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SOME SUPPOSED
SHAKESPEARE FORGERIES

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SOME SUPPOSED SHAKESPEARE FORGERIES

An Examination into the Authenticity of certain
Documents affecting the Dates of
Composition of Several
of the Plays

The poet with many the plays - Shaxberd:

By ERNEST LAW, B.A. F.S.A.

BARRISTER AT LAW

*Author of "Shakespeare as a Groom of the Chamber,"
"The History of Hampton Court,"
"Holbein's and Vandyck's Pictures at Windsor Castle,"
etc., etc.*

WITH FACSIMILES OF DOCUMENTS

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PREFACE

THE strange story of the Books of Revels at Court, which the writer has endeavoured to make plain in the following pages, has seemed to him to require telling in rather full detail—for several reasons.

In the first place, apart from the bearing they have on the interesting problem of the sequence and dates of Shakespeare's plays and their first presentations at Court, there has surely never been known, among all the falsities and delusions, which have so repeatedly misled searchers into the life and works of our great dramatist, a more remarkable perplexity in its way than this.

That documents, at one time accepted as genuine, should afterwards be held to be forged, has not—unfortunately—been such a rare occurrence in the history of Shakespearean criticism, as to seem so very surprising ; nor is it so that documents, at one time believed to be forged, should afterwards be shown to be genuine—though, naturally enough,

this has not very often happened. But that the same documents should have each of these contradictory decisions successively pronounced on them, and that each such decision should afterwards be reversed, is certainly rather unusual.

Further than this : that curious and very precious documents, after having lain in obscurity for two centuries, should be discovered, only immediately to be buried and disappear again for forty years ; that they should then be once more disinterred and re-discovered, to disappear again, for a third time, for another thirty years ; that they should afterwards re-appear yet once more—under circumstances suggesting larceny, forgery and fraud—forthwith to be universally pronounced to be other than what they really are ; and that only now they should, after more than a century of mystery and uncertainty, at last be unmistakeably revealed in their true nature, must surely be unprecedented in the whole annals of our literature.

In any case, a story of such strange vicissitudes befalling Shakespearean documents would seem to warrant a complete exposition of how it all came about.

Moreover, there are other reasons, of a present and practical sort, which seem to make it worth while to do

more than merely record the bare results of the writer's investigations.

For, besides the interest attaching to anything connected with the plays of Shakespeare, the story in itself affords us some very necessary and useful warnings. It may serve to show us how a literary fiction, originating in the slenderest basis, may acquire by degrees universal credence, owing to haphazard and unscientific methods of research. It may also serve as a caution—sometimes necessary enough even in these days—against the danger of accepting the uncorroborated “ipse dixits” of “experts in handwriting,” however experienced and however honourable, unless their assertions can be subjected to rigid testings and checks.

Reverting now to the documents themselves, from whose vicissitudes these morals may be drawn, it is satisfactory to know that they now repose—let us hope for ever—in the permanent security of the Public Record Office, once more in the possession of the Crown. Had the American millionaires been about in the late 'sixties, when their then possessor was wanting to turn them into cash, there can be little doubt that those “snappers up” of

such "unconsidered trifles" as these, would not have missed acquiring the priceless papers, which our own Audit Office and Record Office between them had at one time altogether forgotten, and narrowly escaped letting slip for ever.

The whole circumstances are, in truth, most instructive for us at the present time. For it is notorious—though this seems to make but little difference—that the resources at the disposal of the custodians of our national archives, not only in Chancery Lane but also at Somerset House and elsewhere, are entirely inadequate to cope with the masses of material in their charge. Historical documents of all sorts, of the very highest curiosity and interest—many besides of great practical utility to-day in the study of the sciences and the technical and fine arts—are inaccessible and practically useless for want of the means and the staff necessary to arrange, catalogue and calendar them properly.

To cite one instance only: the archives of the Lord Chamberlain's Office, of no inconsiderable value as material for the history of the court, the drama and social life, though transferred to the Record Office in 1866 and 1874, are still to this day uncatalogued—a single manuscript hand-

list being all the assistance the historian gets when making researches among them.

Is a like fate, one wonders, in store for the masses of interesting papers, dating from the time of Henry VIII. to that of Victoria, which were removed from H.M.'s Office of Works in 1907? Are they, too, to be left unindexed and uncalendared for an indefinite period?

A strange thing it is, indeed, that the State, whose powers and activities are being so constantly and too successfully, perhaps, invoked to undertake functions, which might just as well—to say the least—be discharged by private enterprise, should remain so neglectful of the nation's treasures—its own province—as to suffer them to lie unfruitful and even deteriorating, while thrusting its energies into regions where it often does more harm than good.

But this is a wide topic: and, on the present occasion, it is only with records bearing on the wonderful history of our English drama that we are concerned—above all, with those relating to that crown of its wonder, the creations of our all-world poet. When one thinks of the millions profusely showered on the Education Department, and as

profusely wasted by it—for “art” schools, for instance, with their pitiful results—and of the hundreds of thousands of pounds squandered on trumpery and useless things, what is to be said of the indifference with which many of our most precious archæological treasures are left lying huddled away in bundles, unsorted and uncatalogued, in confusion and in shreds?

If it could be seriously contended that the country cannot afford to do this thing—to have its own archives properly taken care of—then it would be better that the necessary funds should be raised by disposing, say, of some of the duplicate copies of rare and valuable prints, stowed away in the presses of the Print Room; or of a few of the superfluous Turners at Millbank.

