student, and by some extraordinary means had acquired many languages and much learning, his contemporaries must surely have known it; but the impression he produced on them was the contrary.

The writers of that age assert that Shakspeare was, in fact, notoriously unlearned. Leonard Digges, one of the preface writers of the folio of 1623, writing in 1640 says: “Nature only helped him.” Thomas Fuller in 1662: “His learning was very little.” Sir John Denham in 1668: “Old mother

<sup>1</sup> Halliwell-Phillipps, i. p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, p. 285.



wit and nature gave Shakspeare and Fletcher all they have." Chetwood in 1684: "Shakspeare said all that *Nature* could impart." In the same year Winstanley wrote of another: "Never any scholar, as our Shakspeare if alive would confess"; and Gerard Langbaine in 1691: "He was as much a stranger to French as to Latin."<sup>1</sup>

How, then, could an unlearned man write learned plays? Some striking contrast there must have been between the man and the works which bore his name, which made men marvel at Shakspeare the unlearned.

It has been supposed that towards the end of 1585 Shakspeare left Stratford, but the year 1587 seems the more likely date. In 1586 a distress was issued against John Shakspeare's goods, but none were found. In March of the following year he was imprisoned, and sued out a writ of *habeas corpus* to obtain his liberty. In the same year, 1587, several companies of players visited Stratford;<sup>2</sup> and it seems likely, from the coincidence of date, that William Shakspeare, gaining no support from his father or his father's trade, then joined the players and followed them to London. There is evidence that William Shakspeare was in Stratford in 1587, since in that year he joined with his father and mother in a release of her property of Ashbies to John Lambert the mortgagee, a transaction which John Shakspeare endeavoured in 1589, and again in 1597, to set aside, but without success. Nothing more is heard of William Shakspeare until 1592.

In the meantime, in 1582, when only eighteen, William Shakspeare had formed an intimacy with a neighbouring farmer's daughter, Anne Hathaway, eight years older than himself, whom he married in November or December of that year, apparently under pressure of her relations, and

<sup>1</sup> "Bacon *v.* Shakspeare," by Edwin Reed, to which book the author is much indebted.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, p. 33.

who bore him a daughter in May, 1583, and twin son and daughter in January, 1585.

The more closely Shakspeare's life is scrutinized, the more unamiable he appears.

To hurry on his marriage with Anne Hathaway, two friends of her father (who had lately died) took the unusual step of giving a bond in the Worcester registry on the 28th November, 1582, which enabled the marriage to take place immediately with only one publication of banns. But on the previous day, 27th November, a licence had been taken out of the same registry for the marriage of William Shakspeare with Ann Whately! It has been suggested as possible that this was another William Shakspeare; but the coincidence of time, and the sudden and unusual pressing on of Anne Hathaway's marriage, leave little room for doubt that, but for her friends' interference, Shakspeare would have deserted Anne Hathaway and married another woman; nor does this disagree with his after conduct to his wife.

"All the evidence points to the conclusion, which the fact that he had no more children confirms, that in the later months of the year 1585 [or 1587] he left Stratford, and that, although he was never wholly estranged from his family, he saw little of his wife or children for eleven years."<sup>1</sup>

The emphasis with which the author of the plays insists that a woman should take in marriage "an elder than herself," and that prenuptial intimacy is productive of "barren hate, sour-eyed disdain, and discord," suggests, it is said, "a personal interpretation"! It is rather one of the many discords between the plays and Shakspeare's life.

Of these eleven years, apart from the inferences drawn from the plays and poems which bear the name of Shakespeare, scarcely anything is known.

On his arrival in London he is said at first to have held

<sup>1</sup> Lee, p. 26.

horses for visitors to the theatre, then to have been engaged as call-boy or supernumerary, and then as actor. He is noticed as an actor in 1592, and was a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Company in 1594, in December of which year he acted before the Queen at Greenwich. He is said to have lodged near the Bear Garden in Southwark in 1596, and in the parish of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, in 1598. The company acted successively at the Theatre and the Curtain, both near Shoreditch, the Rose Theatre, the Globe, the Blackfriars Theatre, at various provincial towns, and sometimes at Court. In 1598 he acted in Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour," and in 1603 in "Sejanus." Aubrey quotes an old actor as saying that Shakspeare "did act exceedingly well." Rowe identifies only one of his parts, namely, the ghost in "Hamlet," and describes it as "the top of his performance."

The only personal incident of this period which has come down to us is the story of a trick practised upon his fellow-player Richard Burbage, marking a loose life.<sup>1</sup>

Let us pass over for a while these eleven mysterious years, which are supposed to have converted William Shakspeare into the most brilliant literary genius of all time, and consider him when he returned again to Stratford in 1596.

He then had made money, and in 1597 he bought New Place, the largest house in Stratford, and added field to field in after years, though living partly in London until 1611; but all we learn of him is that he lent money and sued for its repayment. From his many suits he seems to have been a hard man and litigious. "He inherited his father's love of litigation."<sup>2</sup> This is another discord between his life and the plays, which hold usurers up to contempt, and praise Antonio, who lent money without interest and

<sup>1</sup> *Lee*, p. 265.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

spoilt the usurer's trade. Bacon, be it observed, wrote an essay against usury.

Shakspeare's literary fame was little appreciated at Stratford, and did not even obtain the toleration of the drama there; for in the year 1602 the board of aldermen prohibited the future performance of any stage plays at Stratford under a penalty of ten shillings, increased in 1612, the year after Shakspeare's final retirement to Stratford, to ten pounds.

The status of a player was then a low one; for, by a statute of Elizabeth of 1571, players must procure a licence from a peer or personage of higher degree, or they were adjudged rogues and vagabonds. These licences were freely given by Elizabeth and her nobles, so that, although the first theatre in London was erected in 1576, there were in London in 1587 six companies of players, besides three companies of boy-actors from the choirs of St. Paul's and the Chapel Royal, and from Westminster Scholars. Yet in 1597 the Lord Mayor denounced the theatre as "a place for vagrants, thieves, horse-stealers, contrivers of treason, and other idle and dangerous persons."

Shakspeare's two daughters were twelve or thirteen years old when their father returned to Stratford in 1596, but were allowed to grow up in ignorance, notwithstanding the scorn with which the author of the plays denounces ignorance; another discord!

"O thou monster ignorance, how deformed dost thou look!"—*Love's Labour's Lost*.

"There is no darkness but ignorance."—*Twelfth Night*.

"Ignorance the curse of God, knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to heaven."—2 *Henry IV*.

"The common curse of mankind folly and ignorance."  
—*Troilus and Cressida*.

Susannah, the eldest daughter, was not sufficiently edu-

cated to be able to recognize her husband's writing ; Judith could not sign her name.

Shakspeare's wife, it must be supposed, rejoined him, since she is mentioned in his will ; but stories current in his life-time and afterwards show, at least, that his reputation when in London, and after his return to Stratford, was not one of fidelity to her.<sup>1</sup> Another discord, since the plays condemn unchastity in every form. Nor did he, unless compelled, repay the forty shillings borrowed of her father's shepherd during her husband's neglect. This remained unpaid when the shepherd died in 1601, and he directed his executor to recover the money from Shakspeare and distribute it among the poor of Stratford.

John Shakspeare's money troubles appear, indeed, to have ceased on his son's return ; and father and son combined in a curious application for a grant of arms, based on fictitious statements, which ultimately in 1589 proved so far successful that the arms were assumed, though not recorded.

In 1605 Shakspeare bought a portion of Stratford tithes, and thereupon engaged in litigation with the town. In 1614 he joined in an application for the inclosure of the common land, by which he hoped to profit, but was defeated by the corporation of Stratford.

On 25th April, 1616, he died, and according to the testimony of John Ward, vicar of Stratford from 1662 to 1668, from the effects of a drinking bout. The tradition at least shows a reputation for intemperance.

The plays express contempt for intemperance.

To sit  
And keep the turn of tipping with a slave,  
To reel the streets at noon, and stand the buffet  
With knaves that smell of sweat.

*Antony and Cleopatra*, I. iv.

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<sup>1</sup> *Lec*, p. 265.

“O that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains ! that we should with joy, pleasance, revel and applause transform ourselves into beasts. To be now a sensible man, by-and-by a fool, and presently a beast ! O strange ! Every inordinate cup is unblessed, and the ingredient is a devil.”—*Othello*, II. iii.

When he is best he is little worse than a man ;  
And when he is worst he is little better than a beast.  
*Merry Wives*, I. ii.

Oh, monstrous beast ! how like a swine he lies.  
*Taming of the Shrew*.

This Bacon may have written : can Shakspeare have done so ?

The lines on the slab over Shakspeare's grave in Stratford were, according to a letter written in 1694, by William Hall, an Oxford graduate, “in his lifetime ordered to be cut on his tomb-stone,” which is confirmed by the fact that the epitaph seems to have prevented his wife being buried beside him. The lines show little evidence of poetic genius. Another doggerel epitaph on John Combe is attributed to Shakspeare by Aubrey and Rowe.

Shakspeare by his will commenced in January, and signed in March, 1616, gave New Place and all his residuary estate to his eldest daughter, Susannah Hall. To Judith he gave a silver bowl, a life interest in a house, £150 in money, which included her marriage portion of £100, and a further £150 should she survive him three years. He left, among other legacies, “36/8 to each of his fellowes, John Heminge, Richard Burbage and Henry Condell, with which to buy memorial rings.” To his wife, by an interlineation in the will, he left “his second best bed with its furniture,” and nothing more. She may have been entitled to dower out of some part of his lands, but on his last purchase in 1613, of a house in Blackfriars, he barred his wife's dower.



Although there is careful mention of his various landed and house properties, his household furniture, his plate, his bowl, his sword and his wearing apparel, there is no mention of books or manuscripts, or literary property. Yet if he was the learned student, the wide-read and prolific author he is reputed to have been, he must have possessed a library of books, a rare and valuable possession in those days, and many manuscripts of the successive editions of the plays.

A man so careful, nay, greedy of money, had he been the author of the most famous plays of the period, not to say of all time, would surely have turned them to some account, or given some direction about them in his will.

The interest he acquired in the London theatres as one of the actors probably ceased on his retirement; and it has been suggested that all his rights in the plays may have been made over to the company of players. But there was no such transfer recorded at Stationers' Hall, where after 1594 all plays were required to be registered before publication; nor is there any evidence of a transfer which could prevent him from publishing the twenty plays yet unpublished. On the contrary, his fellow-players, Heminge and Condell, did afterwards publish them, and disclaimed any such title. They say in the dedication of the folio: "We have but collected them, and done an office to the dead to procure his Orphanes guardians, without ambition of selfe-profit or fame; onely to keepe the memory of so worthy a Friend and Fellowe alive as was our Shakspeare." But William Shakspeare left no trace of books or manuscripts!

In 1642 Dr. James Cooke, a surgeon in attendance on royalist troops stationed at Stratford, visited Mrs. Hall, Shakspeare's eldest daughter, a widow since 1635, and examined the manuscripts in her possession; but they were of her husband's and not of her father's composition,

though she insisted that they were written by a debtor, who had pledged them to her husband. Dr. Cooke says: "I being acquainted with Mr. Hall's hand told her that one or two of them were her husband's and showed them to her. She denied, I affirmed, till I perceived she began to be offended." Mrs. Hall, therefore, although her father's executrix and residuary legatee, knew nothing of any manuscripts written by him, or of other literary remains, and could not distinguish her husband's writing.

Observe how the end of Shakspeare's life fits in with the beginning. There is the same unamiable, intemperate, immoral life, the same carelessness and neglect of wife and children; no sign of learned education, or books, or literature; no more trace of the plays at the end of his life than at the beginning.

A character wide as the poles from the character revealed by the plays of their author. Genius may doubtless be subject to human infirmity, but should be at least discernible in the life and character of the man. Whence in his sordid life could William Shakspeare derive the noble thoughts, the profound philosophy, the generous sentiments, the various learning, the pure ideal of womanhood, the aristocratic sense, the tone and speech of courts and camps, which characterize the plays?

"I cannot marry this fact to his verse," Emerson wrote. "Other admirable men have led lives in some sort of keeping with their thought, but this man in wide contrast."

Coleridge, assuming Shakspeare's authorship of the plays, rejected the facts of his life and character. "Ask your hearts," he exclaimed, "ask your common sense to conceive the possibility of the author of the plays being the anomalous, the wild, the irregular genius of our daily criticism. What! are we to have miracles in sport? Does God choose idiots by whom to convey divine truth to men?"

It is this discord between the life of William Shakspeare and the plays which bear his name, which caused the doubts of those acute and thoughtful men whose names have been cited. Weighing the facts of William Shakspeare's life, it seems improbable, if not incredible, that he should have written the plays.

### III. FRANCIS BACON'S LIFE AND EDUCATION.

**I**N striking contrast was Francis Bacon's mental equipment. Born on 22nd January, 1561, he was the son of the wise Sir Nicholas Bacon for twenty years Lord Keeper. His mother, noted for her learning and piety, was able to correspond with Archbishop Jewell in Greek, and to read, write and translate Latin and Italian. From her Bacon would early acquire a familiar knowledge of Italian language and literature, from which so many of the plays are derived.

In April, 1573, at the age of twelve, he entered Cambridge University, and was trained under Whitgift, afterwards Archbishop. At Christmas, 1575, he left Cambridge, having mastered all the knowledge he could gain at the University and "run through the whole circle of the liberal arts." Disappointed with Aristotle's philosophy, he even then conceived the idea that a better method might be found; but he acquired a wide knowledge of classical and modern language and literature, such knowledge as is conspicuous in the plays.

In 1576, being then fifteen, he entered as a student at Gray's Inn. Already he enjoyed the Queen's favour, who called him her young Lord Keeper. In September of the same year he went with Sir Amyas Paulet, the English ambassador, to Paris, and remained in France for two and

a half years, where he gained a colloquial knowledge of French and some of Spanish ; and he made afterwards a collection of Spanish proverbs. He saw many parts of France, Blois, Tours and Poitiers, where he stayed some months, thus visiting the battlefields famous in English history. A knowledge of French and of these battle scenes is reflected in the plays. During his absence the Queen, in May, 1577, was entertained for five days by his father, Sir Nicholas Bacon, at Gorhambury, near St. Albans.<sup>1</sup>

Bacon brought back despatches to the Queen, which mentioned him as "of great hope and endued with many good and singular parts." During these years he lived with princes and nobles, and learned the manners and language of the Court. Shakspeare's associates at Stratford were peasants and apprentices.

The death of Sir Nicholas Bacon, in 1579, recalled Francis Bacon to his home at Gorhambury. He then took up his abode in Gray's Inn, and began laboriously to study law. Disappointed of his father's intended provision, of which he received only a fifth part, he had now to make his livelihood by his profession or by literary effort.

We are wont to think of Bacon only as the grave philosopher of his later life ; but his philosophical writings did not begin to appear *for seventeen years after his return from Paris*. Meantime, though studying law, his life was that of the brilliant courtier, the associate of Essex and Southampton and Sidney ; the chief contriver of the masques and entertainments at Gray's Inn, or before the Queen at Greenwich. Not free from extravagance, his narrow means involved him in many difficulties. How were his necessities to be met ?

Philosophical writings in advance of the age are not often either popular or lucrative ; it was said by Cuffe, Essex's

<sup>1</sup> Nicholls's "Progresses."

secretary, of the "Novum Organum," when published in 1600, that "a fool could not have written it and a wise man would not." And Coke wrote on his presentation copy :

It deserveth not to be read in Schools,  
But to be freighted in the Ship of Fools.<sup>1</sup>

If, then, any other form of literature more readily saleable lay open, would not Bacon be likely to use it, if he could by any means escape the charge of frivolity, and avoid injury to his professional career?

Not until 1596 were his "Maxims of the Law and Treatise on the Colours of Good and Evil" published, and in 1597 the first ten of his fifty-eight Essays appeared. Though he diligently studied law, it was distasteful. He was called to the Outer Bar in June, 1582, but could not plead in Court until he became a bencher in 1586, and his first case seems to have been in January, 1594. He had entered Parliament in 1584. Disappointed of office, and struggling with debt, he threatened in 1592 to throw up the law, and become "a sorry bookmaker or a true pioneer in the mine of truth."

Was there no fruit of his teeming brain during these seventeen years to help his empty purse?

At this period from £6 to £11 was the price ordinarily paid to an author for a play,<sup>2</sup> but these sums should be multiplied by eight to represent their present value.

A needy barrister of the present day would be glad to earn from £50 to £90 by writing a play, if his talents enabled him to do so, and Bacon may well have been glad to earn the equivalent in his day.

Now there is evidence that Francis Bacon, during these years, before the publication of philosophical books, was in fact engaged in some course of study or literary work

<sup>1</sup> Disraeli's "Curiosities of Literature," p. 492.

<sup>2</sup> *Lec.*, p. 197.

(he was, he says, "a man born for literature") which to one at least of his friends seemed derogatory if not disgraceful.

This appears from a remarkable letter written in 1607 by Sir Thomas Bodley, the founder of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, on receipt of Bacon's "Cogitata et Visa." The letter congratulates Bacon on having at length made choice of a fit subject of study, natural philosophy, "which course," he adds, "would to God—to whisper as much in your ear—you had followed at the first, when you fell to the study of such a study as was not worthy such a student."

Sir Thomas shared the prevailing prejudice against English plays, and would not admit "such baggage" into his library.

It has been doubted if Bacon had poetic genius, or dramatic taste, to fit him for such authorship.

"In wit," Macaulay says, "if by wit be meant the power of perceiving analogies between things which appear to have nothing in common, he never had an equal; not even Cowley, not even the author of 'Hudibras.' . . . The poetical faculty was powerful in Bacon's mind. . . . In truth, much of Bacon's life was passed in a visionary world."

Shelley said: "Lord Bacon was a poet. His language has a sweet and majestic rhythm which satisfies the sense, no less than the almost super-human wisdom of his philosophy satisfies the intellect."<sup>1</sup>

His versions of the Psalms, written in sickness, have been adduced as evidence of want of poetic talent; but these, though such translations cramp poetic genius, are certainly finer than some of Milton's versions—for example, Milton's version of the 7th Psalm; yet Milton was undoubtedly a poet. Let two verses from each suffice for comparison:

<sup>1</sup> Prose Works, iii. p. 107.



O Lord, thou art our home, to whom we fly,  
And so hast always been from age to age ;  
Before the hills did intercept the eye,  
Or that the frame was up of earthly stage,  
One God thou wert, and art, and still shalt be ;  
The line of time, it doth not measure thee.

Thou carriest man away as with a tide,  
Then down swim all his thoughts that mounted high,  
Much like a mocking dream that will not bide,  
But flies before the sight of aching eye ;  
Or as the grass that cannot term obtain  
To see the summer come about again.

Bacon, Psalm XC.

Lord, my God, to Thee I fly,  
Save me and secure me under  
Thy protection while I cry ;  
Lest as a lion (and no wonder)  
He haste to tear my soul asunder,  
Tearing and no rescue nigh.

He digged a pit and delved it deep,  
And fell into the pit he made :  
His mischief that due course doth keep  
Turns on his head ; and his ill trade  
Of violence will, undelayed,  
Fall on his crown with ruin steep.

Milton, Psalm VII.

Spedding writes : "I should myself infer that Bacon had all the natural faculties which a poet wants, a fine ear for metre, a fine feeling for imaginative effect in words, and a vein of poetic passion : the thought could not well be fitted with imagery, words and rhythm more apt and imaginative ; and there is a tenderness of expression, which comes manifestly out of a heart in sensitive sympathy with nature. . . . The heroic couplet could hardly do its work better in the hands of Dryden."

Nor does Bacon's stately prose differ more widely from the poetry of the plays than the prose of Milton's "Areopagitica" does from "Comus" and "L'Allegro."