Or, why not get rid of the records themselves altogether, by selling them for some temptingly large price, say, to the Public Library of Berlin; or to some Museum or University in the United States, which would cherish such a possession, and speedily open the treasures they enshrine to the world at large?

Such expedients, however, are not, of course, seriously to be thought of. Yet, how much do we allow, even as it

is, other nations to do for us, of these islands, which we ought to take pride in doing for ourselves !

How is it that we have so often to seek in the books of Germans and Frenchmen, of Dutchmen and Danes—not to mention those, of course, of our kinsmen beyond the seas—for some of the most illuminating studies on the various branches of these subjects? How is it, too, that, if some private British scholar, who may have devoted immense time and pains to Shakespearean research—such as Mrs. Stopes, or Mr. W. J. Lawrence in that exceedingly valuable essay of his, “*Music in the Elizabethan Theatre*”—wishes to place the results of some of his investigations at the disposal of the world of letters, he has, as often as not, to do so by the courtesy of German scholars through the medium of the “*Jahrbuch*” of the “*Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft*”—for the reason, that the British publisher “won’t touch it,” because he doesn’t “see enough money in it?”

How comes it that it is as one of the twenty-nine volumes of the “*Materialien zur Kunde des älteren Englischen Dramas*”—that magnificent series of reprints of old English plays and documents elucidating our early drama, edited

by Dr. W. Bang, Professor of English in the University of Louvain, and published in that town, out of their comparatively small resources, aided, indeed, with a subsidy, for this special purpose, from the Belgian Government, but, getting nothing at all out of plutocratic England—how comes it that it is as one of this series that a Frenchman, an enthusiastic lover of our literature, and the author of a most delightful study of the life and works of John Lyly, M. Feuillerat, Professor of English in the University of Rennes, has to bring out his splendid work—written in admirable English, too—on the early history of our Office of the Revels?

Ask for M. Feuillerat's book in the great public libraries in Germany, France, Belgium, Holland—you will get it readily. Ask for it in the Library of the University of London, in the Library of the Guildhall, in the Library of the Society of Antiquaries—it is not there, nobody knows it, nobody wants it, but you can have the latest tract by a "Baconian."

How comes it, that it is to no English scholar but to Dr. Wallace, commissioned by the governing body of his University in Nebraska, to make researches in our Record

Office in London, that we are indebted for the most remarkable of recent discoveries on the personal life of Shakespeare? How comes it, indeed, that nearly 90 per cent. of those who hold permits for historical research are foreigners or colonials from beyond the sea.

In fact, the whole thing is, from any point of view, little less than discreditable to us as a nation, apart from the practical inferences to be drawn from the story of the particular documents recounted in the following pages.

As to this it may confidently be asserted that had the Record Office Department in 1859, when it took over the custody of the Audit Office archives, or even at any reasonable time after, been provided by the Treasury with the necessary resources for arranging and calendaring them, and rendering them easily and quickly accessible to all students, it would never have been possible for the preposterous fiction about the Books of Revels, to have deluded for forty-two years all the scholars and readers of Shakespeare in four continents. If the authorities concerned would only now draw the moral, the following pages may not have been written in vain.

FACSIMILES OF DOCUMENTS.

ON the opposite page and the following one are printed facsimiles of writings purporting to give a contemporary List of Plays, including seven of Shakespeare's, presented at Court before King James at Whitehall in the winter of 1604-5. They are written on pages 3 and 4 of a document inscribed thus:—

THE REUELLS BOOKE.

An^o 1605.

The Accompte of the Office of the
Reueles of this whole yeres
Charge in An^o 1604:
Untell the last of
October 1605
160⁵₄.

The pla-
iers ~~names~~ Hallamas Day being the first of. The poets
By the Kings ^{the} ~~the~~ November 8th play in the shanlet night. wh maye the
plaiers. soust uttere fit of all called The most of- plaies &c.



By his ma^{ties} The Sunday followinge play
plaiers of the Merry wines of winfor.

By his ma^{ties} On S^t steuens night in the shaxberd:
plaiers. Hall playe called Mejer for meder.

On S^t Jons night A maye be
An usike presented by the Erl of pembrok
of Lord willowbir. 6. Emigge more of shaxberd

By his ma^{ties} On Inosents night & plaie of: shaxberd:
plaiers: Errors

By the Queens On Sunday followinge playe: Hewood
the plaiers: Halle Flow to Larne of a sword to wode

The Boyes of= On Newers Night A playe By Georg
the Chapell: Gaule: All Foulles: Chapman

By his ma^{ties} Betwim Newers Day And
plaiers: Crotle Day playe of Loues Labours Last.

The playes On Twelfe night The poete

*Was the first of secretts not eleven layed
of hymns to Atticus party for ma not fram
in great Townes of doubt wth the far
In not constant musicke*

By his Ma^{ties}
playes:

On the 7. of January was played
the play of Henry the fift.