It is certain also that Bacon wrote other poetry than that

which bore his name, since he described himself and was described by others as "a concealed poet."<sup>1</sup>

As to dramatic taste. In that age, when the drama and its votaries were despised, Bacon perceived and taught that the drama ought to be used for the education and elevation of the people.

"Dramatic poesy is as history made visible, for it represents actions as if they were present, whereas History represents them as past." Dramatic poesy, "which has the theatre for its world, would be of excellent use if well directed; for the stage is capable of no small influence both of discipline and corruption. Now of corruptions of this kind we have enough, but the discipline has in our times been plainly neglected. But though in modern states play-acting is esteemed but as a toy, except when it is too satirical and biting, yet, among the ancients, it was used as a means of educating men's minds to virtue, nay, it has been regarded by learned men and great philosophers as a kind of musician's bow, by which men's minds may be played upon."<sup>2</sup>

Again, in "The Masculine Birth of Time," speaking of the obstructions caused by the ignorance and bigotry of the age, he writes: "A new process must be instituted by which to insinuate ourselves into minds so entirely obstructed. . . . So men generally taste well knowledges that are *drenched in flesh and blood*, civil history, morality, policy, about which men's affections, praises, fortunes do turn and are conversant."

And in the second book of the Latin translation of the "Advancement of Learning," he urges that "the art of acting (*actio theatralis*) should be made a part of the education of youth—for though it be of ill repute as a profession, yet as a part of discipline it is of excellent use."

The Shakespeare plays realized Bacon's ideal, yet nowhere does he make allusion to them!

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> "De Augmentis," book ii., ch. xiii.

Francis Bacon and his brother Anthony appear both to have had a passion for the drama. Anthony, soon after his return in 1592 from his travels, left his brother to take up his abode in Bishopsgate, near the Bull Theatre, where several of the Shakespeare plays were acted.

Their mother, Lady Anne Bacon, was gravely concerned at her sons' taste for stage performances, and wrote that she trusts "they will not mum nor mask nor sinfully revel at Gray's Inn"; but Francis Bacon continued through life to be the "chief contriver" of the masques at Gray's Inn.

Lady Anne was a masterful woman, whose rigid Puritan opinions her sons might not openly offend. Anthony, while travelling abroad, once hired a Roman Catholic servant, to his mother's grave displeasure, and sent him on some errand to England. Lady Anne straightway clapped the man in gaol as a Papist, and refused the entreaties of both her sons to let him out.

Surveying Francis Bacon's life, his character and education, his intellectual training and social experience, his poetical imagination and dramatic taste, and his various learning, are not these the very qualities which the plays themselves demand for their author, in all of which William Shakspeare seems hopelessly deficient?

#### IV. COMPARISON OF THE PLAYS WITH BACON'S PROSE WORKS.

**I**F the contrast between Shakspeare's life and Bacon's life, and between their intellectual endowment and training, points to Bacon rather than Shakspeare as the probable author of the plays, what is the internal evidence of the plays themselves?

The more closely the plays are examined, the larger looms the difficulty of attributing them to Shakspeare, and the closer appears their affinity with the prose works of Bacon. Under a superficial difference of style, inherent in the difference of subject, will be found an underlying identity of thought and expression hard to explain except by unity of authorship.

Estimates have been made of different vocabularies. Some labourers, Max Müller tells us, have not 300 words in their vocabulary. "A well-educated person in England who has been at a public school and at the University, who reads his Bible, his Shakespeare, 'The Times,' and all the books of Mudie's Library, seldom uses more than about 3,000 or 4,000 words in actual conversation. Accurate thinkers and close reasoners, who avoid vague and general expressions, and wait till they find the word that exactly fits their meaning, employ a larger stock, and eloquent speakers may rise to a command of 10,000. Shakespeare, who displayed a greater variety of expression than probably any writer in any language, produced all his plays with about 15,000 words. Milton's works are built up with 8,000; and the Hebrew Testament says all it has to say with 5,642 words."<sup>1</sup>

Professor Craik estimates Shakespeare's vocabulary at 21,000 and Milton's at 7,000. It has been computed that Shakespeare gave 3,000, or some say 5,000, new words to our language, and these largely derived from the Latin; and about 2,000 words are said to be used once only in the plays.<sup>2</sup> Without relying on the exactness of these estimates, there can be no doubt that the vocabulary of the plays is one of extraordinary richness.

Whence could Shakspeare, emerging from a provincial

<sup>1</sup> "Science of Language," vol. i., pp. 277-278.

<sup>2</sup> Theobald, "Shakespeare Studies," p. 431.

town, with the imperfect education described by Halliwell-Phillipps, gain this affluence of speech, which could only be acquired by familiarity with classical and modern language and literature?

This familiarity Bacon possessed, and made it his study "to enrich languages by mutual exchanges, so that the several beauties of each may be combined (as in the Venus of Apelles) into a most beautiful image of speech."

And this rich vocabulary belonged equally to Bacon and to the Shakespeare plays.

Dr. Johnson said: "A dictionary of the English language might be compiled from Bacon's works alone."

Excluding, for fair comparison, from Bacon's prose works absolute technicalities, and from the plays absolute colloquialisms, oaths, etc., unsuitable for philosophic works, 97 per cent. of the words, Mrs. Pott states, are common to Bacon and Shakespeare. Did Bacon acquire this wealth of words from Shakspeare, or the plays from Bacon?

Not only the words, but the expressions and turns of speech are curiously alike in the plays and in Bacon's prose works.

For example, Mr. Bengough,<sup>1</sup> a student of Shakespeare, compared Bacon's "History of Henry VII." with Shakespeare's "King John," and found in these two works alone 22 metaphors used in both, several catchwords often repeated in both, 9 or 10 peculiar phrases used in both, 20 or more words peculiar or used in an unusual sense occurring in both; he found, indeed, 21 passages in one scene of the play (Act II., Sc. ii.) with corresponding passages in three pages of the history, and concludes that the only rational hypothesis is, that the same mind employed the same words in both cases.

Numerous similar lists of parallelisms, to the number of

<sup>1</sup> "Baconiana."

1,000 and more, have been pointed out between the other plays and Bacon's prose works.<sup>1</sup>

The cogency of this argument increases in proportion to the number of examples examined; a few only can here be given.

"Periander being consulted with how to preserve a tyranny; bid the messenger stand still, and he walking in a garden topped all the highest flowers, signifying the cutting off and the keeping low of the nobility."—*De Aug.*, vi. 1.

Go thou, and like an executioner  
Cut off the heads of too fast growing sprays  
That look too lofty in our commonwealth:  
All must be even in our government.

*Richard II.*, III. iv. 33.

Being once perfected how to grant suits,  
How to deny them; who t<sup>h</sup> advance, and who  
To trash for over-topping.

*Tempest*, I. ii.

The Moon so constant in inconstancy.

Bac., Trans. Psalm CIV.

Oh, swear not by the Moon, the inconstant Moon,  
That monthly changes in her circled orb,  
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.

*Rom. and Jul.*, II. ii. 109.

"His purpose was to break the knot of the conspiracy."  
—*Hist. Hen. VII.*

There's a knot, a gin, a conspiracy against me.

*Merry Wives*, IV. ii. 123.

This ancient knot of dangerous adversaries.

*Richard III.*, III. i. 182.

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<sup>1</sup> Parallelisms have been collected by Judge Holmes in "Authorship of Shakespeare," pp. 303-325; by Mrs. Pott in "State Metaphors," in the "Journal of the Bacon Society," and in Bacon's "Promus"; by Mr. Wigston, "Francis Bacon," pp. 192-268; by Mr. Edwin Reed in "Bacon v. Shakspeare," pp. 57-80; by Mr. Donnelly in the first vol. of the "Great Cryptogram"; and by Mr. R. M. Theobald in "Shakespeare Studies in Baconian Light."

“A subtler error is this, that art is conceiv'd to be a sort of addition to nature.”—*Adv. of Learning.*

So that over art,  
Which you say adds to nature, is an art  
That nature makes.

This [grafting] is an art  
Which does mend nature, changes it rather, but  
The art itself is nature.

*Winter's Tale.*

“Wretches—have been able to stir earthquakes by the murdering of Princes.”—*Charge against Owen.*

Wherefore this ghastly looking? What 's the matter?  
O! 'twas a din to fright a monster's ear,  
To make an earthquake.

*Tempest*, II. i. 309.

“‘Ordinatio belli et pacis est absoluti imperii,’ a principal flower of the crown. For if those flowers should wither and fall, the garland will not be worth the wearing.”—*Report*, 1606-7.

*Catesby.* Till Richard wear the garland of the realm.

*Hastings.* How! wear the garland! dost thou mean the crown?  
*Richard III.*, III. ii.

“To see if he could heave at his lordship's authority.”—*Observations on War and Peace.*

I'll venture one heave at him.

*Henry VIII.*, II. ii. 85.

“As for discontentments, they are in the body politic like to humours in the natural, which are apt to gather a preternatural heat and inflame.”—*Essay of Sedition.*

Stop their marches 'fore we are inflamed.  
Our discontented counties do revolt—  
This inundation of distempered humour  
Rests by you only to be qualified.

*John*, V. i. 7.

“To give moderate liberty for griefs is a safe way, for he



that makes the wound to bleed inwardly endangereth malign ulcers and pernicious imposthumes."—*Essay of Sedition.*

This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace,  
That inward breaks and shows no cause without  
Why the man dies.

*Hamlet, IV. iv. 27.*

Such instances of identity both of thought and expression may be multiplied almost indefinitely.

There are also tricks of style common both to the plays and prose works, such as triple antitheses. For example :

"Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them."—Shakespeare.

"Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested."—Bacon.

"It would be an argument for a week, laughter for a month, and a good jest for ever."—Shakespeare.

"Crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them."—Bacon.

"One draught above heat makes him a fool, a second mads him, and third drowns him."—Shakespeare.

"Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man."—Bacon.

A long list of such triplets has been extracted from the plays and from the prose works.<sup>1</sup>

Of fifty-three points of style, which were selected by Mrs. Cowden Clarke in the "Shakespeare Key" as being "specialities" and "characteristics" of Shakespeare, almost all have been found in the prose works of Bacon.

Not only the words and phrases, but the learning and opinions expressed in the plays and in the prose works of Bacon are the same, and in both the learning is largely drawn from books rather than from observation.

The knowledge of law shown in the plays is wide and

<sup>1</sup> Edwin Reed, pp. 191-194.

accurate, and could not be exhibited except by a trained lawyer; and this knowledge is not shown merely by a formal description of legal proceedings, which may be learned, but crops up even in the mouths of the heroines, in metaphors which would only occur to a lawyer. In one scene the lover, wishing for a kiss, prays for a grant of pasture on his mistress's lips. She replies that "they are no common, though several they be," playing on the law of common of pasture and severalty.

Mistress Page understood the strongest form of assurance of property, when she says of Falstaff: "If the devil have him not in fee simple, with fine and recovery, he will never I think attempt us again."—*Merry Wives*, IV. ii.

Portia knew the charges and interrogatories of a bill in Chancery. She says:

Let us go in  
And charge us there upon int'rogatories,  
And we will answer all things faithfully.  
*Merchant of Venice*, V. i.

Lord Campbell, in his treatise on "Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements," says: "While novelists and dramatists are constantly making mistakes as to the law of marriage, of wills and inheritance; to Shakespeare's law, lavishly as he expounds it, there can be neither demurrer nor bill of exception nor writ of error."

One writer<sup>1</sup> enumerates 250 law terms used or referred to in the plays, of which 200 are treated with more or less fullness in Bacon's legal tracts.

The stress of this serious, if not insuperable difficulty, induced a conjecture that Shakspeare had passed a year or two in a lawyer's office. This is abandoned; but it is now suggested that his legal acquirements were gained by observation of his father's many legal processes, and inter-

<sup>1</sup> "Baconiana," vol. i., p. 154.

course with members of the Inns of Court :<sup>1</sup> an inadequate mode of legal education. Law is not contagious !

As to medicine. In an age when Queen Elizabeth's physician, Dr. William Bulleyn, prescribed for a nervous child "a smal yonge mouse rosted," and King James's physician, Sir Theodore Aulbone, relied on pulverized human bones, "raspings of a human skull unburied" and balsam of bats ; when Dr. Hall, Shakspeare's son-in-law, was accustomed to prescribe human fat, tonics of earth-worms and snails, frog spawn water and swallows' nests, Bacon and the author of the plays, though deeply versed in medicine, are equally free from such absurdities and prescribe identical remedies.

Bacon recommends to produce sleep "the tear of poppy," henbane and mandrake.

We read in "Othello" :

Not poppy nor mandragora,  
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world  
Shall ever minister thee to that sweet sleep  
Which thou ow'dst once.

Bacon and the Shakespeare plays both recommend as a cordial *carduus benedictus*, and cite the bitters of *coloquintida* ; both refer to the ventricles of the brain and the *pia mater* as the seat of the intellect ; and the symptoms of Falstaff's death, the fumbling hands, sharpened nose and cold extremities, are described in "Henry V." in the same terms as Bacon uses in his "History of Life and Death."

Dr. Bucknill, in a treatise on the "Medical Knowledge of Shakespeare," discusses that knowledge as shown in each one of the plays, and "arrives at the conviction that the great dramatist had at least been a diligent student of all medical knowledge existing at his time," and he finds "not merely evidence but proof that Shakespeare had *read widely*

<sup>1</sup> Lee, p. 32.

in medical literature." The same writer observes that "physical science, upon which modern medicine is founded, traces its parentage no higher than to Shakespeare's great contemporary, Bacon."

Treatises have been written on the natural history of the plays, on the animal lore, the birds, the insects; but the varied knowledge was gathered from books rather than observation. An acute writer in the "Quarterly Review" for April, 1894, tells from what books this learning was taken, sometimes almost word for word: "He borrows from Gower and Chaucer and Spenser, from Drayton and Du Bartas and Lyly and William Brown, from Pliny, Ovid, Virgil and the Bible; borrows, in fact, everywhere he can, but with a symmetry that makes his natural history harmonious as a whole, and a judgment that keeps it always moderate and possible."

"Shakespeare," he continues, "was curiously unobservant of animated nature. He seems to have seen very little—Stratford-on-Avon was, in his day, enmeshed in streams, yet he has not a single kingfisher. Not in all his streams or pools is there an otter, a water-rat, a fish rising, a dragon-fly, a moor-hen, or a heron—to the living objects about him he seems to have been obstinately purblind and half deaf. His boyhood was passed among the woods, and yet in all the woods in his plays there is neither wood-pecker nor wood-pigeon—we never hear or see a squirrel in the trees, nor a night-jar hawking over the bracken."

Knowledge accumulated from books must share their errors, and there are many errors of natural history in the plays.

Bees are often described, but mistakenly :

We'll follow where thou lead'st,  
Like stinging bees in hottest summer's day  
Led by their master to the flowered fields.

*Titus Andron.*, V. i.

“The passage,” the reviewer adds, “is of course ridiculous, but it is taken from Du Bartas.”

The old bees die, the young possess their hive.

“A monumental error, the most compendious mis-statement possible.”

The most elaborate description of a beehive and its inhabitants is in “Henry V.,” of which the same writer observes: “As poetry it is a most beautiful passage,” but “with an error of fact in every line. It is taken from the ‘Euphues’ of Lyly.”

The same store of knowledge of natural history, gathered from books and not free from like error, is found in Bacon’s prose works.

Bacon calls Perkin Warbeck “this little cockatrice of a king that was able to destroy those that did not espy him first.” Three Shakespeare plays refer to the supposed deadly power of the cockatrice’s eye.

Bacon questions “if the stone taken out of a toad’s head be not of virtue.”

In Shakespeare we read :

Sweet are the uses of adversity,  
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.

Bacon speaks of the wisdom of crocodiles that shed tears when they would devour.

In Shakespeare we find: “As the mournful crocodile, with sorrow snares relenting passengers.”

Yet Shakspeare appears to have had no books, and was accounted by his fellows not studious but unlearned!

So in horticulture; of the thirty-three flowers of Shakespeare, Bacon enumerates thirty in his *Essay on Gardens* or in his “*Sylva Sylvarum*.”

Not only so, but Bacon's curious experiments in horticulture reappear in the plays :

"Take common brier and set it amongst violets or wall-flowers, and see whether it will not make the violets or wall-flowers sweeter."—*Natural History*, Experiment 488.

The strawberry grows underneath the nettle,  
And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best  
Neighbour'd by fruit of baser quality.

*Henry V.*, I. i.

"As terebration doth meliorate fruit, so upon the like reason doth letting of plant's blood, as pricking vines or other trees after they be of some growth ; and thereby letting forth gums or tears."—*Natural History*, Experiment 464.

And wound the bark, the skin of our fruit-trees,  
Lest being over-proud with sap and blood  
With too much riches it confound itself.

*Richard II.*, III. iv.

And the same explanation of knots in trees, causing irregular branches, is given by Bacon and in the plays.

"The cause whereof is that the sap ascendeth unequally, and doth, as it were, tire and stop by the way. And it seemeth they have some closeness and hardness on their stalk, which hindereth the sap from going up, until it hath gathered into a knot and so is more urged to put forth."—*Natural History*, 389.

Checks and disasters  
Grow in the veins of actions highest reared,  
As knots by the conflux of meeting sap  
Infect the sound pine and divert his grain,  
Tortive and errant from his course of growth.

*Troilus and Cressida*, I. iii.

In all subjects treated of by Bacon, the human body, sound and light, heat and cold, germination and putrefaction, the history of the winds, astronomy, astrology, meteorology

and witchcraft, the plays and prose works closely correspond, and both exhibit a learning up to the limit of that age.

Nay more, when Bacon's philosophical opinions change, the philosophy of the plays changes simultaneously. For instance, in the 1604 edition of "Hamlet," the Prince, addressing his mother, says: "Sense sure you have, else could you not have motion."

This accords with the ancient doctrine that everything that has motion has sense. Bacon's "Advancement of Learning" was first published in 1605, and it states this doctrine of the ancients with some approval. But in 1623 a new edition of the "Advancement of Learning" was published, which expressly declared that there *is* motion in inanimate bodies, without sense, but with a kind of perception. In the same year the first folio of the plays was published, and the passage above quoted from "Hamlet" was omitted. It no longer agreed with Bacon's opinion.

In "Natural Philosophy" not only the same wisdom, but the same errors, are found in Bacon's prose works and in the plays. For example, Bacon supposed that fire extinguished fire. In the "History of Henry VII." he describes that Perkin Warbeck at the siege of Exeter fired one of the gates. "But the citizens perceiving the danger blocked up the gate inside with faggots and other fuel, which they likewise set on fire, and so repulsed fire with fire." In the "Advancement of Learning" Bacon again wrote: "Flame doth not mingle with flame but remaineth contiguous."

In "King John," Pandulph tells the King: "Falsehood falsehood cures, as fire cools fire." Again in "Coriolanus": "One fire drives out one fire, one nail one nail"; and again in "Two Gentlemen of Verona":

Even as one heat another heat expels,  
Or as one nail by strength drives out another.



Bacon also supposed that the sea swells before a storm.

"It is everywhere taken notice of that waters do somewhat swell and rise before tempests."—*Natural History of Winds.*

"As there are certain hollow blasts of wind, secret swelling of seas before a tempest, so are there in states."—*Essay of Sedition.*

In Shakespeare the same thought is expressed.

Before the days of change still is it so  
By a divine instinct, men's minds mistrust  
Ensuing danger; as by proof, we see  
The waters swell before a boisterous storm.

*Richard III.*, II. iii.

Hamlet uses this strange expression :

O that this too too solid flesh would melt,  
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew.