By his Ma^{ties}
playes:

The 8. of January: A play Gaulede
Every on out of his Umor

By his Ma^{ties}
playes:

On Candelmas night A playe
Every one In his Umor

The Sunday following A playe
produced And Disposed

By his Ma^{ties}
playes:

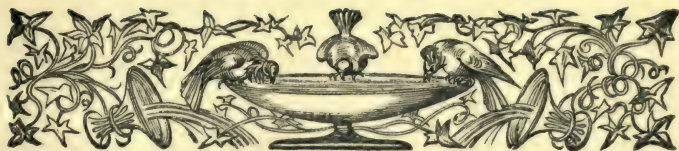
On Shrou Sunday A play of the Sheberd
Marchant of Venis

By his Ma^{ties}
playes:

On Shrou Monday A Tragidy of
the Spanish Maye

By his Ma^{ties}
playes:

On Shrou Tuesday A play Gaulede Sheberd.
The Marchant of Venis Against Bonard
By the Kings Ma^{ties}



SOME SUPPOSED SHAKESPEARE FORGERIES

NEARLY forty-three years ago—on the 29th of April, 1868—a letter was received by Sir Frederick Madden, Keeper of Manuscripts in the British Museum, offering for sale to the Trustees two very interesting documents of the time of James I.—the Account-Books of the Revels Office for the years 1604-5 and 1611-12. The writer of the letter, who was well-known to the Assistant Keeper of Manuscripts, Mr. Bond, stated that he had found these papers some thirty years before, when a Clerk in the Audit Office, “under the vaults of Somerset House—far under the Quadrangle in a dry and lofty cellar, known by the name of the ‘Charcoal Repository.’ Had I been a rich man,” proceeded the writer, “I would have *presented* these highly interesting Papers to the Nation.” But as he was not so, he added in a postscript, that he would “be content with any *sum* that the Trustees of the British Museum may see

fit to give me for these papers." Four days later in acknowledging a letter, which he had received from Mr. Bond asking him to name a price for what he offered, he said, "I have written to *Collier* about the Revels Accounts I sent you ; and he will write to you."

The "Collier" referred to was the notorious John Payne Collier, who, in the earlier half of the nineteenth century had been renowned and honoured throughout the world of letters, as a learned scholar and critic of our old English Drama ; but who had then recently—in the late fifties—been exposed before all Europe and America, after a very searching and convincing enquiry, as the undoubted fabricator of a series of the most astonishing Shakespearean forgeries that have ever been known. That one, who had been the subject of so painful a revelation, still fresh in the public mind, should have been asked to put a value on ancient documents, the source of which appeared to be by no means free from suspicion, seemed a somewhat strange thing ; even though he prudently stood aloof, and did not respond to the request. The would-be seller, however, in default of any communication from Collier, wrote to Mr. Bond two days after saying : "I do not think that I am *asking* too much of the *Trustees* of the *British Museum*, when I ask *Sixty Guineas* for them."

There the correspondence, which the present writer has been permitted, for the purposes of this investigation, to see, abruptly came to an end.

For, in the meanwhile, enquiries had been made about these documents; when it had at once become evident that they were National Records, formerly preserved in the Audit Office, but, for some unexplained reason, not transferred, as they ought to have been in 1859, with other similar historical papers, to the Public Record Office.

The two account books were, accordingly, impounded by Sir Frederick Madden, and having been formerly identified by the Deputy Keeper of the Records, Mr. (afterwards Sir) Thomas Duffus Hardy, were handed over on the 26th of May, 1868, by Mr. Bond, on behalf of the Trustees of the British Museum, to the Record Office. There they were placed among the old “Audit Office Declared Accounts—Various—” where they still remain.

Of these bare facts, which had, of course, been much talked about privately in literary circles, an outline was made known to the public in the “Athenæum” of June 20 following, with the announcement that the question, “how these documents came to be in private hands was then forming the subject of an enquiry.” Nothing further, however, was ever published by that newspaper on the subject.

But it soon became generally known, to the amazement of the literary world—and especially of Shakespearean scholars—that Peter Cunningham, who had been long favourably known as a literary antiquary and the compiler of several excellent works of history and biography, was the man who had been in unlawful possession of the documents

in question, and had endeavoured to palm them off on the British Museum as his own.

Cunningham, it should be added for the information of the present generation, was a son of Allan Cunningham, "Honest Allan," the famous writer of songs, a brother of Colonel Joseph Davey Cunningham, the author of "The History of the Sikhs," a work still widely read as the standard one on the subject, and a brother also of Admiral Cunningham. Out of regard for his father's memory Sir Robert Peel had nominated Peter in 1834, then a young man of 18, to a clerkship in the Audit Office, where he had acquitted himself so well as to have risen to be Chief Clerk. It was while in that department that he had devoted his leisure to writing the "Life of Inigo Jones," practically the only biography we have of the architect; a "Life of Nell Gwynne" also, which has remained a popular book to this day; an edition of Horace Walpole's "Letters," reissued quite lately; and a "Handbook for London," which has been the basis of all subsequent works on the subject. He was also an occasional writer in the periodical literature of his time. But he was best known, perhaps, among students of Shakespeare, at any rate, for his researches and writings relating to the dramatist; for he had been one of the most frequent contributors to the publications of "The Shakespeare Society," of which he had been one of the founders, and in which he had held the responsible post of Treasurer throughout the period of its existence.