*Act I. Sc. ii. 229.*

But this is the echo of Bacon's philosophy, who wrote :  
"The emission of the spirit produces dryness; the detention and working thereof within the body either melts, or putrefies, or vivifies." "The spirit in a body of firm texture is detained, though against its will."—*History of Life and Death*, pp. 321, 328.

Bacon speaks of "the irregularities of Mars" ("De Aug.," bk. iii.).

In Shakespeare we find :

Mars his true moving, even as in the heavens  
So in the earth to this day is not known.

*Henry VI.*, I. ii.

Bacon did not readily accept the Copernican theory of the heavens. In his "Essay of Wisdom" he speaks of the Earth "that only stands fast upon his own centre, whereas all things that have affinity with the heavens move upon the centre of another."

Shakespeare says :

The heavens themselves, the planets, and *this centre*,  
Observe degree, priority, and place.

*Troilus and Cress.*, I. iii.

On the other hand, Bacon anticipated in principle Newton's discovery of gravitation. He wrote :

"The loadstone draws inferior to superior powers as iron in atoms cleaves to the magnet, but in mass will, like a true patriot, with appetite of amity fall towards the centre of the earth."

Voltaire exclaims : " But what sagacity in Bacon to imagine what no one else had thought of."

In Shakespeare we find the same principle stated :

But the strong base and building of my love  
Is as the very centre of the earth,  
Drawing all things to it.

*Troilus and Cress.*, IV. ii.

As to religion. In an age embittered by religious hatred and persecution, Bacon, though a Protestant, enjoined a large tolerance and condemned persecution.

The same spirit shines through the plays. Cranmer is praised, but there is no satire upon the priests, who are always represented as benevolent and venerable ; and as to persecution the author writes :

It is an heretic that makes the fire,  
Not she who burns in it.

*Winter's Tale*, II. iii.

The Bible was then a scarce book, and William Shakspeare seems an unlikely man to be addicted to its study ; but the writer of the plays was very familiar with its contents, as was also Francis Bacon, who often refers to its histories, and in his "Promus" noted down twenty-two passages for literary use.

Can it be from two different minds that knowledge and ideas flow in such identical channels ?

## V. THE "PROMUS."

THE "Promus" is another branch of evidence identifying Bacon with the authorship of the plays.

Bacon for many years, from December, 1594, kept a notebook to enlarge his powers of language, called a "Promus of Formularies and Elegancies."<sup>1</sup> It contains over 1,600 notes from classical and modern literature, including 668 proverbs—English, French, Spanish and Italian. These notes reappear to a large extent both in Bacon's prose works and in the plays.

It cannot be seriously supposed that Bacon made these notes from the plays, for use in his philosophical writings.

The following are illustrations of the use in the plays of Bacon's notebook. Six entries in the "Promus" occur very near together, probably made at about the same time, in January, 1595, since the next folio of the "Promus" is dated 27th January, 1595. The corresponding words and phrases are found in *eleven consecutive lines* of "Romeo and Juliet," which was probably written about that date.

<i>Promus.</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet.</i>
Rome.	Romeo.
Good morrow.	Good morrow.
Sweet for speech in the morning.	What early tongue so sweet saluteth me.
Lodged next.	Where care lodges sleep will never lie.
Golden sleep.	There golden sleep doth reign.
Uprouse.	Thou art uproused by some distemperature.

"Golden sleep" was a new simile, "uprouse" a new word.

This parallelism can scarcely be mere coincidence: the

<sup>1</sup> "The Promus of Formularies and Elegancies," by Francis Bacon, edited and illustrated by Mrs. Henry Pott, 1883.

writer of "Romeo and Juliet" must surely have had Bacon's "Promus" at his elbow.

The same folio of the "Promus," No. 111, contains an even more striking coincidence with the plays. This folio begins with forms of salutation: "Good morrow," "Good swoear," "Good travaile," "Good matins," "Good betimes, bonum Mane," "Bon ioure," "Bon ioure, Bridegroom," "Good day to me and good morrow to you." What object, it will be asked, could Bacon have in noting down these forms of salutation, and indorsing this sheet "Formularies and Elegancies"?

In truth, they were not then in common use in England; and the fact that they were so noted down, and four of them borrowed from the French, shows that Bacon had been struck with the courtesies of France, and wished to introduce or encourage like courtesies in England.

Mrs. Pott, in a laborious examination of the literature of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, comprising 328 authors and 5,300 of their works,<sup>1</sup> only found three instances of the use of any of these forms of salutation before 1594, the date of the "Promus."

Ben Jonson a little later uses "good morrow" two or three times; and Beaumont and Fletcher, in more than forty plays, use "good morrow" five times, "good day" once, "good night" four times, "good even" once.

In the Shakespeare plays the forms of salutation noted in the "Promus" are used about 250 times, with the addition in "King Lear" of "good dawning."

A striking instance of identity of thought and purpose between Bacon's notebook and the plays.

Bacon, in the concluding lines of his Essay on Travel, ridicules the man who lets travel appear rather in his apparel and gestures than in his discourse; whereas he should only

<sup>1</sup> "Promus," pp. 81, 82, and 536-566.

"prick in some flowers of that he had learned abroad into the customs of his own country." This Bacon did when he "pricked in" these flowers of courteous speech into his "Promus" and thence transplanted them to bloom abundantly in the plays.

Out of numerous other striking parallels between the "Promus" and the plays a few may here be given as examples :

*From Bacon's "Promus."*

God sendeth fortune to fools.

He who dissembles is not free.

Our sorrows are our schoolmasters.

He who lends to a friend loses double.

He is the devil's porter who does more than what is required of him.

Love me little, love me long.

Make not two sorrows of one.

What the eye seeth not the heart rueth not.

At length the string cracks.

*From the Plays.*

Call me not fool till heaven hath sent me fortune.

*As You Like It*, II. vii.

The dissembler is a slave.

*Pericles*, I. i.

Give sorrow leave awhile to tutor me.

*Richard II.*, IV. i.

For loan oft loses both itself and friend.

*Hamlet*, I. iii.

I'll devil porter it no further.

*Macbeth*, II. iii.

Love moderately, long love does so.

*Romco and Juliet*, II. vi.

Two together weeping make one woe.

*Richard II.*, V. i.

Let him not know 't and he's not robbed at all.

*Othello*, III. iii.

The strings of life began to crack.

*Lear*, V. iii.

There seems scarcely a sentiment or opinion expressed in the plays which has not its counterpart in the acknowledged works of Bacon.

Tennyson indeed thought that the author of the Essay on Love could not have written "Romeo and Juliet," because he speaks of love as tending "to trouble a man's

fortunes and make him untrue to his own ends"; but he forgot that Shakespeare also says :

To be wise and love  
Exceeds man's might, that dwells with Gods above.  
*Troilus and Cress.*, III. ii.

And Proteus complains :

I leave myself, my friend, and all for love.  
Thou Julia, thou hast metamorphosed me,  
Made me neglect my studies, lose my time,  
War with good counsel, set the world at naught,  
Made wit with musing weak, heart sick with thought.  
*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I. i.

Moreover, in 1591-2, before the date of "Romeo and Juliet," Bacon, then in his prime, extolled love, and wrote a masque, "The Conference of Pleasure," containing a speech in "Praise of Love," in which love is declared to be "the noblest affection" of the mind. The Essay in its final form was written in declining years, in 1623, when his married life was overclouded and embittered. What wonder he should then declare that "the stage is more beholden to love than the life of man"?

But the picturing of love in the plays (though not in many of them is it the ruling motive) does with singular exactness anticipate the philosophy of love as taught in the Essay.

"Great spirits and great business do keep out this weak passion"; and so Coriolanus and Brutus, Hamlet and Hotspur, repress their love, and "sever it from their serious affairs." In weaker natures love is wayward and hyperbolic, oft "losing riches and wisdom," as shown in "Love's Labour's Lost," or by Proteus and Benedick and Florizel. "Transported to the mad degree," it "does much mischief, sometimes like a siren, sometimes like a fury," as in Mark Antony or Romeo or Othello.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. M. Theobald, "Shakespeare Studies," p. 129.

Is it conceivable that two different minds, one of the highest cultivation, the other imperfectly educated, should each, independently of the other, achieve a series of extraordinary works in advance of their age, yet identical in language of unexampled richness, in knowledge, philosophy, opinion, in wisdom and error, and in form of expression? It seems impossible.

In 1821, while the authorship of the Waverley Novels was still undisclosed, eight letters were published by Mr. Adolphus, identifying the author of the novels with the writer of Scott's poems; by the knowledge shown both in the novels and the poems of classical and modern languages, of law, of social manners, of history and locality; by poetic feeling and by moral character; and finally by parallelisms of thought and expression, of which eighty instances were cited. Scott was pointed out as the only known author combining these various attributes, and it was noticed that he was never referred to by the novelist. The argument was sound and convincing, but the like argument identifies with still greater force the writings of Francis Bacon with the Shakespeare plays, in which the intellectual identity is equally varied and complete, while the parallelisms may be counted as more than a thousand. Francis Bacon alone combines the multifarious knowledge found in these plays, and these plays he never names.

Observe! this evidence is cumulative, its force grows with the number of examples. If eighty instances are convincing, by what ratio shall we gauge the demonstration of a thousand? If likeness of opinion suggests identity, what shall we say when every branch of knowledge of Bacon's many-sided mind is thus reflected in the plays?



VI. COMPARISON OF THE PLAYS WITH  
BACON'S LIFE.

**B**UT further, the plays reflect Bacon's life, not Shakespeare's.

One striking peculiarity of the plays is that, notwithstanding the variety and originality they display, the plots are not original, but embroidered upon some old tale or history. It is very strange that the author's so versatile mind should never invent an original story!

But this was consonant with Bacon's mind, who, when writing his "History of Henry VII.," wished "there had been already digested any tolerable chronicle as a simple narrative of the actions themselves, which should only have needed out of the former helps to be enriched with the counsels, and the speeches, and notable peculiarities."<sup>1</sup> Just so the author of the plays used and enriched the old chronicles and tales.

Another singularity of the plays is that, apart from the historical plays, the scenes are nearly always laid abroad.

Few of the Elizabethan dramas had foreign scenes. Greene, who had travelled in Spain, wrote a play in 1585 entitled "The Comical History of Alphonso, King of Aragon." Kidd about 1592 produced "Jeronimo" and "The Spanish Tragedy." Peile about 1594 wrote "The Battle of Alcazar," and perhaps "Alphonsus of Germany." Ben Jonson in 1596 laid in Italy the scene of "Every Man in his Humour," but changed the scene to England in the next edition of the play in 1598. He also took three subjects from ancient Roman history. Chapman, the learned translator of Homer and other classics, who began writing

<sup>1</sup> Bacon's Works, by Spedding, vol. vi., p. 17.

plays about 1597, chose a foreign scene for his first play, "The Blind Beggar of Alexandria," and for some other plays after Elizabeth's death. Marlowe, whose plays in style, in subject and in metre so strangely resemble the Shakespeare plays as to suggest collaboration, if not a closer origin, chose foreign scenes for his three plays of "Tamburlaine," "The Jew of Malta" and "The Massacre of Paris," between 1585 and 1589.

All the Shakespeare plays have foreign scenes, save some of the historical plays; the "Merry Wives," which continues "Henry IV.;" "Cymbeline," whose scene is Bacon's home; and "King Lear."

To Bacon, who lived two and a half years in France, whose brother Anthony continued in foreign travel for many years, and who maintained through life intimate correspondence with others resident abroad, it would be natural, seeking "fresh woods and pastures new," to let his imagination dwell on foreign scenes. But what could put it into the head of William Shakspeare, fresh from a provincial town, to talk of nothing else but foreign parts, of which he could know little or nothing!

Notwithstanding a few errors, the plays show a knowledge of foreign countries, especially of France and Italy, much beyond that ordinarily attained in that age. Francis Bacon's travels were probably confined to France. Anthony visited Germany and Switzerland, and in 1582 intended to go on to Italy, but was then hindered by war. His intimate friend and correspondent, Nicholas Faunt, after travelling in Germany, passed six or seven years between Geneva and North Italy, and as Anthony continued his travels until 1592, he doubtless often accompanied Faunt to Italy.

The chief error charged against the author of the plays is allotting a seashore to Bohemia in "Winter's Tale." This error appears to have arisen from a transposition, without

consequent correction, of the scenes in Greene's romance of "Pandosto," on which the play is founded.<sup>1</sup> The romance begins in Bohemia and ends in Sicily. The play transposes the scenes; hence the sailors land in Bohemia instead of Sicily. Notwithstanding his encyclopædic learning, Francis Bacon was often careless of details, and incurred James's satirical remark, "De minimis non curat lex."<sup>2</sup>

Another error alleged is that in "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" Valentine and Launce are made to embark at Verona for Milan; but the Adige is navigable, and the embarkation was by river, for Launce declares that if the river were dry he could fill it with his tears.

This play, moreover, was probably written before 1592, when Anthony Bacon returned, and brought Francis the exact knowledge of Venice, Padua and Verona which the plays exhibit, as Elze shows in his essay on the "Supposed Travels of Shakespeare."

Mr. Sidney Lee admits that "it is in fact unlikely that Shakspeare ever set foot on the continent of Europe in either a private or professional capacity."

Again, notwithstanding what is alleged in the preface to the folio of 1623, the plays did not spring from the poet's brain perfect and complete, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter. They often began with a sketch, which was from time to time re-edited and enlarged until final completion. In this way, too, were Bacon's prose works composed.

Bacon, we are told, rewrote his "Essays" thirty times. His chaplain and biographer, Dr. Rawley, says: "I myself have seen at the least twelve copies of the 'Instauration' revised year by year, one after another, and every year altered and amended in the frame thereof, till at last it

<sup>1</sup> Temple Shakespeare.

<sup>2</sup> For instances of inaccuracies see Bacon's "Apothegms," Devey's notes, Bohn's edition.

came to that model in which it was committed to the press."

Consider now in detail the origin and history of the plays.

The development of the mediæval moralities into the regular drama took place in the sixteenth century. Italy led the way early in the century. Ariosto (1474-1533) has been styled the father of modern comedy. In France, Stephen Jodelle (1532-1572) first introduced tragedy and comedy of modern character. Other dramatists succeeded, borrowing largely from the Italian, and in 1576, the year of Bacon's arrival in Paris, a permanent colony of Italian players was established in France, so that Bacon saw in Paris both French and Italian plays, and could form the opinion, afterwards strongly expressed, that the stage, then too often licentious, should be raised to be a means of instruction for the people.

The English stage was not then more pure than that of France, nor does William Shakspeare's life point him out as a probable reformer of its morals; but it is a striking coincidence that in 1576, in which year Francis Bacon first came to London and attended the Court, the first beginning of the Shakespeare plays appeared; and in 1579, the very year in which Francis Bacon returned to England from France, signs of improvement were noted in the English stage, and in that year appeared, in its earliest form, another, or perhaps two other, of the Shakespeare plays.

In 1576 a "Historie of Errors" was played at Hampton Court before the Queen by the "Children of Pauls." This was doubtless the original or first sketch of the "Comedy of Errors," which was founded on the "Menæchmi" of Plautus, not then translated. The author was therefore a classical scholar, and had access to the Court, conditions fitting well with Francis Bacon, then fresh from Cambridge, brilliant and precocious, and eager to attract

the Queen's favour. The same play, probably (miscalled in the Account of Revels "A Historie of Ferrars"), was "shewed before Her Majesty at Wyndesor on Twelf daie (1581) at night, enacted by the Lord Chamberleyne's servants." That Bacon was the anonymous author is confirmed by the fact that, the next time we hear of the "Comedy of Errors," it was acted in 1594, at Francis Bacon's Inn, Gray's Inn, under his direction and in association with a masque wholly or in great part written by him.

In 1579 Stephen Gosson, in his "School of Abuse," containing "a pleasant invective against poets, pipers, players and such like caterpillars of the Commonwealth," while expressing penitence for some plays he had himself written, tells us that, "As some of the players are farre from abuse, so some of their plays are without rebuke, which are as easily remembered, as quickly reckoned." Of such he names, with five others, "The Jew showne at the Bull, representing the greediness of worldly choosers and bloody mindes of usurers."

In the year of Bacon's return from France, therefore, there was acted at the Bull, where several of the Shakespeare plays were afterwards produced, a play with the double plot of the "Merchant of Venice," the "Caskets" and "The Jew," now first united; both stories taken from Italian sources, the cruel Jew from a novel not translated.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to point to any English dramatist of that date familiar with Italian literature, and competent to discover and combine these two Italian stories into an English comedy. No one has claimed the play, which therefore was probably produced anonymously. Lilly is the only dramatist of any note who is known to have begun work at this date; he began to write in 1578 and lived till 1601. He wrote

<sup>1</sup> Lee, p. 66.

many graceful though fantastic masques, but did not claim this play.

Peile, Greene and Marlowe are said to have begun work about 1584 or 1585. Nash came to London in 1589. Chapman, Ben Jonson and Dekker began eight or ten years later. Marlowe was at this date a youth of fifteen; Peile was of full age, having been born in 1552. He was an able writer, but he lived until about 1598, when this play had been again acted, under the name of "The Venesyon Comedie," and never claimed the play. On the contrary, his last play, "Willie Beguiled," contains passages parodying the "Merchant of Venice."<sup>1</sup>

The coincidence of date, the foreign scene, and the untranslated Italian source of the play, Bacon being intimately acquainted with Italian literature, all point to the probability that the "Play of the Jew," which was acted in 1579, it would seem anonymously, was one of Francis Bacon's earliest dramas.

If so, his active intellect and pressing necessities make it unlikely that it was the only one, and there is some evidence of others.

Gosson mentions a "History of Cæsar and Pompey" as also acted in 1579. This may have been the first form of "Julius Cæsar." A French tragedy called "The Death of Cæsar," written by J. Guerin, was acted in Paris in 1578,<sup>2</sup> and may have suggested the theme. In 1579 also North's translation of Plutarch appeared, containing the lives of Cæsar, Brutus and Antony, and upon North's translation the play of "Julius Cæsar" appears to be partly based.

Francis Bacon was at this period very busy about something of seeming mystery, for Nicholas Faunt, in a letter to Anthony of 31st March, 1583, says he called at Gray's Inn

<sup>1</sup> Fleay, "Chronicle," vol. ii., p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> Halliwell-Phillipps, ii. p. 257.

to see Francis, and "I was answered by his servant that he was not at leisure to speak with me. This strangeness which hath at other times been used towards me by your brother hath made me sometimes to doubt that he greatly mistaketh me."

The nature of Francis Bacon's studies during these years was, as we have seen, known to his friend Sir Thomas Bodley, and by him strongly condemned.

In 1584, the year after Faunt's letter, "Felix and Philomena," a lost play, on which it is acknowledged<sup>1</sup> "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" was founded, was acted at Court. This play had also a foreign source and foreign scene. It was drawn from the Spanish romance of "Diana," which was not translated until 1596 or 1598, and, not being claimed by any dramatist, it was probably anonymous. Yet the author was a man of cultivation, acquainted with the Spanish language and literature, and of sufficient interest at Court to have the play acted before the Queen. All this is very consistent with Bacon's authorship.

The Earl of Leicester was at this time, and until his death in 1588, the patron of the principal company of players, the Queen's, after 1594 called the Lord Chamberlain's Company. Francis Bacon was a constant attendant at Court, and was in favour with the Queen, whose entertainment he often afterwards promoted, and could readily arrange with Leicester for the performance of this play.

William Shakspeare had not then left Stratford.

<sup>1</sup> Lee, p. 53.



VII. “HAMLET.”

“**H**.AMLET” next appears; its early history deserves close attention.