The facts of the disclosure were also the more strange and distressing in that Cunningham was the very person, who, some twenty-six years before—in 1842, when he was a young man of twenty-six and had been in the Audit Office eight years—had announced to the world his discovery at Somerset House of these particular documents ; and had himself edited them, with a valuable Introduction, with other similar papers of earlier dates, in one of the most interesting as well as one of the best known of the volumes issued by “The Shakespeare Society”—“Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels at Court.” In this he had explained how he came to find them. He had started, he said, “on a search for old papers, rummaging in dry repositories, damp cellars and still damper vaults, for books of accounts, for warrants and for receipts. . . . My last discovery was my most interesting, and, alighting as I now did upon two official books of the Revels—one of Tylney’s and one of Buc’s—which had escaped both Musgrave and Malone, I at last found something about Shakespeare, something that was new, and something that was definitive.”

But the whole affair was still more astonishing from the strange ingenuousness—if it were not the most impudent and reckless effrontery—with which Cunningham had written to Sir Frederick Madden, apparently entirely forgetful of everything that had gone before, telling him how he had come by the books, deliberately pointing out to

him, in effect, how he could have had no sort of right or title to any property in them. Yet, according to the "Athenæum," "the gentleman who offered them for sale appears to have thought his right of property in them perfect."

The real state of the case, however, was that Cunningham, for many years past—as was pretty well known to the officials of the Record Office and the British Museum, among whom he had many acquaintances, as well as among literary men and editors—had given way hopelessly to drinking, and had seriously impaired his mental powers thereby; to which cause, possibly, was in part due his early retirement—at the age of 42—from the Civil Service, when the re-organisation of his department would have afforded his superiors an easy opportunity of passing him gracefully into private life.

To the decay of his mental powers, caused by his intemperate habits, may, at any rate, be put down his otherwise inexplicable conduct in his attempted sale of the Revels papers—the small fact that his letter of April 1868 was dated 1867 being an indication of this—though it does not help us either to fix the time when he removed them into his own keeping, or to find out in what circumstances he had done so. But these are after all but trivial details, as to which we are never likely to know anything more; and they are but the first among the many mysteries in which an affair, simple enough in itself,

has been throughout, as we shall see, rather curiously involved.

The most charitable supposition that can be framed in favour of Cunningham is to assume that, when he was transcribing the Books of Revels for printing, he was allowed by his chief to take them home for that purpose, and that he kept them there, after his volume of "Extracts" was published, forgotten by himself as well as everybody else, until he came across them again after his retirement, and that he then half thought he was entitled to keep them, as the original finder. Another supposition, equally likely, or perhaps equally unlikely, is that when he was arranging the records of his department for transfer from Somerset House to the new Public Record Office in Chancery Lane, he carried off these books as a sort of "perquisite"—"souvenir" "the wise it call" now-a-days—on quitting his old office, his drink-poisoned brain being unable to appreciate either the legal offence, the moral obliquity, or the personal dishonour of so doing.

That the documents were not missed and searched for is perhaps not surprising, for the archives of the Audit Office, while still at Somerset House, were in no way accessible to the general public, and consequently without the invaluable protection which publicity always affords; and when they were sent to the Record Office they were simply passed over *en bloc*, unsorted and unindexed.

This is the best apology that can be made for Peter

Cunningham. As for himself he never, it would seem, vouchsafed either to the public, or the authorities of the British Museum, any explanation; though in response to an invitation from the Master of the Rolls, Lord Romilly, to explain how he came to be in possession of these public documents, he answered boldly: "They belong to me. . . . To the Commissioners of Audit, they passed from the Auditors of the Imprest. But for me they would have been destroyed, through sheer ignorance, or sold for *waste paper*."

Such an excuse, however, cannot be held to avail him much; for the only documents which he abstracted out of the dozen published by him (none of them being either destroyed or sold) were those which, owing to the list of plays prefixed to them, and especially, of course, to the occurrence therein of Shakespeare's name, were of considerable pecuniary value. Moreover, whatever palliation there may have been for his conduct, it was soon afterwards found that he had undoubtedly disposed of, privately and for money, a year or two after, if not before, his retirement, of another of these Revels Account-Books—presumably taken possession of by him at the same time as the two others—namely, that of Sir George Buc, Tylney's successor as Master of the Revels, for the year 1636-7, an account which had also formed part of his volume of "Extracts" in 1842, and which contained references to plays of Shakespeare's performed at court before Charles I. What price

he got for it, and whether in selling it he gave any explanation of how he had come by it, or where he had got it from, we do not know. The buyer was a bookseller in Fleet Street, of the name of Waller, who, when he heard of the talk about Cunningham and the other books, came forward and gave it up to the Master of the Rolls, when it was replaced in the bundle with the rest of the series.

In spite, however, of the decidedly incriminating look of these transactions, nothing further appears to have been done in the matter. No proceedings were ever taken against him, the state of his health probably rendering any such step inexpedient, even had it been likely that it would have been successful; and had there not, moreover, been a general desire, in all the circumstances, to let him down as easily as possible, and to find in his condition of mental and physical prostration an explanation, if not an excuse, for his strange aberration of conduct. Nor does any regular formal enquiry ever seem to have been held, and certainly nothing was ever placed on record against him. Only the bare fact was noted in the thirtieth Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Records, that the two books had been received from the Trustees of the British Museum.

Here the matter might have rested, and indeed, so far as Cunningham's dealings with the documents were concerned, it did, and everyone would have been content to let the whole thing drop; while certainly it need never have been raked up again now, nearly forty-three years

after its occurrence, when all concerned in it have long since passed away, had it not been that another aspect of the affair, of much greater general interest and importance, had come into prominence.