The play was first acted at some time between 1584 and 1589, probably in 1584 or 1585. The scene and source of “Hamlet” are foreign. The story was drawn from the French “*Histoires Tragiques*” of Belleforest, not translated until 1608, or from the earlier Latin “*Historia Danica*” of Saxo Grammaticus. The play was therefore the work of a scholar. The play transforms the legend, and is a typical example of the dramatist’s power to “enrich” his subject “with counsels and speeches and notable peculiarities,” transmuting dross into gold.

The Ghost, so powerful a motive in the play, finds no place in the legend. The secrecy of the crime, its detection by the “Mousetrap” play, and the gravediggers scene, all are new; and, from a vulgar temptress procured by the uncle to test Hamlet’s madness, has been created the pure and pathetic character of Ophelia.

The play, though acted before 1589, was not published until 1603. The question is whether the early play and the published play were substantially the same and by the same author. One evidence of identity is that both contained the new and striking episode of the Ghost.

The production of the play, having for its subject the poisoning of a monarch, deeply avenged, was doubtless connected with the plots for the murder of Elizabeth by poison, which in 1584, and again in 1594, strongly excited the public mind. The play was calculated to arouse indignation against such crimes, and to inspire in those tempted to commit them a wholesome dread of vengeance.

In 1584 several of such plots were discovered, investigated and punished. Francis Bacon, who entered Parliament in that year, thereupon addressed to the Queen a letter of warning and advice. "Care," he wrote, "one of the natural and true-bred children of unfeigned affection, awaked with these late wicked and barbarous attempts, would needs exercise my pen to your sacred Majesty."

On 28th February, 1587-8, certain devices and shows were presented to Her Majesty by the gentlemen of Gray's Inn (Bacon's Inn) at Her Highness's Court at Greenwich, including a masque of "The Misfortunes of Arthur,"<sup>1</sup> partly devised by Francis Bacon. Seven plays were also performed before the Queen by the children of Paul's and Her Majesty's servants during these revels. Whether these plays included the original play of "Hamlet" we know not; the first distinct allusion to the play appears in Nash's preface to Greene's "Menaphon" in 1589, when the play must have been well known and already often acted.

Both Nash and Greene were dramatists of University education, who jealously resented the intrusion by interlopers, without classical education, of foreign translated plays in blank verse. Greene in 1585, in his "Planetomachia," denounced "some avaricious player—who not content with his own province [of acting] should dare to intrude into the field of authorship, which ought to belong solely to the professed scholars." In 1588 he sneers again at this play-writer, and speaks of "gentlemen poets" who set "the end of scholarism in an English blank verse—it is the humor of a *novice* that tickles them with self-love."

Nash, in his preface of 1589, sneers at a few of our "triviall translators," and proceeds: "It is a common practice now-a-daies, amongst a sort of shifting companions

<sup>1</sup> Collier's "History of the Drama," pp. 266-268; Knight's "Biography of Shakespeare," pp. 326-327.

that runne through every arte and thrive by none, to leave the trade of *noverint* wherein they were borne, and busie themselves with the endeavours of art ; that could scarcely latinize their neck-verse if they should have neede ; yet English Seneca read by candle-light yeeldes manie good sentences as ‘Bloud is a beggar,’ and so forth : and if you intreate him faire in a frostie morning he will afford you *whole Hamlets, I should say Handfuls of tragical speaches.*” —“Idiot art-masters who think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of bragging verse, and translate twopenny pamphlets from the Italian.”

What caused this outburst of jealousy from Greene and Nash? By some this satire is supposed to refer to Shakspeare, who had but lately come to London ; by others, to be pointed at Thomas Kydd, who about this date was writing plays ; but Kydd is not known to have translated from the Italian. Probably the satire was directed against the anonymous and, as yet, unknown author, whose foreign dramas in blank verse, drawn from Italian, Spanish or French stories, were gaining a popularity excelling that of the rhyming comedies of Nash and Greene or Lodge.

In 1591 Greene, in his “Farewell to Folly,” sneers at the practice of concealing the authorship of plays under other names. “Others—if they come to write or publish anything in print—which for their *calling and gravity* being loth to have any profane pamphlets pass under their hand, get some other to set his name to their verses. Thus is the ass made proud by this underhand brokery. And he that cannot write true English without the aid of clerks of parish churches will needs make himself the father of interludes.”

In 1594 another plot against Elizabeth’s life was discovered ; her physician Lopez was bribed with 50,000 crowns to poison her by putting a poisoned jewel into her

cup. Bacon took official part in the inquiry into the guilt of Lopez, who was executed on 7th June, 1594.

Two days later, on 9th June, 1594, "Hamlet" was acted at Newington Butts by "My lord Admiralle and my lord Chamberlen men."<sup>1</sup>

In the play the cup prepared for Hamlet, but drunk by the Queen, is poisoned with a pearl.

In 1596 Lodge, in "Wits Miserie," alludes to the Ghost "which cries so miserably at the Theatre like an oyster wife 'Hamlet revenge.'" This new supernatural element, the ghost impelling Hamlet to avenge his murder, goes far to prove the substantial identity of the play acted before 1589, and again in 1594, with the play published in 1603 and 1604.

In 1598, the year in which the name of Shakespeare was first printed on the title-page of a play, "Hamlet" appears to have been assigned to him as the author.

Steevens, in his preface to "Hamlet," writes: "I have seen a copy of Speight's edition of Chaucer which formerly belonged to Gabriel Harvey (the antagonist of Nash), who in his own handwriting has set down 'Hamlet' as a performance with which he was well acquainted in the year 1598. His words are these: 'The younger sort take much delight in Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis"; but his "Lucrece" and his tragedy of "Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke," have it in them to please the wiser sort, 1598.'"

The copy of Chaucer referred to has disappeared, and Halliwell-Phillipps doubts if the date of Gabriel Harvey's note is reliable; but Steevens's statement is precise, and confirms the identity of the play, well known in and before 1598, with the play afterwards published in Shakespeare's name.

The identity of the actors points to the same conclusion. In 1594 "Hamlet" was played by the Lord Admiral and

<sup>1</sup> Henslowe's Diary.

the Lord Chamberlain's men, who from 1594 to 1596 acted together at Newington Butts. In 1596 "Hamlet" was played at "The Theatre" which James Burbage built in 1576, and where the Lord Chamberlain's Company were acting in 1596.<sup>1</sup> The play therefore belonged to that company; and according to tradition Richard Burbage excelled in the part of Hamlet, and William Shakspeare, who was a member of the company in and after 1594, took the part of the Ghost, "the top of his performance." Were there two Hamlets, and two Ghosts, conceived by two different authors, and acted alternately or successively by the same actors? A strange theory, which seems confuted by the title of the play when published.

On 26th July, 1602, "A book called the revenge of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke, as it was lately acted by the Lord Chamberlain his servants," was entered on the register of the Stationers' Company.

In the following year, 1603, "Hamlet" was published under the title of "The Tragical Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, by William Shakespeare, as it hath beene divers times acted by his Highnesse servants in the citie of London, as also in the two Universities of Cambridge and Oxford and elsewhere."

The play now published was, therefore, not a new one, but the old one well known as so often acted by the Lord Chamberlain's Company in many places.

In 1604 a revised and much longer version was published as "The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, by William Shakespeare, newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much again as it was, according to the true and perfect copy."

In the folio of 1623 it was again printed, with some further additions and some omissions.

<sup>1</sup> Lee, p. 36.

The precise words, "Hamlet revenge," spoken by the Ghost, and which had become a common saying in 1596, are not found in the published editions; but the title registered in 1602, "The Revenge of Hamlet," suggests that some earlier copies contained them, or that some actor declaimed them and so gave them currency. The passion of the play as first acted was probably less restrained than in the printed editions.<sup>1</sup>

The continuous popularity of the play, presented repeatedly by the same company, the Ghost specially characteristic of the Shakespeare play, its description when published as the well-known play so often acted by the Lord Chamberlain's Company: all these are marks which combine to establish the substantial identity of the play published in 1603 with the play acted in and before 1589.

But in 1589 William Shakspeare had but lately left Stratford, and, according to D'Avenant's story, was holding horses at the Theatre. He could scarcely yet have become an actor, nor is it reasonably credible that he had already composed "Hamlet" and obtained its production.

Bacon at this date had returned from France ten years, and was studying law at Gray's Inn, but falling into debt. He was devoted to the drama, and had perhaps already produced four plays, "The Plaie of Errors," "The Jew," "Cæsar," and "Felix and Philomena." He was well known and esteemed at Court, familiar with Lord Leicester, and doubtless also with the Queen's Company of players, and, well knowing the dangers to which Elizabeth was exposed, was eager to "exercise his pen in her service."

The philosophic character and the medical science and legal skill of the play point to the philosophic mind and medical and legal skill of Bacon, rather than to the early essay of a provincial youth, for its origin.

<sup>1</sup> Halliwell-Phillipps, vol. ii., p. 312.



The play seems tinged with the vague pantheistic philosophy of Giordano Bruno,<sup>1</sup> who lectured in Paris against Aristotle in 1579 (in which year Bacon also was in Paris), and who was in England from 1583 to 1585, was patronized by Sir Philip Sidney, to whom he dedicated two of his books, and doubtless would obtain the sympathy and friendship of Francis Bacon. The coincidence of date is interesting, having regard to the philosophical cast of the play.

The philosophy of Greece also appears in the play.

Bacon names among other Greek philosophers, too slightly perused, Parmenides, of whose works a few fragments have been preserved by Plato. The essence of Parmenides' teaching was that Being is the sole reality, and not Being is nothing,<sup>2</sup> “Wherefore either to be or not to be is the unconditioned alternative.” Here may be traced the germ of Hamlet's soliloquy. Parmenides also taught that the sun and stars are real fires. Bacon adopted this opinion and Hamlet expresses it: “Doubt that the stars are fire—but never doubt my love.”

But there is also singular evidence of medical science. The circulation of the blood was not announced by Harvey until 1616; but the valvular structure of the veins was discovered before this time by Fabricius, a physician of Padua, to whom Harvey went to study in 1598. This stage of the discovery appears to have been known to the author of “*Hamlet,*” who also understood the action of certain poisons in coagulating the blood and throwing out pustules.

The Ghost thus describes his murder:

Sleeping within mine orchard,  
My custom always of the afternoon,

<sup>1</sup> “*Shakespeariana,*” vol. i., p. 31; Field's notes to “*Romeo and Juliet.*”

<sup>2</sup> “*Baconiana,*” vol. i., p. 223.



Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole  
 With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,  
 And in the porches of mine ears did pour  
 The leperous distilment; whose effect  
 Holds such an enmity with blood of man  
 That swift as quicksilver *it courses through*  
*The natural gates and alleys of the body,*  
 And with a sudden vigour it doth posset  
 And curd, like eager droppings into milk,  
 The thin and wholesome blood: so did it mine,  
 And a most instant tetter barked about  
 Most lazar like, with vile and loathsome crust,  
 All my smooth body.

The like knowledge appears afterwards in "Coriolanus," where Menenius, in telling the fable of the belly and the members, says of the digested food:

I send it through the rivers of your blood,  
 Even to the Court, the heart—to the seat of the brain;  
 And through the cranks and offices of men,  
 The strongest nerves and small inferior veins  
 From me receive that natural competency  
 Whereby they live.

How came the author of "Hamlet" by this knowledge? Francis Bacon had correspondents in Italy and at Padua, and studied deeply physiology and the operation of poisons. Can William Shakspeare be reasonably supposed to have gained this knowledge at Stratford.

As to legal attainment, it has been pointed out by Lord Campbell<sup>1</sup> that the gravediggers scene shows an accurate knowledge of the law relating to suicides, as discussed in the case of *Hales v. Petit* in Plowden's "Reports" (1578). Knowledge proper to Bacon, but very strange in William Shakspeare.

Much conjecture has been indulged in as to the relation of the first to the second quarto edition of "Hamlet." It

<sup>1</sup> "Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements," p. 104.

has been suggested that the 1603 edition was printed<sup>1</sup> “apparently from a MS. of the old play by Kyd, as hurriedly altered by Shakspeare for the occasion, but with the omission of many speeches, which, being written on separate papers, had passed into the hands of the several actors ; their defect being made up as best might be.” Again,<sup>2</sup> that the edition of 1603 was “a piratical and carelessly transcribed copy of Shakspeare’s first draft of the play.”

These conjectures appear inconsistent with the facts shown by the books themselves.

The greater part of the play of 1603 is verbatim the same as that of 1604, and must have had the same author. The title of the play of 1603 declares it to be that which the Lord Chamberlain’s Company were accustomed to act. That it was not copied or taken down from the play of 1604 is shown by Polonius being named Corambus in 1603. The difference between the two editions consists not in incident but chiefly in the expansion of the speeches, developing the characters of the play. The speeches are not dropped out in 1603, but are expanded in 1604. Thus revised and enlarged the play became the true and perfect copy. A like revision and expansion took place with regard to others of these plays, “The Merry Wives,” the Second part of “Henry VI.,” and others. The two titles tell the plain facts and cannot be ignored. There appears no just ground for the imputation of piracy. The book was duly entered at Stationers’ Hall in 1602 by James Roberts, who probably therefore printed the edition of 1603 for Ling and Trundell, the publishers ; and who certainly printed the edition of 1604 for the same publisher, Nicholas Ling.

That the edition of 1603 was not a mutilated copy of that

<sup>1</sup> Fleay, “Chronicle of the English Drama,” vol. ii., p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, p. 223.

of 1604, but that the latter was a distinct revision, is confirmed by the German "Hamlet." "Hamlet" is included with "Romeo and Juliet," "Julius Cæsar" and "King Lear," in a list dated 1626 of English plays acted in that year at Dresden.<sup>1</sup> The earliest extant German version is dated in 1710. It is vulgarized in the translation; but the incidents are nearly the same as those of the English play of 1603, and the Chamberlain is named Corambus, showing that the German play had an origin distinct from and earlier than the English play of 1604.

Leicester's company of players accompanied him to the Low Countries when he went thither as commander-in-chief in 1585. The play, as we have seen, belonged to that company. It seems probable that by that company and at that date the play of "Hamlet" was first introduced into Germany.

If the evidence identifies the "Hamlet" acted in and before 1589 with the "Hamlet" of 1603 and 1604, William Shakspeare cannot reasonably be supposed to have been the author. If Shakspeare was not the author, to whom but to Francis Bacon can the authorship be attributed? And it will not be disputed that the author of "Hamlet" was the author of the other plays.

<sup>1</sup> Cohn's "Shakespeare in Germany," p. cxv.

## VIII. "TWELFTH NIGHT," "LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST," "TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA" AND "MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM."

"TWELFTH NIGHT" in its original form, if the suggestions of an ingenious writer may be accepted,<sup>1</sup> also appeared in 1584 or 1585 as a thinly-veiled satire on members of the English Court.

In D'Israeli's "Curiosities of Literature" it is stated that "Coke was exhibited on the stage for his ill-usage of Raleigh, as was suggested by Theobald in a note on 'Twelfth Night';" but the play may be more probably explained as a satire in the person of Malvolio, Olivia's steward, upon Raleigh, then the Queen's Chamberlain, whose overweening arrogance embittered the envy caused by his sudden rise to royal favour.

Raleigh, Aubrey says, "was a fine fellow but damnable proud." Bacon relates Lord Oxford's sneer at Raleigh, "When Jacks go up heads go down." He offended the court ladies, as Bacon also tells,<sup>2</sup> by saying "they were like witches for they could do hurt, but they could do no good!" The ladies doubtless retaliated, and would enjoy even an imaginary discomfiture of their contemner. Maria's description of Malvolio as "smiling his face into more lines than are in the new map with the augmentation of the Indies" would be referred to Raleigh, whose captains returned in September, 1584, from their first exploring voyage to the West.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Renaissance Drama, or History made Visible," by William Thomson, F.R.C.S., F.L.S. Melbourne, 1880.

<sup>2</sup> "Apothegms."

<sup>3</sup> This may be a later addition referring to Hakluyt's Map, published in 1599 or 1600 (Lee, p. 210).

The Clown doubtless represented, or was represented by, Dick Tarleton, whom for his ready wit Leicester brought from being a cowherd on his estate to become Court Jester, a post he retained until in 1584 his biting jest at the unpopular favourite banished him from Court.<sup>1</sup> "See," he said, pointing to Raleigh, who with Leicester was sitting beside Elizabeth, "the knave commands the Queen!" After leaving Court, Tarleton became or continued the chief comedian in Leicester's company of players; he went with Leicester to the Low Countries in 1585, and died in 1588. Tarleton also kept a tavern in Gracious, now Gracechurch Street, hard by the chiming tower of St. Benet's Church. Hence the wit passage between the Clown and Viola.

*Viola.* Save thee, friend, and thy music. Dost thou live by thy tabor?

*Clown.* No, sir, I live by the church.

*Viola.* Art thou a churchman.

*Clown.* No such matter, sir. I do live by the church, for I do live at my house, and my house doth stand by the church."

And again, the Clown says to Orsino:

"The bells of St. Bennet may put you in mind, one, two, three."

The Captain's advice to Sebastian, "In the south suburb, at the Elephant, is best to lodge," further shows that, though the scene and the actors are disguised as of Illyria, they belong really to the English Court, and to London city. The Elephant, now surviving as the Elephant and Castle, would be one of the first hostelries reached on entering London on the south from the sea-coast.

<sup>1</sup> Bohun's "Character of Elizabeth."

The Clown also satirically refers to the transmigration of souls, which strange notion of Pythagoras was revived by Giordano Bruno when in England from 1583 to 1585, the suggested date of the play.

“*Clown.* What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl?”

*Malvolio.* That the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird.”

Sir Toby Belch, Olivia's kinsman, recalled Elizabeth's own cousin, Sir Francis Knollys, a jovial old soldier, who by virtue of “consanguinity” took liberties in the royal household, as Sir Toby did in Olivia's. His chamber being hard by the dormitory of the maids of honour, he declared “that they used when retired for the night to frisk and hey about,” so that it was in vain for him to attempt sleep or study. One night, “when the maids of honour were unusually obstreperous,” he marched into their dormitory with his night-cap on and book in hand, and paced up and down declaiming in Latin, declaring that he would not leave them in quiet possession, without they permitted him to rest in his apartments.

Sebastian may represent young Robert Devereux, afterwards Earl of Essex, who in 1584 entered the brilliant Court, and Viola, perhaps, his sister Penelope, whose beauty changed Sir Philip Sidney's courtly admiration of Elizabeth to a passion for herself, which her marriage with Lord Rich disappointed.

Other allusions in the play may be traced with more or less probability, and others may exist no longer recognizable.

In that age personal satire was common, and playwrights freely lampooned one another; but a court satire needed for its writer one within the circle of the Court, familiar with

court gossip, and with tact showing how far and in what direction satire might safely go. These qualifications belonged to Bacon rather than to Shakspeare.

"Twelfth Night" was acted, probably in a revised form, at the Middle Temple Hall on February 2nd, 1601-2.

The satire on the English Court was followed by a travesty of the French Court. In "Love's Labour's Lost" the King of Navarre and his courtiers and some of the incidents of the play are drawn from contemporary characters and events of the French Court. The scene in which the princess's lovers press their suit in the disguise of Russians follows the reception at Elizabeth's Court, in 1584, of Russian ambassadors, who sought a wife among the English nobility for the Tsar.

"Love's Labour's Lost" is commonly said from internal evidence to be the earliest of the Shakespeare plays, because of the large number of rhymes which it contains; and, although this character may depend on subject as well as date, this play appears to be the first which in point of date could be attributed to William Shakspeare. But how strange a subject it seems for him to choose for his first essay in drama.

Bacon from his residence in France knew all the leaders in French politics, and doubtless saw the Russian ambassadors at the English Court; but what could Shakspeare, living at Stratford, probably until 1587, be likely to know of French politics or Russian ambassadors?