For the sensation caused by the discovery of Cunningham's attempted sale of the purloined papers was small as compared with that aroused by the announcement that they had fallen under a grave suspicion of having been tampered with—the experts, according to "The Athenæum," having arrived at the conclusion that "the whole body of Shakespearean illustrations has been added to the original"; and according to the "Daily News," "pronounced by the most competent judges to be modern imitations—one of them a clumsy bare-faced performance"—that is to say, that the two well-known lists of plays in which were included many of Shakespeare's greatest works, with the dates of their being acted before King James at Whitehall, were entirely forged.

Coming, as this did, on the top of the then still recent exposure of Collier's far-reaching forgeries, it naturally produced a most disturbing effect on all lovers of Shakespeare, causing among scholars nothing less than dismay. For ever since the publication of the Revel's "Extracts" in 1842 the list therein printed (now found to correspond, word for word and letter for letter with the "forged" manuscript) had been taken, almost universally, as decisive of the vexed questions of the dates of composition and production of "Measure for Measure," "Othello," "A Winter's Tale"

and "The Tempest," and then suddenly the whole basis whereon had been so carefully reared a vast edifice of commentary and learning was declared to be absolutely unsound!

This was at once seen to have a particularly important bearing on the question of the date of "Othello," around which a sharp controversy had long raged—for something like a hundred years—and which, though it had to a certain extent abated on the publication of Cunningham's 1604-5 list, was now about to break out again, as keenly as ever.

On the one side, in the 'fifties and 'sixties of the nineteenth century, the chief living combatant—in succession to those defunct Shakespearean warriors of the eighteenth century, Warburton, Chalmers and Steevens—had been Gulian Crommelin Verplanck, Vice-Chancellor of the University of New York, and the editor of an excellent edition of Shakespeare's plays, published in that city in 1844-6. He, in spite of the positive, though unsupported, statement of Malone, as printed in the famous posthumous edition of 1821, known as the "Third Variorum" Edition, or "Boswell's Malone," in favour of the year 1604, as the date of production of the great tragedy, would not relinquish the later date 1611, first promulgated by Warburton a century before, and subsequently adopted by Chalmers—a date, indeed, which Malone himself had originally supported. Verplanck's opinion was mainly founded on "æsthetic" ground, being, as he said, convinced, by some obscure psycho-

logical process, which he did not explain, that Shakespeare in 1604 was neither old enough nor experienced enough to depict the workings of bitter passions as portrayed in the play "Othello," as we now have it from the first quarto of 1622 and the first folio of 1623. Only most reluctantly would he even admit that "the Moor of Venis," acted before King James in 1604, might have been an outline by Shakespeare "sufficient for dramatic effect, containing all the incidents and characters, but wanting some of the heightened poetry and intense passion of the drama, as we read it." He had doubtless formed his opinion before 1842, and was unable to fit it or bend it to the new fact then revealed.

Very much the same attitude, and on very similar grounds, had been taken up by Richard Grant White, another very competent American scholar, whose first edition of the plays in ten volumes, in many ways a very admirable one, had been brought out at Boston, U.S.A., in 1857-60. For Grant White, while accepting therein the undoubted genuineness of Cunningham's item relating to the performance of the "Moor of Venis" in 1604, had suggested that the play so entitled may have been by another playwright, afterwards entirely re-written by Shakespeare and produced in 1611, so tightly does the theorist—especially your *a priori* intuitionist—clasp his own imaginings in despite of the most positive, almost physical, proofs.

On the other side was, among many others, Charles Knight, who in the second edition of his "Pictorial Shakespeare, published in 1842-4, had frankly and unreservedly accepted the obvious consequences of Cunningham's discovery, with its strong corroboration of Malone's final, though unsubstantiated decision, and had placed the play as indubitably belonging to the second year of James I.'s reign. Halliwell-Phillips, a Shakespearean scholar of unrivalled antiquarian learning, at any rate, if not of very special critical acumen, equally readily, and without any qualification, adopted the earlier date in his magnificent folio edition of the plays, published in sixteen volumes between 1853 and 1865—"Othello" appearing in 1865.

Dyce, likewise, one of the most trustworthy and discerning of the commentators of that epoch, took the same line, both in his first edition brought out in 1857, as well as in his second, which followed in 1864-7. The triumph of the 1604-daters seemed, indeed, to be final, and the rout of the 1611-daters complete: their obstinate adherence to a chronology fatally discredited by the new evidence only serving, in the opinion of the other side, to expose their innate perversity to a deriding world. Moreover, the 1604-daters, following up their advantage, showed that the chronology of the supporters of 1611 had no better substance to rest on than a laboriously-woven tissue of wrong inference and false conjecture. For "how," asked they in effect, "can anyone with the smallest pretensions to

sound criticism maintain any longer that the words of Othello to Desdemona in the fourth scene of the third act :

“ The hearts of old gave hands :
But our new Heraldry is hands, not hearts.

was a reference to the institution by King James of the order of Baronets in May, 1611, instead of an echo of a passage in one of the Essays of Sir William Cornwallis, the younger, published in 1601 :

“ They had wont to give their hands and their hearts together ; but we think it a finer grace to look asquint, our hands looking one way, and our hearts another.”