"The Two Gentlemen of Verona," which is thought to have next appeared, was probably a revision of the lost "History of Felix and Philomena" already mentioned. Both were founded on the Spanish romance of "Diana," of which no translation was published until 1596 or 1598. Bacon knew Spanish, and in his "Promus" collected Spanish proverbs, but it is scarcely possible that Shakspeare



could be acquainted with the Spanish language or literature, or could have discovered this Spanish romance; he could not have done so at Stratford in 1584, when "Felix and Philomena" appeared.

The scenes of these two plays were laid abroad, a choice well fitting Bacon's life, but hard to reconcile with Shakspeare's.

"Midsummer Night's Dream" is believed by Fleay to be one of the earliest of the plays on account of the 850 rhyming lines it contains, exceeding those of any other of the plays except "Love's Labour's Lost," which has more than 1,000. Only three other plays, "Romeo and Juliet," "Richard II." and the "Comedy of Errors," exceed 200.<sup>1</sup>

The play was probably written in celebration of a marriage, and several authors<sup>2</sup> have assumed that it was composed for Southampton's marriage in 1598. Elze points out<sup>3</sup> that this is inconsistent with the clandestine circumstances of Southampton's marriage, for which he was promptly imprisoned by Elizabeth, and he suggests Essex's marriage in 1590 as the more probable occasion.

Oberon's vision is thought to refer to Leicester's fête to Elizabeth at Kenilworth in 1575, which argues an early date for the play.

This theory agrees well with Francis Bacon's authorship, whose intimacy with Essex might well lead him so to grace his marriage. But it is difficult to suppose that William Shakspeare within three years from leaving Stratford in 1587 could have attained the refinement and skill which characterize the play, or the distinction of being chosen to write it for such an occasion.

<sup>1</sup> "Shakespeare Manual," p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> Tieck, Ulrici, Gerald, Massey.

<sup>3</sup> Elze's "Essays," "Midsummer Night's Dream."

## IX. HISTORICAL PLAYS, 1591.

THE next play is believed to be the First part of "Henry VI.," commencing the historical series and dramatizing the wars in France. It was produced on 3rd March, 1591,<sup>1</sup> and obtained a popular triumph. "How it would have joyed brave Talbot, the terror of the French," wrote Nash in August, 1592, "to think that after he had lyne two hundred yeares in his tombe hee should triumph againe on the stage, and have his bones embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least (at several times), who in the tragedian that represents his person imagine that they behold him fresh bleeding."

The scenes of this play Bacon had himself visited; the effect of its acting was just such as he desired for the historical drama, "History made Visible."

The Second and Third parts of "Henry VI." were acted in the same or the following year. These depict the wars of the Roses; the Second part describes the battle of St. Albans, which was fought within a mile or two of Bacon's home. From his childhood he grew up amid the memories of Henry VI. In the Abbey Church are the tombs of Earl Warwick's family, with the Nevil's crest, "The rampant bear chained to the ragged staff," of the Greys his kindred, of Queen Margaret and good Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, all of whom are mentioned in the Third part of "Henry VI."

Historical plays were then almost a novelty, although a popular play of "The Victories of Henry V." was acted and one or two others. It was natural that Bacon should essay historical drama which he so commended, and natural

<sup>1</sup> Henslowe's Diary; Lee, p. 56.

that he should choose the historical scenes with which he was most familiar ; but it was a strange coincidence that Shakspeare (if it was really he) should not only choose historical drama, but should, in making his first essay, select for his subject three historical scenes so intimately connected with Bacon's life.

Two lines in "1 Henry VI." point to Bacon rather than Shakspeare as the author of this play :

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

Critics were long puzzled to trace this legend. It has been found in Plato's "Phædrus," which Bacon knew, but which was not translated in Shakspeare's time. But "Adonis' Gardens" is also one of Bacon's "Promus" notes, drawn from Erasmus.

A few lines further on "the rich jewelled coffer of Darius" is mentioned, of which the story, taken from Pliny and Strabo, is told by Bacon in the first book of "De Augmentis"; another instance of the identity, in thought and knowledge, of the author of the plays and Bacon.

It seems as difficult to fit the scenes and subjects of these plays, as their language and learning into the life of Shakspeare.

Genius, in every other case, takes colour from its surroundings, however it may transmute them.

Walter Scott wrote of mediæval romance, and of Scottish history and homely life ; Robert Burns of "Banks and Braes" and rustic beauty ; Dickens invested vulgar life with picturesqueness, humour and pathos ; Thackeray wrote tales of the Charterhouse ; Disraeli, political novels ; Gladstone, Homeric dissertations. Shakspeare's receptive genius, if he really possessed it, must have absorbed the scenes and customs of his Warwickshire home, as George Eliot did, and then the vivid variety of town life when he came

to London. With a mind so filled, but with little book-learning, in what form is his genius supposed to burst out? French politics, Italian novel, Roman history, Spanish romance, Danish legend, Latin play, French wars and the battle of St. Albans!

It is a tissue of improbabilities which multiply by geometrical progression into the impossible. But all fit naturally and exactly into the life of Francis Bacon, and reflect its varying colour.

If Bacon was the author of the plays this could not be avowed; some author must be named for plays so successful.

In the contempt in which the stage was then held, an avowal of the authorship of stage plays would have destroyed Bacon's good prospects of judicial or other office, and ruined his professional career. It would have disgraced him at Court, and bitterly incensed his mother.

Literature as a profession, even apart from play-writing, was then deemed degrading to a man of position. Montaigne said for a man of good family to addict himself to literature for so "abject an end as gain" was "unworthy of the grace and favour of the Muses." Selden, in his "Table Talk," says: "'Tis ridiculous for a Lord to print verses, 'tis well enough to make them to please himself, but to make them public is foolish"; and the author of "The Arte of English Poesie" (1589) says he has known "very many notable gentlemen of the Court that have written (poetry) commendably and suppressed it again, or else suffered it to be published without *their own* names to it."<sup>1</sup>

Such *jeux d'esprit* might be circulated privately in manuscript without the loss of caste which publication for profit would entail.

Shakspeare's name was given forth as the author of the plays. This rôle would be but awkwardly assumed by a

<sup>1</sup> "Shakespeare, Bacon, an Essay," p. 36.

young illiterate player, and may well have seemed to his fellows incongruous or unaccountable, and have excited their jealousy and suspicion; although those who only knew him from the works which bore his name may have expressed unfeigned admiration. Nash in 1589 had sneered at some "Idiot art-masters who think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of bragging verse and translate twopenny pamphlets from the Italian." But when the trilogy of "Henry VI." achieved such brilliant success, and was claimed by Shakspeare, suspicion broke out into denunciation; and Greene in 1592, in his "Groatsworth of Wit," warned his friends against the upstart. "An upstart crow beautified with our feathers, that, with his tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast a blank verse as the best of you, and being an absolute Johannes Factotum is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country."

The words "With his tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide" are parodied from the line in "3 Henry VI.": "O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide."

It has been erroneously supposed that Chettle, who published Greene's "Groatsworth of Wit," afterwards apologized, in his "Kind Hearts Dream," for this as an attack on Shakspeare. This is an error; the apology and the character-sketch it contained do not, as Fleay and Castle have pointed out,<sup>1</sup> refer at all to Shakspeare, but to one of the three writers whom Greene had addressed and severely censured, probably Marlowe. The error was begun by Malone, and has been copied by subsequent writers. Chettle's words are: "About three months since died Mr. Robert Greene, leaving many papers in sundry booksellers' hands, among others his 'Groatsworth of Wit,' in which a letter written *to divers*

<sup>1</sup> Fleay, "Chronicle History of Shakespeare," p. 111; "Shakespeare, Bacon, Jonson, and Greene," by Castle, p. 163.

*play-writers* is offensively by one or two of *them* taken.—With neither of *them that take offence* was I acquainted, and with one of them I care not if I never be. The other whom at that time I did not so much spare as since I wish I had—that I did not I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault.”

If the suspicions of the genuineness of Shakspeare's claims should spread the mask might not avail, the true authorship of the plays might be discovered. If, however, Shakspeare's reputation as a poet were established, this might be averted. What next followed certainly had this effect.

X. “VENUS AND ADONIS” AND “LUCRECE,”  
1593-1594.

IN 1593, the London theatres being closed on account of the plague, which would prevent the author of the plays, whether Bacon or Shakspeare, from gaining money by fresh dramas, the classical poem of “Venus and Adonis” appeared, without an author's name on the title-page, but with a dedication to the Earl of Southampton, signed “William Shakespeare.” The Earl of Southampton, then a young man of twenty, lodged in Gray's Inn, and was well known to Bacon and his brother Anthony. He was a close friend of Essex, for whom Francis and Anthony Bacon were then acting as secretaries or assistants. He afterwards became associated with Essex in his treasonable schemes; Bacon then renounced the friendship of both, and the dedication did not appear in the later editions.

To show some connection between Southampton and William Shakspeare, any intimacy between a nobleman and a young actor being unlikely, a story is cited, recorded by Nicholas Rowe with some hesitation more than a century

later, in 1709, and said to be handed down by Sir William D’Avenant, “that Lord Southampton at one time gave Shakspeare a thousand pounds to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to.”

The story is not reconcilable with the facts of Shakspeare’s life. His first purchase was of New Place for £60 in 1597. At this time his income as an actor is estimated at £130 a year, irrespective of any profit from the plays.<sup>1</sup> In 1598 we find him lending money at Stratford. In that year Southampton was committed to prison on account of his secret marriage with one of the Queen’s Maids of Honour. He was already ruined by his extravagance, and had joined the Paris embassy to endeavour to retrieve his position. Being recalled to answer for his offence, he wrote thus to Essex from Paris in September, 1598: “My so sudden return is a kind of punishment which I imagine Her Majesty’s will is not to lay upon me ; I mean because, when I am returned, I protest unto your lordship I scarce know what course to take to live, having at my departure let to farm that poor estate I had left for the satisfying my creditors, and payment of those debts which I came to owe by following her court, and have reserved only such a portion as will maintain myself and a very small train in the time of my travels.”<sup>2</sup> In 1599 Shakspeare acquired from Burbage shares in the Globe Theatre, “doubtless freely bestowed,”<sup>3</sup> estimated to bring him in £500 a year. In 1601 Southampton was again imprisoned for complicity in Essex’s rebellion, and was not released until April, 1603. His name was now struck out from the dedication of the poems. In 1602 Shakspeare, then living in affluence at Stratford, bought lands for £320, and in 1605 a lease of tithes for £440. It cannot be supposed that Southamp-

<sup>1</sup> Lee, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> Hatfield MSS., 1598.

<sup>3</sup> Lee, p. 201.



ton's aid, while he was still in prison or recently released, was either offered or required for these purchases.

If the story has any foundation, it may possibly refer to some act of liberality of Southampton to Francis Bacon, who was in money straits, and to whom Essex in 1594 transferred property worth £1,800 in reward for long service.

To "Venus and Adonis" was prefixed a Latin quotation from Ovid's "Amores." Of the poem Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke, who seem to have studied it more accurately than Shakspeare's life, write: "It bears palpable tokens of college elegance and predilection, both in story and in treatment. The air of niceness and stiffness peculiar to the schools invests these efforts of the youthful genius with almost unmistakable signs of having been written by a schoolman."

One of Shakspeare's contemporaries, the author of "Polimanteia" (1595), fell into the like error, or divined the true author, when he wrote that Shakspeare was both a "schollar" and also a member of one or more of the "three English Universities, Cambridge, Oxford and the Inns of Court." A description well fitting either Francis or Anthony Bacon, but not William Shakspeare.

In those days, when men travelled little even in their own country, the provincial dialects were strong and persistent. It is difficult to conceive that William Shakspeare, so soon after leaving Stratford, could have written a poem so polished, elegant and classical.

Moreover, the dedication describes the poem as "the first heir of mine invention," a remarkable expression, inconsistent apparently with its authorship by the writer of the plays, whoever he might be, unless, as some have been driven to suppose, it was written by Shakspeare before he left Stratford—a difficult theory!

In the previous year, 1592, Anthony Bacon returned from his foreign travels, and lived with Francis at Gray's

Inn until 1594, and then went to live near the Bull Theatre. He was two years older than Francis, and had an equal education; the brothers were devoted to each other, and doubtless Anthony, until his death in 1601, aided Francis in his literary work, including the plays, if he wrote them. He was, Dr. Rawley tells us, "of as great a wit as his brother, but less learned." Among Anthony Bacon's correspondence at Lambeth Palace is a French elegy to his memory, which addresses him as "the flower of Englishmen and the honor of the nine Muses and of Pallas, who now wander without guide or succour through the wood." It would seem from this that Anthony was known as a poet, although no poems are known to have been published in his name.

Is it an improbable conjecture that Anthony Bacon may have written "Venus and Adonis," which is as poetical as the plays, but less learned? This may have been "the first heir of his invention." The moral tone of the poem differs widely from that of the plays, and seems to harmonize as little with the character of Francis Bacon as the polished elegance of the verse does with the education of William Shakspeare.

In the year 1594 the poem "Lucrece" was published, with a similar dedication to Lord Southampton, signed "William Shakespeare." The authorship of the two poems was doubtless the same.

Although the writing of poems might be less objectionable in a lawyer than writing plays, its avowal would have been a serious obstacle to Francis Bacon's professional advancement, since even his philosophical writings are said to have been used by his rivals to exclude him from office. The same objection might be felt by Anthony to the publication of poems in his name, and there was, if Francis Bacon wrote the plays, the attribution of which to Shakspeare was already

x  
The  
Lucrece  
Shakspeare

the subject of suspicion, strong reason for confirming Shakspeare's poetic reputation.

On the other hand, how could Shakspeare have possibly acquired the cultured and classical style these poems show, and why should he describe them as "the first heir of mine invention"? Both these poems were printed by Richard Field, who had lately come from Stratford-on-Avon and commenced a printing business in London, and with whom William Shakspeare was probably acquainted; but Field's name does not again appear.

These poems were greatly admired, and gained for William Shakspeare high praise, and did in fact confirm his reputation both as poet and play-writer. John Weever, in a sonnet addressed to "honey-tongued Shakespeare" in 1595, eulogized the two poems as an unmatchable achievement, mentioning at the same time the plays "Romeo" and "Richard," and "more whose names I know not."

The numerous editions show that the publication of these poems was profitable to the author, whoever he may have been.

Letters between Bacon and Essex, hereafter quoted, appear to show that Essex knew that Bacon was a poet. Southampton, from his intimacy with Essex and Bacon, probably shared the secret, and would understand that Shakespeare was an assumed name.

It must be noted that, although the Shakspeare family spelt their name in twenty-six different ways,<sup>1</sup> never until the dedication of these poems was the name known to be spelt "Shakespeare."

This spelling was afterwards generally adopted when the name was printed on the plays, but, in seventeen instances, with a hyphen between the syllables, as if it was a *nom-de-plume* or a metaphor rather than a proper name; and the

<sup>1</sup> Elze's "Essays."

title-page of the folio of 1623 shows the spear shaken by Wit from behind a mask at Ignorance. In none of the five signatures of Shakspeare extant does he appear to have so spelt his name, though all are written late in life; nor in any of the 166 entries in the Stratford records is the name so spelt; only in the poems and plays, and in the proceedings to obtain the grant of arms; and in some deeds, but not all, after that date, does this spelling appear; and it is not then adopted by Shakspeare himself, as his later signatures show. Shakspeare is the spelling in the registry of baptism and of burial, Shagspere in the marriage bond. In 1604 the Accounts of Revels at Court show that "Measure for Measure" and "The Plaie of Errors," and in 1605 "The Merchant of Venis," were played before the King. In both places "The poet which made the Plaies" is given as "Shaxberd."<sup>1</sup>

Is it not then a suggestive coincidence that, just about the time when the name "Shakespeare" first appeared, someone was experimenting with this name in connection with the name of Francis Bacon, and wrote it out seven times, and the name Francis Bacon three times, on the cover of a book containing several of Francis Bacon's writings in manuscript, and also the manuscripts of two of the Shakespeare plays? Yet this appears from the Northumberland House manuscript hereafter described.

## XI. THE "COMEDY OF ERRORS" AND OTHER PLAYS, 1594-1600.

THE "Comedy of Errors" reappeared in 1594, being probably a revised form of the "Historie of Errors" played at Hampton Court in 1576.

<sup>1</sup> Shakspeare's name does not appear elsewhere in the Accounts of Revels; nor at all in the Stationers' Registry, nor in Henslowe's Diary.

“A Comedy of Errors like to Plautus his Menechmi” was played by the players at Grays’ Inn on Innocents’ Day, December, 1594, as is recorded in the “Gesta Graiorum.” The players are described as a “Company of base and common fellows,” to distinguish them from the members of the Inn, who acted in the accompanying masque, which, according to Spedding, was composed by Bacon, the “chief contriver” of the masques and revels there. Was Bacon or one of those “base and common fellows” more probably the classical scholar, who adapted this play from the untranslated “Menæchmi” of Plautus?

On the same day William Shakspeare had made his first recorded appearance before the Queen at Greenwich Palace, acting in a comedy or interlude with William Kempe and Richard Burbage. Halliwell-Phillipps<sup>1</sup> supposes that the same company came late at night to Grays’ Inn to act in the “Comedy of Errors,” and if Shakspeare wrote the comedy he would doubtless be there; but the description of the players is little consistent with his recognition as the author of the play.

In 1592 and 1593 Francis Bacon was in money straits, borrowing from Jews and Lombards, and almost decided to abandon the legal profession and become “a sorry book-maker.” About this time he was arrested on a bond. Anthony again and again came to his relief, and mortgaged his estate to pay his brother’s debts. In 1594 he writes that “He is poor and sick, working for bread.” Upon what work was he then engaged to supply his need?

In 1593 and 1595 he wrote two masques, “The Conference of Pleasure” and “The Indian Prince,” for Essex to present before the Queen. But in 1594, when Bacon was in such sore need of money, the author of the plays was very prolific. This year, it is believed, saw the production of

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i., p. 124.

"Richard II.," "Titus Andronicus," "King John," and also an early form of "The Merchant of Venice," then called "The Venesyon Comedy," in addition to the "Comedy of Errors."

It is, indeed, a strange coincidence if, just after Anthony had delivered his brother from the Jews, it occurred to Shakspeare to represent on the stage Antonio delivering Bassanio from the clutches of Shylock. If, again, "The Venesyon Comedy" was only a reproduction of the play of "The Jew showne at the Bull" in 1579, that play Shakspeare could not have written.

What makes the hypothesis of Shakspeare's authorship still more difficult is that this play, whenever written, was founded on an Italian novel not then accessible except in the original Italian.<sup>1</sup>

It may be remarked that Anthony, the name of Francis Bacon's brother, to whom he was devoted, is a favourite name with the author of the plays. It occurs in "Love's Labour's Lost," "Much Ado about Nothing," "Henry V.," "Richard III.," "Romeo and Juliet," "Anthony and Cleopatra," "Julius Cæsar" and "Macbeth."

Both "Richard II." and "Richard III." were published anonymously in 1597, as they had "been publicly acted by the Rt. Hon. Lord Chamberlain his servants."

A curious history attaches to the play of "Richard II." Dealing with the deposition of a king, it gave offence to Elizabeth, who was jealous of her own title to the crown. When the play was printed, the deposition scene was omitted in the earlier editions. The offence of the play was increased, when in 1598 Sir John Haygarth published a history of the first year of Henry IV.'s reign, describing the deposition of Richard, and dedicated the book to Essex in terms of adulation: for this Haygarth was sent to the

<sup>1</sup> Lec, pp. 65, 66.



Tower. The play was acted, at the instigation of Essex and his followers, in the afternoon before his insurrection in February, 1601, but failed to excite the populace to rise as Essex had hoped. The Queen complained<sup>1</sup> that "This Tragedie of Richard 2nd had been played with seditious intent forty times in open streets and houses," and one head of the indictment preferred against the conspirators was that they had procured with money the old tragedy of the tragical abdication of Richard II. to be performed in a public theatre before the conspirators.

"Titus Andronicus," a play showing classical knowledge, was performed in January, 1594,<sup>2</sup> with much success; it was published anonymously in 1600 and was included in the folio of 1623.

To 1594 or 1595 are attributed "All's Well that Ends Well" and "The Taming of the Shrew." These plays have foreign scenes. They were first published in 1623.

The correspondence already pointed out between the "Promus" notes and "Romeo and Juliet" may lead us to attribute this play to 1595, in which year Francis Meres mentions it, though Lee assigns it to 1594, and Dr. Delius suggested 1591 because of the Nurse's remark, "'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years," the last earthquake in England having been in 1580. Perhaps the first draft of the play may have been written in 1591. The play is founded on an Italian story, though this, it appears, had been translated. Italian literature was familiar to Bacon; Shakspeare would learn nothing of it at the Stratford Grammar School; books, whether original or translations, were scarce in those days, and Shakspeare appears to have had none. "Romeo and Juliet," again, has a foreign scene; it was printed anonymously in 1597, 1599 and 1609.

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Reed's "Shakespeare" Note to Richard II.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, p. 302.



Essex was in 1594 and 1595 endeavouring, but in vain, to obtain for Bacon the office of Solicitor-General.

On 18th May, 1594, Essex wrote to Bacon that the Queen “did acknowledge you had a great wit, and an excellent gift of speech, and much other good learning. But in law she rather thought you could make show to the uttermost of your knowledge, than that you were deep.”

Bacon, weary of waiting, wrote thus to Essex in 1595 : “I am neither much in appetite (for the office) nor much in hope ; for as to the appetite *the waters of Parnassus* are not like the waters of the Spaw, which give a stomach, but rather they quench appetites and desires.”

What were these waters of Parnassus, which were so satisfying as to quench even the desire for office ? Parnassus was the home of the Muses, all devoted to poetry and the drama, save Clio, the Muse of history, and Urania. Whence, and in what channel, flowed in 1595 those streams of poetry which satiated Bacon’s desires ?

In another letter, written about the same date, Bacon expresses his weariness and disappointment in pursuit of office.

“For to be like a child, following a bird, which, when he is nearest flieth away and lighteth a little before ; and then the child after it again, and so on in infinitum. I am weary of it.”

The metaphor is reproduced in “*Coriolanus*” : “I saw him run after a gilded butterfly ; and when he caught it, he let it go again, and after it again ; and over and over he comes and up again.”

In another letter of 1595 Bacon writes to Essex : “I am purposed not to follow the practice of the law, and my reason is only because it drinketh too much time, which I have dedicated to better purposes.”

Of the year 1596 Spedding writes : “It is easier to under-

stand why Bacon was resolved not to devote his life to the ordinary practice of a lawyer, than what plan he had in view to clear himself of the difficulties which were now accumulating upon him, and to obtain means of living and working. What course he betook himself to at the crisis at which we have now arrived I cannot possibly say. I do not find any letter of his which can possibly be assigned to the winter of 1596, nor have I met among his brother's papers with anything which indicates what he was about."

The mystery is solved if he was the author of the plays.

In 1597 historical plays were resumed in the First and Second parts of "Henry IV.," followed by "The Merry Wives of Windsor," the last having an English scene, but being again in part founded on an Italian novel.

In this year, 1597, the first edition of ten of Bacon's "Essays" appeared, dedicated to his "deare brother, you that are next myself." What, it may again be asked, had been up to this time the employment of so active and versatile a mind, being, as he declares, "born for literature"?

In "The Taming of the Shrew" and in the Second part of "Henry IV." are found the only traces of the neighbourhood of Stratford or of any connection with the life of Shakspeare. Christopher Sly and Marian Hacket and the villages of Wincot and Woncot and Barton-on-the-Heath are said to be names found in the neighbourhood of Stratford, and Justice Shallow is said to be a satire upon Sir Thomas Lucy. The connection is but slight, and it does not account for the absence of any such references before.

On the other hand, it is remarkable that just at this time Bacon was brought into connection with the neighbourhood of Stratford; for in 1598 Bacon, in reward for services, received a royal grant of a valuable lease of the Rectory and Church of Cheltenham and the Chapel of Charlton Kings,

lying about twenty-five miles from Stratford and twenty from Barton-on-the-Heath. Some years later, in 1606, Bacon married a step-daughter of Sir John Pakington, who lived near Stratford, and by his marriage became connected with Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote, whose daughter Joyce his cousin, Sir William Cook, had already married in 1601, so that Bacon had ample opportunity of becoming acquainted with the district. “The Taming of the Shrew” was first printed in 1623.

A play entitled “The Taming of a Shrew” was printed in quarto in 1594. It is difficult to determine the relation of this play to the one printed in the folio of 1623. The induction is substantially alike in both plays, though improved in the later play. The last scenes between Katharine and Petruchio are nearly alike in both plays, and must have been written by the same author. The other scenes in the earlier play are of doubtful authorship. The allusions to the Stratford neighbourhood are introduced in the later play.

In the year 1598 Shakespeare’s name appears for the first time on the title-page of a play, namely “Love’s Labour’s Lost,” hitherto played anonymously. The title-page describes the play as “presented before her Highness this last Christmas. Newly corrected and augmented by W. Shakespeare.” A court performance probably required the name of the author to be given. Up to this date the plays were published anonymously, although Shakspeare may have been already the reputed author of some, and now became generally recognized as the author of these plays.

Meres in 1598 highly extolled Shakespeare as most excellent in tragedy and comedy, and names his poems and six comedies, “Two Gentlemen of Verona,” “Errors,” “Love’s Labour’s Lost,” “Love’s Labour’s Won,” “Midsummer Night’s Dream” and “Merchant of Venice,” and six

tragedies, "Richard II.," "Richard III.," "Henry V.," "King John," "Titus" and "Romeo and Juliet," and his sugared sonnets among his private friends. As the plays until 1598 were published anonymously, Meres's list cannot be relied upon as complete.

But why, if Shakspeare was the author, should the plays have been published until 1598 anonymously?

To Bacon secrecy was essential, not only on his mother's account, but because he was still looking forward with Essex's aid to be appointed Solicitor-General; but he failed as yet to obtain the appointment, apparently through the opposition of his cousins the Cecils, who represented him as "A Speculative man, a dangerous individual therefore in the realities of business." Had it been known he was a writer of stage plays or poems, all hopes of preferment would have vanished.

In 1598 "Henry V." was written, which was performed in 1599.

It was published anonymously in 1600, 1602, 1608, and in an enlarged form in 1623. This play dramatized the French wars, the battle of Agincourt, and the scenes visited by Bacon in early life. The play also shows that the author was a friend of Essex, whose return from his command in Ireland was then expected.

Were now the general of our gracious Empress  
(As in good time he may) from Ireland coming  
Bringing rebellion broached upon his sword,  
How many would the peaceful city quit  
To welcome him.

Act V.

In 1599 two of the most perfect of the comedies were probably written, "Much Ado about Nothing" and "As You Like It," the former of them drawn apparently from Italian sources and both with foreign scenes.

"Troilus and Cressida" was probably written about this

time, since in 1602-3 a licence was obtained “For the booke of Troilus and Cressida as it is acted by my Lord Chamberlayne’s men.” It was not printed till 1608, when it appeared, perhaps in an altered form, with Shakespeare’s name on the title-page, and with a curious preface extolling him as a writer of comedies, and asserting that the piece had not been acted, but had escaped from “the grand possessors.”<sup>1</sup> This play borrows so much from the Greek that Steevens concluded that Shakspeare could not have wholly written it.

In 1596 Shakspeare had returned to Stratford. He was now a man of some wealth. An actor’s profession, though despised, was lucrative. Richard Burbage was able to build the Globe and Blackfriars theatres; Alleyne built and endowed Dulwich College. Shakspeare’s income as an actor, apart from any money he may have received from the plays or poems, would probably exceed £130, equivalent to £1,040 in our times.<sup>2</sup> In 1597, as already stated, he bought New Place for £60, and thereafter lived, partly at least, at Stratford, though still residing part of the year in London until 1611, when he finally retired to Stratford. He lodged on his journeys to and fro at the Crown Inn at Oxford, kept by John Davenant, a respectable but sombre man, who had a beautiful and witty wife.

In 1599 or 1600 William Shakspeare acquired from Richard Burbage and his brother shares in the Globe and Blackfriars theatres then newly built. These shares, it is estimated, would bring in at least £500 a year, equivalent now to £4,000 a year.<sup>3</sup>

In a petition presented to the Lord Chamberlain by Richard Burbage’s wife, son and brother in 1636, the

<sup>1</sup> Bacon was at this time Solicitor-General. No new play was published after this, until “*Othello*” in 1622.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

transaction is thus described: "We built the Globe, and to ourselves we joyned those deserving men Shakspere, Hemings, Condall, Phillips and others. Now for the Blackfriars (we) placed men players which were Hemings, Condall, Shakspere, and others."<sup>1</sup>

It appears that the owners of the theatre were entitled to one half of the receipts, except the outer doors, corresponding to the modern pit, the other half of the "galleries" and the outer doors being assigned to the actors, who out of their share "defrayed all wages to hired men, apparell, *poetes*, lightes and other charges of the house whatsoever."

Heminge and Condell, it is expressly stated, had their shares for nothing, and the same may be assumed for whatever interest Shakspere had.

## XII. THE DARK PERIOD, 1601-1606.

A MARKED change now came over the plays: instead of the brilliant comedies a series of tragedies appeared, though Shakspere continued at Stratford, buying and selling, and living in rich though selfish respectability. It is true that in the year 1601 his father, John Shakspere, died; but in 1602 William Shakspere bought for £320 107 acres of land at Stratford, and in the same year a cottage and garden near New Place, and was living a prosperous life.

The Shadow is found darkening Bacon's life. Essex was executed in 1601, Anthony Bacon died soon after, and Lady Anne fell into mental derangement. Elizabeth died in 1603. Now, as always, it is the course of Bacon's life, not that of Shakspere, which is reflected in the plays.

In 1603 and 1604 the two editions of "Hamlet" were published, the latter much enlarged.

<sup>1</sup> Halliwell-Phillipps, vol. i., pp. 313-319.

In 1604 "Othello" was written, which was acted before King James at Whitehall on 1st November.

At this time, according to tradition, Shakspeare seduced the wife of the host of the Crown Inn, who early in 1605 gave birth to a son, who afterwards became Sir William D'Avenant, of whom Shakspeare was the reputed father; nor did the son disclaim the relationship; a bizarre coincidence indeed, ill-fitting Shakspeare's life, if Shakspeare at this time really wrote and brought out "Othello."

The tradition, which both Halliwell-Phillipps and Sidney Lee desire to be disbelieved, is confirmed by several authors quoted by the former in an appendix. The facts shown are that John Davenant, the innkeeper, was a respectable but morose man, his wife noted for her beauty and attractions. Aubrey adds: "She had a very light report." Shakspeare, then a rich actor, married but unfaithful, was a frequent and welcome guest; a child was born, popularly imputed to him, to whom he stood godfather and gave his name; the jest was oft repeated, that the boy should not take the name of godfather in vain. Grown to manhood, clever and vain, the boy became Sir William D'Avenant, and did not disclaim, but rather boasted of the relationship; his brothers were dull as their father. Against this is set that John Davenant, whether ignorant or tolerant, remained subject to his wife's charms, and, surviving her, desired to be buried in the same tomb.

In 1604, also, the scarcely less incongruous play of "Measure for Measure" was produced, whose moral is, that chastity is dearer than life, and mercy the noblest virtue of princes. It was acted before the King at Whitehall on 26th December.

Both the last mentioned plays had foreign scenes, and were drawn as so often from Italian sources.

In 1605 "Macbeth" followed. This play indicates



local knowledge by the author.<sup>1</sup> Bacon, as appears from a letter printed by Spedding, had been sent in 1603 to meet King James after his accession, before he came to London, and had an interview with him, apparently in Scotland, since the treasurer of Scotland was present. There is no evidence that Shakspeare ever was in Scotland.<sup>2</sup> The Scotch history of King James's ancestors, and the witch scenes which accorded with the King's Demonology, adroitly sought the King's favour. In the same year, 1605, Ben Jonson, Marston and Chapman, less skilled in the ways of Courts, were sent to prison by order of the King for attacks made on the stage against the Scots, and against the King's book on demonology. Was it more probably Shakspeare or Bacon, whose courtier instincts moulded the play of "Macbeth"?

"King Lear" was written about the same time; it was acted at Whitehall on 26th December, 1606, and registered on 26th November, 1607. Bacon's father was born at Chislehurst, in Kent. The men of Kent are praised in "2 Henry VI.," and many of the towns of Kent and also the Goodwin Sands are mentioned in the plays. Bacon, in passing to and from France had seen Shakespeare's cliff and the sapphire gatherers. The delineation of madness in "King Lear," and in the later editions of "Hamlet," probably reflects the mental state of Bacon's mother, but has no known correspondence with Shakspeare's life. Shakspeare may have visited Dover in 1597 with the Queen's Company, but his name is not recorded in their provincial tours.

<sup>1</sup> Knight's "Life of Shakespeare."

<sup>2</sup> Lee, p. 41.

## XIII. BACON'S LATE PROSPERITY, 1606-1620.

IN 1606 a period of prosperity began for Bacon's life. In 1606, in the forty-sixth year of his age, he married, after three years' courtship, Alice Barnham, "an alderman's daughter—an handsome maiden, and to his liking." He settled upon her a sum double her own marriage portion, which shows that his pecuniary position was at length established. On Anthony's death in 1601 he had succeeded to Gorhambury. In 1607 he was at length promoted to the office of Solicitor-General, with an income of £1,000 a year.

Freedom from money cares and pressure of official business might well interrupt the production of new plays, if Bacon was their author. No such explanation can be given of a sudden cessation of Shakspeare's mental activity, after the extraordinary profusion of the ten years preceding 1607; but from the date when Bacon took office, the production of the plays suddenly diminished, and when he was appointed Attorney-General in 1613 they ceased.

With the following exceptions, no more plays are known to have been produced from 1606 until Shakspeare's death in 1616; nor, indeed, until Bacon's fall and until the publication of the folio of 1623. But the character of the plays again changed with Bacon's changed life, and brightened with its brightness.

In May, 1608, Edward Blount entered in the Stationers' Register, by authority of Sir George Buc, the licenser of plays, "A booke called Anthony and Cleopatra." It was not published, however, until the folio of 1623; nor is it known to have been produced on the stage.

In 1608 "Pericles" was printed—a doubtful play, not included in the first folio.

In 1609-10 Bacon was a fellow-member with the Earls of Southampton, Pembroke and Montgomery, in the Virginia Company, which, in 1609, sent out a fleet to the West Indies under Sir John Somers. The fleet was terribly vexed by storms on the voyage. The ship "Admiral" was wrecked upon the Bermudas; of which an account appeared soon afterwards in Jourdain's "Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called the Isle of Devils."

On 1st November, 1611, the delightful comedy of "The Tempest," whose scene was "the still vexed Bermoothes," was represented before the King at Whitehall. The gentle airs, and the spirits and devils, that infested the island, referred to the Bermudas. The seafaring terms, with which the play opens, show an accurate knowledge of ships, also shown in Bacon's treatise on the sailing of ships published in the same year. Shakspeare is never known to have gone to sea, and would know little of such matters. The incidental music was composed by one of the royal musicians. This might well be arranged by Bacon, who, notwithstanding his official duties, prepared in the following year a splendid masque, presented by the Gentlemen of Gray's Inn and the Inner Temple, on the occasion of the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth with the Elector Palatine.

William Shakspeare had already left London and finally settled at New Place in September, 1611,<sup>1</sup> and thereafter produced no new drama, though he survived for five years.

"The Tempest" contains many allusions to Bacon's later studies, "The History of the Winds," "Ebb and Flow of the Sea," "The Sailing of Ships," and others.

<sup>1</sup> Lee, p. 257.

"Cymbeline" is recorded by Dr. Firman the astrologer, who kept a list of performances, to have been acted in 1610 or 1611, and "Winter's Tale" on 15th May, 1611; both comedies full of charm.

Cymbeline was a British king who reigned at Verulam in the early part of the Christian era, and whose coins have been found at Verulam. Strange that the imagination of Shakspeare (if he wrote the play) should continue to hover round the home of Bacon, while Stratford is unnamed and Warwickshire scarcely referred to.

In "Winter's Tale" the statue is ascribed to Giulio Romano, at which critics have scoffed, saying that he was only a painter; but in the first edition of Vasari, published in 1550, and never translated, he is described as also an architect and sculptor. This Shakspeare could not probably be acquainted with, but would be the natural source of Bacon's information. The three plays last named were first printed in the folio of 1623.

With these exceptions, no new play is known to have been produced between 1606 and 1623.

In 1616 William Shakspeare died at Stratford, leaving neither books nor manuscripts. No special notice of the event is recorded to have been taken at the time, but some time before 1623 his bust, by a Dutch sculptor resident in London, was put up in the church, by whom is not known, with a laudatory epitaph.

Some remarkable facts bearing upon our inquiry must here be considered.

Only sixteen of the thirty-six Shakespeare plays were published in William Shakspeare's lifetime, and several of these anonymously.

But between 1595 and 1613 seven plays by inferior writers were published, three with the name of Shakespeare on the title, one with "W. Sh." and three with "W. S." on

the title, by which it is admitted William Shakespeare was intended.<sup>1</sup>

The appearance of Shakespeare's name on the title of a play is therefore no certain evidence of its authorship.

After 1594 no plays might be published without licence and registry at Stationers' Hall ; but no protest or objection by William Shakspeare is recorded to the use of his name on these plays. No other dramatist appears to have allowed such a use of his name.

It has been suggested that the publishers were unscrupulous, and stole his name to increase their profits ; but if William Shakspeare's name was now worth money, he scarcely seems the man to allow its use gratis. If, however, William Shakspeare was accustomed to treat his name as a marketable commodity, how slender becomes the presumption that any of the plays which bear his name were written by him. Nay, the more brilliant and the more learned are the plays, the less credible is his authorship.

It is even more noteworthy that the death of William Shakspeare did not prevent the revisal and rewriting of plays already published, nor the production of some new ones !

Bacon became Secretary of State in 1612, Attorney-General in 1613, Privy Councillor in 1616, and Lord Keeper in 1617. In 1618 he was appointed Lord Chancellor and created Baron Verulam ; and on 27th January, 1621, was made Viscount St. Albans. These offices well account for the total cessation of the plays in 1611 if they were written by him. No such explanation applies to Shakspeare, who lived until 1616.

<sup>1</sup> "Lochrine," 1595 ; "Puritan Widow," 1607 ; "Thos. Lord Cromwell," 1613, with full name.—"Oldcastle," 1600 ; "London Prodigal," 1605 ; "Yorkshire Tragedy," 1608. W. S.—"Troublesome Reign of King John," 1611. W. Sh. The registry of these plays does not give the name of the author, which appeared on the title-page.

It should be mentioned that a play concerning Henry VIII., entitled "All is true, representing some principal pieces in the reign of Henry VIII.," was in course of performance at the Globe Theatre on June 29th, 1613, when the firing of some cannon incidental to the performance set fire to the playhouse, which was burned down. Fleay gives reasons for believing that this play was not that printed in the folio of 1623. The earlier play seems to have had a clown as a prominent character; the later play is, as the prologue shows, serious and grave, and must have been at least recast.