If any purblind commentator still attempted to maintain so preposterous a supposition—“ a ridiculous idea,” according to Dyce—how could he get over the fact that it was not until May 28th, 1612, that King James by a second patent, granted the baronets as a peculiar heraldic distinction, that “ bloudie hand, O’Neel’s badge ” “ the arms of Ulster, that is, in a field argent, a hand geules,” to which Shakespeare was supposed to allude ; and that the row that took place in the House of Commons over the establishment by the Royal prerogative of this new order of nobility, which would have given point to the dramatist’s supposed satirical allusion, did not take place until May, 1614 ?

These were pertinent questions, pressed home with great persistence. If to meet such cogent objections the

1611-daters proposed to shift the year of production to 1614, then how could they explain that, according to "Vertue's Manuscript"* (which had belonged at one time to Pepys and afterwards to Dr. Rawlinson, who lent it to Vertue), the "Moore of Venice" was acted at court in 1613? Harassed and perplexed enough by these various difficulties, they had been still further worried by a discovery made by Sir Frederick Madden of a manuscript in the British Museum, giving an account, by an eye-witness, of a visit paid to the "Globe" theatre by Prince Lewis Frederick, Prince of Wirtemberg, in April 1610 to see "l'Histoire du More de Venise?" The only retort they could make—and rather a feeble, unconvincing bleat it seemed to be—was to asked in return: "How do you know that this 'More de Venise' of April 1610 and the 'Moor of Venis' of All Hallows' Day 1604 was not altogether a different play from Shakespeare's 'Othello'?" One small crumb of comfort, however, had been theirs, when the reference put forward by Collier, from the Egerton manuscripts, of a performance of "Othello" before Queen Elizabeth at Harefield in 1602, was shown conclusively to be a forgery.

And now, all of a sudden, the tables were completely turned; and a subdued chuckle went round all the adherents of the later date for the tragedy, when Cunningham's

* There can really be no doubt that the "Vertue Manuscript," cited by Malone in this connection, so long, and even still, a perplexity to critics, is the Rawlinson MS. A. 232, printed in the "New Shakespeare Society's" *Transactions*, 1875-6, part ii. p. 419.

reference to a performance of the play at court in 1604 was also pronounced to be part of an undoubted forgery. From across the Atlantic something like a cry of triumph was heard, when the news reached New York. Verplanck, who was then eighty-two, and who died two years later, seems to have been silent. But Grant White, who had already distinguished himself by having originally maintained the genuineness of Collier's forged emendations to the notorious "Perkins Folio," without seeing them, on internal evidence and his own intuition alone, showed no hesitation in at once making up his mind in the Cunningham business.

He wrote an article in the November number of a periodical called "The Galaxy," now extinct, but merged in the "Atlantic Monthly," in which, in a characteristic vein of self-assurance, he told "the whole story," as he had learnt it, so he declared, "from authentic sources." His account, which may be read in full in a copy of the magazine in the Library of the British Museum, or in a more accessible form, though abridged, in Dr. Furness's "New Variorum" edition of "Othello," is found, when tested, to be demonstrably inaccurate and exaggerated in almost every particular. Among other small inaccuracies, indicative of his general carelessness, he stated that Cunningham, "an oldish man broken down by hard drinking," had appeared at the British Museum, and "presented for sale an old manuscript volume . . . which his friend, Mr. Collier, said was worth sixty guineas"; whereas it is clear from the correspondence

cited above, that he did not go to the Museum himself at all, but sent the documents by post or hand, and that he did not quote Collier as an authority for their value. "So interesting a volume," proceeded Grant White, "at once attracted the attention of the experts of the Audit Office; and they at once discovered that, although the book [it is a mere packet or pamphlet of three folio sheets, making six leaves and twelve pages] was genuine, that part of it, which was of greater interest than all the rest, the leaves [there was only one leaf] containing the record of the performance of Shakespeare's plays, was a forgery, a gross forgery, from beginning to end."

To found a further argument for the theory of forgery, Grant White went on to say that "the important entries are made upon two leaves lying loose in the volume," and that these "were never bound into the volume": whereas it is not "two leaves," but only one leaf—pages 3 and 4 of the packet—which contains the impugned list. This leaf is, moreover, in no sense "lying loose" or detached; but forms, as the first half of the second sheet, with the corresponding other half of that sheet at the end—composing pages 9 and 10—an integral part of the packet. Nor is there any question either of "a volume" or of "binding": the "volume," as he calls it, consisting, as already explained, merely of three folio sheets, in no sense ever "bound," but merely held together by a slight thread. It is further to be noted that on page 9 is to be found the undoubted

signature of Edmund Tylney himself, the Master and the accounting officer of the Revels—a fact not mentioned by Grant White, nor ever by anyone else, but of considerable significance.

Truly remarkable carelessness ; truly most unpardonable ignorance of the exact facts of the case, on the part of one seeking, on the strength of them, to overthrow evidence conflicting with his own theories, and bringing (as we shall see in a moment) a serious charge of forgery against a fellow author.

Still further to strengthen his argument against the authenticity of this play-list of 1604-5, he declared that only in the single instance of this account-book, out of thirteen similar ones, " is the name of a play, mask or interlude given "—a statement absolutely opposed to the facts. For the Revels Book of 1611-12 has prefixed to the account for that year just such a similar list of plays—including " The Tempest " and " A Winter's Tale "—which, though its authenticity was likewise then doubted by some, was considered by many, including Grant White himself, to be genuine—and with good reason, as we shall see later on. Moreover, apart from that one, there is yet another similar list of plays—including several of Shakespeare's—prefixed to the account of Sir George Buc in the Revels Book of 1636-7, the genuineness of which list even the most sceptical have never thought of disputing.