During this period, however, in the spring of 1609, a book entitled "Shakespeare's sonnets never before imprinted" was entered at Stationers' Hall and published by Thomas Thorpe. The vexed questions of their authorship and true meaning are too long for discussion here, nor do the difficulties seem to weigh seriously on one side or the other upon the present question of the authorship of the plays. Some "sugared sonnets" had, as we have seen, been circulated in manuscript some years before under Shakespeare's name. In polished style and in moral tone the sonnets resemble the "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece" rather than the plays. They may not, perhaps, be all the product of one mind.

In 1619 the Second and Third parts of "Henry VI." and "The Merry Wives of Windsor" were reprinted, but in each case in their original short form. No new play was printed between 1608 and 1622.

#### XIV. BACON'S FALL, 1621.

**I**N 1621 came Bacon's fall, due to the malice of his enemies, the corruption of his servants, and to carelessness rather than misconduct on his own part. His great

wealth vanished, but he retained in adversity the favour of the King and the admiration of his friends. Being forced to give up York House, he retired to Gorhambury and devoted himself to literary work. "I could never bring myself," Ben Jonson wrote, "to condole with the great man after his fall, knowing as I did that no accident could do harm to his virtue, but rather make it manifest. He seemed to me ever by his work one of the greatest men and most worthy of admiration."

The facts as to Bacon's alleged corruption appear from Spedding's investigations to stand thus.

On being accused of corruption, Bacon at first indignantly denied the charge, declaring that he had never received bribe or present to influence his judgment in the course of any suit. He admitted having received presents from suitors after judgment had been given, but this was according to long established custom, to which no exception had ever been taken. So in "The Merchant of Venice" the Duke says :

Antonio, gratify this gentleman (Portia, the judge),  
For in my mind you are much bound to him.

And Bassanio offers the 3,000 ducats which were the condition of the bond.

When, however, the charge was pressed against Bacon with regard to specific cases, it appeared that his servants had often taken secret bribes under pretence of influencing his favour, and also that in a few instances Bacon had himself received presents after judgment given, but, inadvertently, before the suit had been completely wound up. This Bacon admitted was technically, if not morally wrong. But further, Bacon was too sagacious not to perceive, the question being now raised, that the custom of gifts to judges, however time-honoured, was in principle indefensible, and liable to manifold abuse. He confessed therefore that he had transgressed,



and could not justify his conduct, though at the same time asserting that he was "the justest chancellor that hath been in the five changes since Sir Nicholas Bacon's time." He seems to have been urged to plead guilty and rely on the King's clemency, probably in order that so eminent a scapegoat might divert the attack from other highly placed offenders. He was thereupon deprived of office and disgraced, and even committed to the Tower, but quickly released. The ruinous fine imposed on him was not, however, enforced.

Three plays fitting the change of circumstances may well be attributed to this period: "Henry VIII.," "Timon of Athens" and "Coriolanus." The first described the fall of Wolsey; "Timon" paints vividly and bitterly the ingratitude and neglect which attend a great man's fall; "Coriolanus" describes the power of envy, and the fickleness of the people.

"Timon" was founded partly on the story in Plutarch, but principally on the untranslated Greek of Lucian.<sup>1</sup> Bacon had studied Timon's story in both authors; for, in his Essay on Goodness, he alludes to the misanthropi, who, Plutarch says, make it their practice to bring men to the bough, and yet leave never a tree in their garden as Timon had; and in the "Advancement" he speaks of the flatterers in the later stage of the Roman State, of which kind Lucian maketh a merry description.

There is no such evidence that Shakspeare had studied Plutarch and the Greek of Lucian.

In July, 1621, immediately after his fall, Bacon began his "History of Henry VII.," and completed it, and sent a copy to King James on 8th October of the same year. It is significant that the Shakespeare plays contain the history of England and the Wars of the Roses from Richard II. to Henry VIII., except the reign of Henry VII., which saw the

<sup>1</sup> Knight's "Stories of Shakespeare," p. 71.

union of the Roses. This gap was filled up by Bacon's "History of Henry VII."

In the following year, 1622, Bacon, after receiving back the manuscript of Henry VII., made notes for an intended interview with the King, at which he would propose to employ his pen upon the story of Henry VIII.; and, on the following 10th January, Sir Thomas Wilson reported to the King, that Bacon had applied to him for such papers as he had in his custody relating to Henry VIII.; and was directed by the King to supply Bacon with any papers he might require. That Bacon then set to work upon the "History of Henry VIII." in some form appears both from common report and from his own letter, for on 10th February, 1623, Chamberlayne wrote: "The Lord (Bacon) busies himself about books, and hath set out two lately, 'Historia Ventorum' and 'De Vita et Morte.' I have not seen either of them, because I have not leisure, *but if the Life of Henry VIII. which they say he is about* might come out after his own manner, I should find time and means enough to read it"; and on 21st February, 1623, Bacon wrote to Buckingham, then in Spain, and asked to be remembered to the Prince (Charles I.), "who I hope ere long *will make me leave Henry VIII.* and set me on work in relation of his Highness's heroical adventures."

Of a prose history of Henry VIII. Bacon left only two or three prefatory pages, enough perhaps to give colour to his request for official documents, but someone at this time was writing or rewriting the play of "Henry VIII.," and the inference seems strong that it was Francis Bacon who now painted with sympathetic pathos the fall of Wolsey.

In 1622 "Othello," which had been acted in and after 1604, was published.

Surveying from this point the plays as a whole, are they not both a transcript of Bacon's intellect and a mirror of

his life? Have they any point of contact with Shakspeare's life or character? Is it possible or reasonably credible that Shakspeare could have collected so many stories from Italian or Spanish novels and classic histories, or conceived and described such various foreign scenes, or displayed such varied learning, and such knowledge of courtly life?

#### XV. CONTEMPORARY ALLUSIONS.

IN circumstantial evidence each additional coincidence not only adds to but multiplies its force; so that an unbroken chain of probabilities may grow to a certainty.

Against the chain of circumstantial evidence which has been adduced two facts are opposed, contemporary repute and the folio of 1623.

William Shakspeare's reputed authorship of the plays is not, however, wholly inconsistent with Bacon's real authorship, since if Bacon was the true author it is probable, from the circumstances of his life and expectations, that the authorship would be concealed. We have also seen<sup>1</sup> that it was the practice of the time for authors of "calling and gravity" to suppress their names, or get some other to set his name to their verses.

It has been urged, however, that Shakspeare's contemporaries must have detected whether he was or not the author of the plays attributed to him, and numerous contemporary references to his reputed works have been diligently collated, but few describing the man himself.

Dr. Ingleby, who collected these references in his "Centurie of Prayse" and "Shakespeare Allusion Books," attached "so little weight to contemporary rumour" that he cites seven witnesses only, of whom "there are but four

<sup>1</sup> *Ante*, pp. 51, 67.

who directly identify the man or the actor with the writer of the plays and poems." These were the four editors or preface writers of the folio of 1623, presently to be considered. Dr. Ingleby adds: "It is plain for one thing that the bard of our admiration was unknown to the men of that age. Assuredly no one during the 'Centurie' had any suspicion that the genius of Shakespeare was unique."

The personal allusions seem the least favourable.

Greene, we have seen, denounced "the upstart."

Nash, who eulogized the play of "Henry VI.," has also been referred to. He was a close friend of Greene, and in a letter of 1589 prefixed to Greene's "Menaphon," spoke in like contemptuous terms of some ignoramus, who can scarcely be other than the object of Greene's scorn, since it points to a player-author who translated from the Italian.

"Amongst this kind of men, that repose Eternity in the mouth of a player, I can but engross some deep-read schoolmen and grammarians, who have no more learning in their skull than will serve to take up a commodity, nor art in their brains. Idiot art-masters, who think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of bragging verse, and translate twopenny pamphlets from the Italian, without any knowledge even of its articles. It may be the ingrafted overflow of some kill-cow conceit."

"Deep-read schoolmen and grammarians" may point ironically at someone educated only at a grammar school. Nash and Greene and several other of the Elizabethan dramatists were University men.

To kill the cow or calf was, in the slang phrase of the day, to make extemporary speeches during a performance on the stage, such as Shakspeare probably often made.

Two anonymous writers, some years later, refer apparently to Shakspeare, since no other player-author, at this date, is known to have acquired wealth or affected gentility.

One writes thus : "Thou shalt learn to be frugal, *to feed upon all men*, and when thou feelest thy purse well-lined buy thee some place in the country."—*Ratsies Ghost*, 1605.

Another writes :

With mouthing words that better wits have framed  
They purchase lands, and now esquires are made.

*Return from Parnassus*, 1606.

Ben Jonson appears to have entertained the like contempt of Shakspeare until about the year 1620, when he became associated with Bacon, and assisted him in latinizing his works.<sup>1</sup>

Ben Jonson's epigram, published with others in 1616, the year of Shakspeare's death, but probably written earlier, can scarcely apply to any but Shakspeare.

Poor poet ape, that would be thought our chief—  
Whose works are e'en the frippery of wit  
From brokerage is become so bold a thief  
As we the robbed 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.—Tush such crimes  
The sluggish gaping auditor devours,  
He marks not whose 'twas first, and after times  
May judge it to be his as well as ours.

Ape is the term elsewhere applied by Jonson to players. Shakspeare was the only actor who claimed to be a dramatist, whose plays excelled Jonson's in popularity, and would excite his jealousy.

In the epilogue to "Every Man in his Humour," acted in 1598, and printed in 1616, Ben Jonson satirizes Shakspeare's neglect of the unities of the drama.

Though need makes many poets, and some such  
As wit and nature hath not bettered much,

<sup>1</sup> See Edwin Reed, pp. 92-101.

Yet ours for want hath not so loved the stage  
 As he dare serve *the ill customs of the age*  
 Or purchase your delight at such a rate,  
 As for it he himself *must justly hate* :  
 To make a child now swaddled, to proceed  
 Man, and then shoot up, in one beard and weed,  
 Past threescore years, or with three rusty swords  
 And help of some few foot and half foot words,  
 Fight over York and Lancaster's long jars,  
 And in the tiring house bring wounds to scars.

The whole of this prologue, Steevens says, "is a malicious sneer at Shakspeare."

In the "Poetaster" (1601) he elaborately ridicules his use of new words derived from the Latin.

Rufus Laberius (red-haired<sup>1</sup> Shaker) Crispinus, a poet-actor, who had obtained a coat of arms and whose father was lately dead (characteristics plainly identifying Shakspeare), is accused by Horace of stealing words from him, and is condemned by Cæsar to take a pill from Virgil, which causes him to vomit up the uncouth words retrograde, reciprocal, defunct, and many others. At length Cæsar dissolves the court with these words :

It is the bane and torment of our ears  
 To hear the discords of those jangling rhymes  
 That with their bad and scandalous practices  
 Bring all true arts and learning in contempt.  
 Blush, folly, blush, here's none that fears  
 The wagging of an ass's ears,  
 Detraction is but baseness varlet  
 And *apes are apes though clothed in scarlet.*

A scarlet dress was the badge of an actor's profession. Shakspeare and his fellow-actors walked in King James's Coronation procession, and each received four and a half yards of scarlet cloth.

<sup>1</sup> Shakspeare, according to the bust at Stratford, had red or auburn hair. Some have supposed Dekker or Marston to be the object of this satire; an error, since they, though play-writers, were not actors.

In the induction to "Bartholomew Fair," acted in 1614, three years after "The Tempest" appeared, Jonson again wrote: "If there never be a *servant monster* in a fair, who can help it? he (the author) says; or a nest of *antics*; he is loth to make nature afraid like those who beget tales, *tempests* and such like drolleries, to mix his head with other men's heels." The reference is to Caliban, and to the dance of Satyrs in "Winter's Tale." "Our author," says Jonson's editor, Whalley, "is still venting his sneers at Shakspeare."

In 1619 Jonson told Drummond of Hawthornden that Shakspeare "wanted art and sometimes sense."

These sneers were doubtless due to jealousy, but Jonson also despised Shakspeare's want of education, which he apparently considered incompatible with the plays attributed to him; and the fact that seven plays and some poems were published in Shakspeare's name, besides those now claimed for him, gave further ground for the repeated imputation of appropriating other men's work.

Strenuous endeavours have been made to explain away Ben Jonson's animosity against Shakspeare, by urging that these bitter gibes cannot have been meant for him, or that they showed a passing irritation hiding the love verging on idolatry, which Ben Jonson afterwards expressed for the author of the plays; but the animosity seems too plain to be reconcilable with such love.

This jealous animosity, which continued until Shakspeare's death in 1616, was transformed into a profound admiration for the author of the plays, when Jonson, about 1620, became Bacon's literary assistant; and this new-born admiration was expressed in Jonson's preface to the first folio of the Shakespeare plays, the publication of which in 1623 Jonson undertook to aid or control.



## XVI. THE FOLIO OF 1623.

THE folio of 1623 contains thirty-six plays, of which twenty were now printed for the first time. It was nominally edited by John Heminge and Henry Condell, two of Shakspeare's company of players, to whom he bequeathed legacies for mourning rings. They state that they have collected the plays "without ambition of selfe-profit or fame, onely to keepe the memory of so worthy a Friend and Fellowe alive as was our Shakespeare."

Heminge and Condell did not, however, undertake the cost of the book, which was printed by Isaac Jaggard and Edward Blount, "at the charges of W. Jaggard (Isaac Jaggard's father), Ed. Blount, J. Smithweeke and W. Aspley," the two last of whom had each published two of the Shakespeare plays.

The printers, Isaac Jaggard and Edward Blount, obtained, on 8th November, 1623, licence from the Stationers' Company to publish sixteen of the twenty unpublished plays. The four others, "King John," First and Second "Henry VI.," and the "Taming of the Shrew," were not now licensed, probably because they were based on or were revisions of earlier plays already published. The licence shows that no transfer of the title to these plays had been before recorded.

A portrait of William Shakspeare was prefixed to the volume with a laudatory verse by Ben Jonson, who also wrote a longer preface in praise of the plays and their author.

Leonard Digges and two other minor poets also wrote prefatory verses. Such prefatory poems were the custom of the period; Spenser's "Faery Queen" was prefaced by seventeen poems and sonnets.

The prefaces to the folio of 1623, by Heminge and Con-

\* The name Heminge is the name of the printer of the first folio of 1616. It is also the name of the printer of the second folio of 1623. The name of the printer of the third folio of 1632 is not known.

dell and by Ben Jonson, are justly deemed the strongest evidence which exists in favour of Shakspeare's authorship of the plays; and, but for the cogency of the internal and circumstantial evidence to the contrary, and Ben Jonson's striking change of appreciation, might, at first view, be accepted as concluding the matter.

Closer examination may show that there is a mystery surrounding this folio, which the prefaces do not solve.

The book is dedicated to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, both intimate friends of Bacon, who were associated with him in the Virginian Company. The preface is nominally by Heminge and Condell, and describes the plays as "trifles." The dedication is also in their name, but the use made of Pliny's epistle to Vespasian, prefixed to his "Natural History," makes it unlikely that the dedication was written by them. It has been with more probability ascribed to Ben Jonson.

The title-page showed Wit from behind a mask, shaking a spear at Ignorance, emphasizing the metaphorical spelling and use of the supposed author's name; a metaphor also applied by Ben Jonson to the author of the plays in his preface: "He seems to shake a lance, as brandished in the face of Ignorance."

The contents of the folio present serious difficulties. Of the twenty plays now printed for the first time fourteen are known to have been acted.

"All's Well that Ends Well," now first printed, is probably the same as "Love's Labour's Won," mentioned by Meres in 1598, in his enumeration of Shakespeare's plays.

A play of "Julius Cæsar" was, as we have seen, acted in 1579, 1589 and 1594, but was first printed in the folio.

No performance of "Antony and Cleopatra" is recorded.

"Coriolanus" and "Timon of Athens," and "Henry VIII." in its present form, are now heard of for the first time.

All the sixteen plays before published differ more or less from the quarto editions ; some are largely rewritten.

The Second and Third parts of "Henry VI." were published in 1594 and 1595 under the titles, respectively, of "The First Part of the Contention between the two famous Houses York and Lancaster" and "The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York." These had been republished in 1619, three years after Shakspeare's death, under the same titles as at first. In the folio of 1623, however, they appear under new titles, and the Second part now contained 1,578 new lines and is otherwise much altered.

"The Merry Wives of Windsor" was also reprinted in 1619, after Shakspeare's death, in the same form as in 1602 ; but in the folio it becomes nearly twice as long as in the quarto.

"Othello" was first printed and published in 1622, the year before the issue of the folio ; but in the folio it received numerous alterations.

Who revised and rewrote these plays long after Shakspeare's death, and whence came the plays of which there is no previous record ? This is a mystery !

The account of the folio given by Heminge and Condell in their preface cannot be reconciled with the facts.

"As where before we were abused with divers stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of incurious impostors that exposed them, even those are now offered to your view cured and perfect in their limbes, and all the rest absolute in their members as he conceived them, who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expressor of it. His mind and hand went together : and what he thought he uttered with that Easinesse that we have scarce received from him a blot in his paper" ; and they further state the plays were now printed from "the true original copies."

The story is a fiction.

The copies from which the folio was printed, whencesoever obtained, were not the "true original copies." The plays had been written and rewritten, altered and enlarged. Nor is it credible that the writer of the five crabbed and scarce legible signatures of William Shakspeare could write "with that easinesse" that he wrote the "true original copies" of the thirty-six plays fluently, as he imagined them and with scarce a blot!

Why was this fiction invented, unless to conceal the true provenance of the copies used for the folio? Whence did these copies really come, and what has become of them? This is a mystery.

It is probably true that the previous publication of the plays was in some instances, but not always, unauthorized and piratical. Fleay considers<sup>1</sup> that all the quartos issued up to 1600 were authorized, but that later ones were surreptitious; but if Shakspeare was their author, why did he not stop the piracy? If Bacon wrote them, Shakspeare could not, and Bacon would not, assert a legal claim.

Mr. Sidney Lee asserts that all the quarto editions of the Shakespeare plays were published surreptitiously, and denounces William Jaggard as "a well-known pirate publisher"; but these statements seem at least exaggerated. James Roberts, who printed the quartos of "The Merchant of Venice," "Midsummer Night's Dream," and the "Hamlet" of 1604, enjoyed for nearly twenty years the privilege, under licence from the Stationers' Company, of printing the playbills, a privilege he could scarcely have retained had he habitually pirated plays against the will of the author and players, and in defiance of the rules of the Stationers' Company. The Jaggard family, John, William, Isaac and E. Jaggard, were among the chief printers of London. William Jaggard was appointed in 1611 printer

<sup>1</sup> Fleay's "Manual," p. 270.

to the City of London; and in 1613 the Jaggards bought James Roberts's business, and with it the privilege of printing the playbills. They also published four editions of Bacon's "Essays" in 1606, 1612, 1613 and 1624. William Aspley and John Smethwick had each published two of the Shakespeare quartos. It is not likely that Ben Jonson would select as publishers or printers of the Shakespeare folio men notorious for having pirated the plays. It is more reasonable to believe that the previous publications by Aspley and Smethwick were legitimate. Once only is Shakespeare alleged to have expressed any offence at the use of his name, and no protest by him is at any time recorded.<sup>1</sup>

Leonard Digges, a few of whose lines were printed in the folio, attained perhaps the highest pitch of unreality in the following verses, which, though seemingly intended for the folio, were relegated to a volume of the Shakespeare poems printed in 1640.

Next Nature only helped him, for look through  
His whole book, you shall find he doth not borrow  
One phrase from Greeks, nor Latins imitate,  
Nor once from vulgar languages translate,  
Nor plagiary like from others glean,  
Nor begs he from each witty friend a scene  
To piece his acts with; all that he doth write  
Is pure his own; plot, language exquisite.