So much for Grant White's method of presenting the

case. But he was not alone. For the "British Quarterly Review" (stimulated, probably, by his complaint that, after the pronouncement in the "Athenæum" of June 1868, "the subject appeared to have been dropped for ever" in England, "not a word having been uttered upon the subject since in any quarter") proceeded to publish an article, in January 1869, on "Literary Forgeries" in general, and Shakespeare Forgeries in particular, in which several paragraphs were devoted to the impugned writings in the Revels Books. In it the reviewer asserted that "it only required a *glance* of the experts to discover that the list of Shakespeare's plays performed before the Court in the years alluded to had been appended to the old documents by a modern hand. The trifling and uninteresting items of expenditure are genuine, but the book containing these appears to have also contained some blank pages, into which the forger had crammed the whole of the writings referring to Shakespeare."

Here, again, we have not the attestations of those who had themselves critically and professionally examined the documents, but only a hearsay opinion of an anonymous writer, who, like Grant White, indulged in that arguing at large, without verification of the evidence, which has too often done duty in Shakespearean discussions for positive facts: pretty nearly every single sentence in the article being contrary to the simplest and most easily verifiable facts of the case.

For instance, the reviewer in writing of the document as "a book containing some *blank* pages," by this misleading suggestion begged the whole question. For the pages he referred to—3 and 4—were not, of course, "blank" at the time he wrote, and the very point of the whole matter was whether they ever had been "blank" since 1605—the year when "the trifling and uninteresting items of expenditure," admitted by all to be palpably authentic, were first written into this account-book. Again, the reviewer wrote misleadingly when he stated that "the forger" had "crammed the whole of the writings relating to Shakespeare" into these two pages (assumed to have been "blank" until the "forger" got to work on them); whereas none of the entries are in any sense "crammed," but are plainly written in large script, with ample spaces between the lines; while everyone of them has relation to the period covered by the account that follows.

It does not seem to have occurred to any of those giving vent to all these confident strictures that the differences in the writing could easily have been accounted for, on the obvious supposition that the two pages had been reserved on purpose by the Clerk of the Revels, in order that the list of plays might be afterwards inserted, possibly by another hand. The fact, noticed by only one—not Grant White—of the denouncers of the play-lists—though its significance was unappreciated even by him—that in a previous account-book there was in the margin, in an obviously contem-

porary hand, this note, "The names of the plays should be expressed," should have afforded the clue.

Nevertheless, it was on such assertions as these, so slightly warranted, so false even, made by Grant White, on the authority, according to him, of responsible persons, which, being diffused throughout the world, caused the "forgeries" to be taken by everyone as proved beyond a doubt.

Yet, curiously enough, there is nowhere on record any statement, made by any official concerned, of greater positiveness than the letter from Mr. Bond, the Assistant Keeper of Manuscripts in the British Museum, to the Master of the Rolls, when sending on the documents, in which letter he stated that he "saw reasons for doubting the genuineness of one, at least, of these papers, from the peculiar character of the writing and the spelling"—meaning, of course, that portion of it which we have been discussing. This opinion of his has been attached as a *caveat* to the documents ever since; but, beyond this nothing more: the Record Office Staff having carefully abstained from committing themselves, at least on paper or in public, to anything more definite.

Such a commendable cautiousness does not, however, appear to have been unofficially maintained. For Grant White went on to say—and what he said was never challenged or contradicted—that it was "Mr. Duffus Hardy, of the Rolls Court, than whom there is no better authority

in England, not excepting Sir Frederick Madden himself," who had pronounced the play-list of 1604-5 to be a "forgery, a gross forgery, from beginning to end." That Duffus Hardy did tell everyone who asked him about it that he felt sure that that list, at any rate—and, perhaps, the one of 1611-12 also—was a forgery, there can be little doubt; and that such a mere private expression of his opinion would have carried great weight with Shakespearean scholars, admits of still less doubt.

For two of them, at any rate, and those two the most considered critics of that day—Dyce and Halliwell-Phillips—it was at once decisive; their rejection extending, moreover, equally decisively to the later list of 1611-12, which purports to furnish the dates of the performance at court of "The Winter's Tale" and "The Tempest." Yet, as is clearly indicated by Mr. Bond's letter, there never was among the experts anything like the same general conviction that this later list also was a forgery, as there was about the earlier one. According to Grant White—and he is the only authority we have—Duffus Hardy and the other officials of the Record Office were clear that it was. But, on the other hand, many competent persons, including, it would seem, several of the British Museum men, were equally strongly inclined to believe it to be genuine—an opinion shared, to a great extent, by Grant White himself, as he tells us. At any rate, there was not the same unanimity and positiveness about it, as in the case of the

other ; and for the good reason that pretty nearly every one of the points, which occasioned suspicion in that, was absent in this.

Yet, extraordinary as it may appear, everything goes to show that no enquiry, formal or informal, took place, nor scarcely any discussion ; that no technical scrutiny of the suspected writings was made, nor any testing of them microscopically or chemically—such as so conclusively laid bare Collier's artfully contrived fabric of fraud. The truth seems to be that, owing to Cunningham's former association in editorial matters with that past-master in the forging craft, the documents he sent to the Museum were no sooner seen than suspected, and no sooner suspected than condemned. Everything, especially the phrases used by the "Athenæum," "The British Quarterly," Grant White and others, point to this—"at once seen to be forgeries" ; "clumsy bare-faced forgeries" ; "the experts at once discovered" ; "a palpable forgery" ; "a glance was sufficient" ;—demonstrating that the verdict was pronounced off-hand.