Another fiction!

The publication of a volume of thirty-six plays, of which twenty were before unpublished, was in those days a great literary undertaking. Heminge and Condell, the nominal editors, though friends of Shakspeare in his lifetime, were not literary men, but two players. It is unlikely, if not impossible, that they should undertake such a task without the help, and indeed without the superintendence, of others.

The printers and their associates who undertook the

<sup>1</sup> Lee, p. 182.

charges were none of them literary men; but one of the chief literary figures of the day, Ben Jonson, who had lately published his own works in folio, worked in co-operation with them. He wrote the principal preface and probably the dedication, and seems to have been the chief editor.

Here may be found the solution of the mystery. For Ben Jonson, "the learned and judicious poet," about three years before had, as already stated, become Bacon's friend and literary assistant, and was, as Archbishop Tenison tells us,<sup>1</sup> one of the "good pens" who aided him in translating his works into Latin, "the universal language," as Bacon styled it. Bacon's Latin, notwithstanding his learning, was (as indeed the "Promus" shows) imperfect. In 1621 Jonson was staying with Bacon at Gorhambury, and wrote a sonnet in his praise on his birthday. In that year came Bacon's fall, which, however, did not lessen the esteem of Jonson or of Bacon's other friends. Bacon, in now devoting what remained of life to literary work, had Jonson's continued help.

Whatever control, therefore, Jonson had over the production of the folio was, in fact, or may well have been, the control of Bacon, who, however, could not appear or personally interfere in the publication, as he was still hoping for some official appointment.

These considerations change considerably the point of view.

The fact that the folio was thus published with Bacon's privity under Ben Jonson's direction, and printed by the printers of Bacon's "Essays," makes a wide difference in the inferences to be drawn.

At this date Bacon's wealth had vanished, and he was involved in debt. He was in broken health, but striving to complete his literary work while life lasted.

Twenty plays remained unpublished, sixteen had been

<sup>1</sup> Bacon's Works, by Montagu, vol. i., p. xviii.



published separately. It was at this crisis of Bacon's life, Shakspeare having been dead seven years, that it was decided to publish all the plays together. Can it be doubted that the decision was Bacon's?

If so, it was necessary that someone should control the publication without Bacon's name appearing. This Ben Jonson could best undertake, but, having regard to his known association with Bacon, it would also be necessary to find nominal editors who had some connection with William Shakspeare. This condition Heminge and Condell fulfilled. Seeking neither fame nor profit, nor undertaking charges, they would be docile and unsuspecting instruments. Others were found to undertake the charges of printing and publication, with what share of profit we know not, but under the control of Ben Jonson, who was himself under the direction of Bacon.

The new plays, the largely rewritten or revised editions, and the unblotted copies, may thus be explained.

What, assuming that Bacon wrote the plays, had Jonson to do? First, to write such a commendation of the book as might promote its sale. Next, to divert from Bacon any suspicion of authorship which the publication of twenty new plays would cause to be much discussed. This not easy task he effectually accomplished in the preface by the free exercise of his dramatic powers, though at some expense of historic truth. A portrait of William Shakspeare, with another verse prefixed, completed the illusion.

That the preface is expressed to apply to Shakspeare, and was intended to be so read, is plain enough, but the high praise is really given to the works; the name Shakespeare was a mask or a metaphor. "Reader, look not on his Picture, but his Book." The true author Jonson doubtless knew, but was bound to conceal.

In what other way can be explained the sudden change



in Jonson's estimate of Shakspere, of whom he seems to have been bitterly jealous, and at whom, up to 1616, the year of Shakspere's death, he lost no opportunity of sneering?

Jonson's preface extols Shakespeare above all dramatists modern or ancient.

When the socks are on  
Leave thee alone for the comparison  
Of all that insolent Greece or haughtie Rome  
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.

In his "Discoveries," written after Bacon's death, Jonson enumerates fifteen men of that age, great masters of wit and language, from Sir Thomas More to Lord Chancellor Egerton, and proceeds: "But his learned (but unfortunate) successor *is he* who has filled up all numbers and performed that in our tongue which may be compared or preferred either to insolent Greece or haughtie Rome.—So that he may be named and stand as the mark and *ακμή* of our language."

Shakespeare is here ignored; the real man is named.

In another passage Shakespeare is named. "I remember the players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare, that, in his writing, whatsoever he penned he never blotted a line. My answer had been, would he had blotted a thousand; which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted; for I loved the man and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature, and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped."

The irregularity of the plays, often satirized by Jonson, was doubtless still displeasing to his somewhat pedantic taste; but, in qualifying the eulogy of his preface, he repeats his admiration of their author, still known as Shakespeare.

But William Shakspeare was not idolized by Jonson; the man whom he idolized he thus described, in the same "Discoveries":

"There happened in my time one noble speaker, who was full of gravity in his speaking. His language (when he would spare or pass by a jest) was nobly censorious. . . . He commanded when he spoke, and had his judges angry and pleased at his devotion. No man had their affections more in his power. The fear of every man that heard him was lest he should make an end."

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

If Bacon was the author of the plays, it is inherently probable that he would at this date, when striving to complete his literary work, publish the unpublished plays, and that the name of Shakespeare would be still used, and that Ben Jonson would be the instrument of their publication.

But neither date nor circumstances of publication agree with Shakspeare's authorship. Why the long delay? Why the nominal editors? Why the fictitious prefaces? Why Ben Jonson's superintendence?

The just conclusion appears to be that the thirty-six plays were collected and published in the folio, not by Heminge and Condell, who lent their names without responsibility for charges or hope of profit, but by Francis Bacon himself,

through the aid of Ben Jonson, his literary assistant, and thus the folio becomes, instead of an objection to, strong confirmation of, Francis Bacon's authorship of the plays.

## XVII. RIFTS IN THE CLOUDS.

LITERARY secrecy was a habit of Bacon's life. When a youth in Paris he invented a biliteral cipher, which is described in the sixth book of "De Augustis."<sup>1</sup> Both he and his brother Anthony were throughout life engaged in cryptic correspondence. Anthony's correspondence abounds in feigned names and hidden meanings, and the names and dates in Sir Tobie Matthew's letters to Francis Bacon are disguised.

Bacon was skilled in mystification. At one time, when he was endeavouring to bring Essex into favour with the Queen, he composed a fictitious correspondence for the eye of the Queen. "I did draw," he says, "with my Lord privily and by his appointment, two letters, the one written as from my brother, the other as an answer returned from my Lord, both to be by me in secret manner shewed to the Queen—as a mean to work her Majesty to receive the Earl again to favour and attendance at Court."

Bacon often composed for Essex letters, speeches, and once at least a masque, which went under Essex's name.

In his Essay of Simulation Bacon writes: "An habit of secrecy is both Politick and Morall. No man can be secret except he give himself a little scope of Dissimulation; which is, as it were, but the skirts or Frame of Secrecy. The best

<sup>1</sup> A book lately published under the title of "The Biliteral Cipher of Francis Bacon," by Mrs. E. W. Gallup of Chicago, has been tested by the present author, who is satisfied that it is unworthy of credence.

composition and Temperature is, to have Opennesse in Fame and Opinion ; Secrecy in Habit ; Dissimulation in reasonable use ; and a Power to faigne if there be no Remedy."

Notwithstanding this careful secrecy some hints have transpired.

Bacon spoke of himself and was spoken of by others as "a concealed poet."

In 1600 Bacon received a visit from Queen Elizabeth at "his lodge at Twicknam." "At which time," he says, "I had, though I profess not to be a poet, prepared a sonnet directly tending and alluding to draw on her Majesty's reconciliation to my Lord."

In 1603 Bacon, writing to Sir John Davies to bespeak the favour of the King, asks him "to be good to concealed poets."

Stowe in his *Chronicles* (1615) enumerated twenty-four of "Our modern and present excellent poets which worthely flourish in their own workes," in the Queen's reign, and amongst them Edmond Spencer, Esq. ; Sir Philip Sidney, Knight ; Sir Francis Bacon, Knight ; Maister George Chapman, Gentleman ; Mr. William Shakespeare, Gentleman ; Michael Draiton, Esquire, and Mr. Benjamin Johnson, gentleman.

Florio, a learned Italian, the translator of Montaigne's *Essays*, also translated many of Bacon's works for publication abroad. In his preface to Montaigne's *Essays* he commends a certain sonnet, now generally attributed to Bacon, written as he says by a friend of his, "who loved better to be a poet than to be counted so."

John Aubrey, Milton's friend, who was born the year after Bacon's death, and who was familiar with those who knew the Chancellor personally, states that "his lordship was a good poet but concealed."

Bacon alludes mysteriously to literary work in terms not

applicable in date or language to his philosophical writings. In 1595 we have seen how he wrote of the waters of Parnassus. In the "Promus," which he commenced in December, 1594, he notes, "Law at Twickenham for the merrie tales." His philosophical writings were certainly not "merrie tales," nor did they begin to appear until 1597. The comedies then rapidly appearing were "merrie tales," and contained much law.

In his correspondence with Sir Tobie Matthew, his "kind inquisitor," to whom he was wont to submit his writings, Bacon alludes mysteriously to "works of my recreation," "other works" and "the Alphabet," which last may be explained by a "Promus" note: "Tragedy and Comedy are made of the same alphabet." In one letter Sir Tobie writes: "I return you not weight for weight, but measure for measure."

In 1604, at about the time when the great tragedies of "Hamlet," "King Lear," "Macbeth" and "Othello" were appearing, Bacon writes to Matthew apologizing for some neglect, on the ground that his head had been "wholly employed on invention."

In a letter to Matthew, probably of 1609, Bacon writes: "I sent you some copies of my Book of the Advancement, which you desired, and *a little work of my recreation* which you desired not. My Instauration I reserve for our conference; it sleeps not. Those *works of the Alphabet* are in my opinion of less use to you where you are now than at Paris; and therefore I conceived that you had sent me a kind of tacit countermand of your former request. But in regard that some friends of yours insisted here, I send them to yo., and, for my part, I value your own reading more than your publishing them to others."

In a postscript to a letter to Bacon addressed by Sir Tobie to Viscount St. Albans, written therefore after 27th January,

1621, acknowledging a letter of 9th April sending some "great and noble token," probably one of Bacon's works, Sir Tobie writes: "The most prodigious wit that ever I knew, of my nation and of this side of the sea, is of your Lordship's name, *though he be known by another.*"

The praise is evidently intended for Bacon, and declares that, whether in England or on the Continent, Bacon was the most prodigious wit he ever knew, though the works of his genius passed under another name.

Sir Tobie's letter was apparently written from abroad between 18th April and 10th October, 1623, between which dates he was absent from England on a mission to the Duke of Buckingham and Prince Charles in Spain. Sir Tobie was resident in London in 1621 and 1622. Bacon's "De Augustis" was published in October, 1623. The Shakespeare folio was entered at Stationers' Hall in November, 1623, but seems to have been printed early in the year, one copy bearing date 1622. One of these two books was probably the "Great and noble token" sent to Sir Tobie Matthew; the terms of the postscript point to the Shakespeare folio.

In Northumberland House was found in a box of old papers a volume of manuscripts, of which there is a table of contents. These are nearly all Bacon's works, though not in his handwriting. Two manuscripts mentioned in the contents are missing from the volume, namely, "Richard II." and "Richard III.," two of the Shakespeare plays. It may therefore be truly said that the only place where any manuscript of the Shakespeare plays is known to have existed is in this volume in association with Bacon's works, while their removal from the volume shows an intention to suppress them.

But further, the cover of the volume is scrawled over, in writing of the period, with the name William Shakespeare seven times repeated, and also that of Francis Bacon three

times, and also with two scraps from "Love's Labour's Lost" and "Lucrece."

Now it will be remembered, and the coincidence is notable, that "Lucrece" and "Venus and Adonis" were the first two works which bore the name of Shakespeare, and this in 1593 and 1594, and that "Love's Labour's Lost," written about 1591 or 1592, but not published until 1598, was the first play which was printed with that name; and these were the first instances in which the name was spelt in the new metaphorical manner. Further, that "Richard II." and "Richard III." were written in or about 1593 or 1594.

Does it not look as if someone associated with Francis Bacon about the year 1593, with his head full of "Lucrece" and "Love's Labour's Lost," was trying how this transformed name of William Shakespeare would look if used and printed in this connection; and so wrote it out seven times, before it was decided to put it to the dedications of "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece," and to the play of "Love's Labour's Lost." It certainly was not William Shakspeare who was thus trying the new name!

All these are hints, not in themselves conclusive, but curiously fitting in with the threefold strand of moral, intellectual and circumstantial evidence which attests Bacon's authorship: rifts in the clouds that shroud the authorship of the plays.

#### XVIII. CONCLUSION.

**B**ACON died on 9th April, 1626. By his will he gave careful direction for the custody of his "cabinets and presses full of papers," and for their publication or suppression according to the judgment of his literary executors.



“For my name and memory I leave it to men’s charitable speeches and to foreign nations and to the next ages.”

His death was deeply deplored.

His secretary, Dr. Rawley, collected thirty-two Latin elegies written by Bacon’s friends, chiefly University men of some eminence. These call on Apollo and the Muses to lament his loss ; one especially invoking Melpomene, the Muse of tragedy and lyric poetry, another Clio, the Muse of history. Another begins : “If thou should’st seek, O Bacon, to reclaim all thou hast given to poesy and the world.” Another commences :

Hush, for our grief a speaking silence loves,  
Now he is gone, our only Orator,  
Teller of tales that mazed the Courts of Kings, etc.

These elegies clearly recognize Bacon as a poet, though the plays are not expressly mentioned, and the “Instauration” and other writings are in some referred to.

In 1645, in an anonymous book attributed to George Withers the poet, which describes a great assize held on Mount Parnassus, Apollo sits at the summit, and next to him Bacon sits as Chancellor of Parnassus, Edmund Spenser as clerk. Shakespeare stands below as a juror only to witness to Bacon’s pre-eminence.

Bacon, therefore, at his death was by his friends acknowledged as a true poet ; yet no poems, save the versions of a few Psalms, were published in his name.

Critics profess to trace in some of the plays a second hand, of Marlowe or some other ; Shakspeare may be suggested to have thus had a part in their production, although the plays bear in themselves the stamp of Bacon’s genius.

It may be suggested that the plays were written by Bacon and Shakspeare in collaboration. Collaboration was in that age not infrequent. Let us then imagine that, in those

lodgings of Anthony Bacon beside the theatre, Shakspeare sometimes met Francis Bacon, who may have told the stories of Italian novels, Spanish romances or Latin plays, while Anthony narrated his travels and suggested foreign scenes, or described the associations of their home at St. Albans ; and Francis may have produced his "Promus," and poured out stores of proverbs and witty sayings, and discussed the latest problems of philosophy.

Will this hypothesis suit and explain the facts? What sympathy or fellowship could exist between characters so opposite as Bacon and Shakspeare? Bacon might use Shakspeare : he could not love him.

And Shakspeare did not acquire Bacon's philosophy and learning, but was still reputed unlearned.

Besides this, the language of the plays and of Bacon's prose was a new development of English speech. Could Bacon teach this speech to Shakspeare?

If the language, the philosophy, the knowledge of law, of literature, of courts and camps, the types of noble manhood and female purity were derived from Bacon, what but the mask is left for Shakspeare?

Something may be added as to Marlowe, over whose plays hangs a mystery, singularly like that which shadows the Shakespeare plays.

Marlowe's reputation was almost entirely posthumous. Only two of the plays which have since been assigned to him were published during his lifetime. These are the two parts of "Tamburlaine," and they were published anonymously. The three other principal plays attributed to Marlowe are "Dr. Faustus," "The Jew of Malta" and "Edward II."

The prologue to "The Troublesome Reign of King John" (upon which is founded the Shakespeare play of "King John") appears to assign "Tamburlaine" to the same author. This prologue runs :

You that with friendly grace and smoothed brow  
 Have entertained the Scythian Tamburlaine,  
 And given applause unto an infidel,  
 Vouchsafe to welcome with like courtesy  
 A warlike Christian and your countryman.

Marlowe died on 1st June, 1593. "Faustus" is not known to have existed before 1594, and that date is doubtful. It was registered 7th January, 1601; the earliest extant editions are 1604 and 1609. In 1616 it was republished, enlarged to half as much again, by whom is unknown. Each edition contains allusions which seem of later date than Marlowe's death; the last edition speaks of "Bruno led in chains," an event several years later than Marlowe's death.

"The Jew of Malta" was not registered until 1594, and the earliest known edition is 1633.

"Edward II." was entered at Stationers' Hall in July, 1593, shortly after Marlowe's death, but is not known to have been published until 1598. Some classical poems are also attributed to Marlowe. "Dido" was published in 1594; "Hero and Leander" was entered in 1593 and published in 1598.

No collected edition of Marlowe's works was published until 1826.

Marlowe has been called the precursor of Shakespeare; "To him," it has been said, "we are indebted for the first regular form of the English drama cleared of rhymes, and he may be considered as the link between Shakespeare and the Moralities."<sup>1</sup> "Before him," Swinburne writes, "there was neither genuine blank verse nor a genuine tragedy in our language."<sup>2</sup>

The finest passages of the plays attributed to Marlowe are indistinguishable from Shakespeare; and some critics

<sup>1</sup> "English Cyclopædia."

<sup>2</sup> "Encyclopædia Britannica."

assert that Marlowe's hand is plainly seen, in collaboration with Shakespeare, in the First part of "Henry VI.," one of the earliest of the Shakespeare plays.

Marlowe's plays are more diffuse, more turgid and less restrained, perhaps more immature than the Shakespeare plays; but the style of both is curiously alike, and the language, especially of "Edward II.," is closely allied to that of the Shakespeare plays. This resemblance, if not identity, has been shown in an elaborate comparison of the play of "Edward II." with the plays of Shakespeare, by Mr. R. M. Theobald.<sup>1</sup>

But Marlowe was three years younger than Francis Bacon; "Tamburlaine" and "Dr. Faustus" were not acted before 1588 or 1589, "The Jew of Malta" later. The author of the Shakespeare plays therefore preceded Marlowe, and it was doubtless he who, either in collaboration or independently, impressed upon the anonymous plays attributed to Marlowe the form of blank verse, the historic subjects and foreign scenes, and some at least of the poetic genius which characterize the Shakespeare plays.

If Bacon wrote the first sketch of "The Merchant of Venice" and of "Julius Cæsar" in 1579, of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" in 1584, and of "Hamlet" in 1585, he may well have collaborated with Marlowe in the production of some of the Marlowe plays, especially "Edward II.," and have revised these plays after Marlowe's death—if indeed "Edward II." is not more probably an early play of Francis Bacon? This would fill up and explain the interval between the plays of the "Jew" and "Hamlet," and the plays of "Love's Labour's Lost" and "Henry VI."

Marlowe was killed in a tavern brawl on 1st June, 1593. In the same year Shakespeare's name first appeared in print.

To sum up. The facts of Shakspeare's life render his

<sup>1</sup> Theobald, "Shakespeare Studies," p. 415.

authorship of the plays which bear his name so inconceivable that Schlegel pronounces it "a mere fabulous story, a blind and extravagant error." But, in these plays, the genius of Bacon is manifest ; they bear the stamp of his character they reflect his intellect, they speak his language, they mirror his life.

It is surely an impossibility that of these two men Shakspeare should have written the plays : a moral impossibility, if we contrast their moral characters ; an intellectual impossibility, for the plays are redolent of Bacon's intellect, and of a learning proper to him, but which Shakspeare cannot reasonably be supposed to have possessed ; a biographical impossibility, for the plays are part of Bacon's life but not of Shakspeare's.

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