Nevertheless, Duffus Hardy and the rest scrupulously abstained from formulating any accusation against Cunningham of being himself the real delinquent—in which they showed wisdom as well as justice. For, as Dr. Furness remarked, when exhaustively discussing the case as it stood in 1886, in his notes to "Othello" : "It is one thing to prove a document a forgery, but it is another, and very different thing, to say who is the forger." No such caution

or scruple, however, seems to have troubled Grant White ; for on no better basis, apparently, than the hearsay of London literary tattlers, he ended his article in the "Galaxy" by exclaiming : " And now who is the forger ? The conclusion that Peter Cunningham is the man seems unavoidable."

This confident assertion, so recklessly and cruelly made, has never been challenged to this day ; and, since its republication by Dr. Furness in 1886, has been generally accepted as an incontrovertible fact, and the very last word on the subject. Yet, had any fair amount of consideration been given to it, strong reasons could not but have made themselves at once apparent to confute this charge so lightly fathered upon the poor, dying, discredited ex-Audit Office clerk. For it might have been asked : how and when could Peter Cunningham have concocted the fraud attributed to him ? What would have been his object, what could have been his motive ? If he did perpetrate it, he must have done it some little time previous to the publication of his "Extracts" in 1842—say about the year 1840—1—when he was a young clerk of twenty-five only, with not much literary training, with but slight previous experience in deciphering old records, and but scant familiarity with seventeenth-century manuscripts and their phraseology ; for a purpose moreover unexplained, if not inexplicable, and in any case out of all proportion to the labour entailed and the risks involved. No one, indeed, who has not endeavoured to thread the mazes of the Accounts of the

"Treasurer of the Chamber," and the "Master of the Revels," of the Register of the Stationers' Company, and Henslowe's "Diary" (Greg's edition, not Collier's), can have any idea of the colossal task that any one would set himself to, who, equipped with the fragmentary, haphazard, and often apparently contradictory information afforded by those records, should attempt, with such material, to piece together a list like that in Tylney's account-book—besides the immense care and enormous pains, and almost encyclopædic familiarity with the personal and dramatic records of the time needed for its concoction, so that it should square with all the then-known and most of the since-discovered tiny items, as this does. Even Collier, in his palmiest forging days, could not have attempted it, without bringing into play that apparatus of preliminary tracings, experimental pencillings, half-obliterated letters, and doctored inks and pigments, which eventually led to his detection.

Some of the experts and critics must have felt the force of these various considerations: for one or two of them hinted pretty broadly that Peter Cunningham was probably only the tool, jackal or dupe of John Payne Collier; and that behind the pitiful figure of the broken down drunkard lurked the sinister and ubiquitous hand of the arch-fabricator—the disgraced scholar, the teacherous friend, who, abusing the trust reposed in him and all the unexampled opportunities and privileges accorded him, had

prostituted his learning, his knowledge and his skill, in the vile and mischievous work of poisoning the springs of research into the life and works of our supreme poet: the man, who in his notorious "Perkins Folio" alone, had perpetrated no less than 30,000 frauds, and who, with a moral aberration scarcely explicable except as some abnormal type of insanity, had left the foul trail of his forging fingers on every document confided to his care.

Grant White, however, in fastening, as he did, with so little justification, the charge of forgery against Cunningham, was charitable enough to find something extenuating in his condition: "The poor creature's brain had become so muddled by years of continual drunkenness, and his memory so far gone, that he did not remember what he had done, and did not know what he was doing. . . . He is now insane or idiotic, fit only for a lunatic asylum."

As for Cunningham himself, whether he ever knew of the accusation against him, we cannot tell. Perhaps, he never heard anything about it at all; for in England his name was not directly connected—publicly, that is to say—with the supposed forgery during his life-time. At any rate, he made no sign; and his silence, perhaps, increased the certainty of those who thought him clearly guilty. Even if he was told about it, the state of his mind doubtless prevented his understanding it: for he was gradually passing into complete vacancy, and slowly sinking into his grave. Six months after the appearance of Grant White's

article in the "Galaxy" he died, at St. Albans, on May 18th, 1869.

And so it has been that Peter Cunningham's name has borne not only the stigma of his discreditable, if not criminal—though partly, perhaps, to be palliated and explained—dealings with the Revels Books ; but also with a fraud long and deliberately prepared, when in the enjoyment of his sober senses, and the full capacity of his mind ; carefully thought out and worked up ; and designed to mislead, deceive and to cheat.

If this more serious charge was unmerited, then, surely, he is entitled to have his memory cleared of the imputation. He is entitled to this as much as, and in many ways more than, if he were still alive. For a libel is not less a libel, but, rather is it more so, when it strikes at the honour of one—though only a poor, needy scholar—who is no longer present and able to defend himself. Before these pages conclude, the writer believes that he will be able to do this for him ; and, to the satisfaction of all fair-minded and reasonable men, to vindicate his name from the brand with which it would otherwise be falsely, most unjustly, and ineffaceably stamped for all time.

But, "*litera scripta manet*," and Grant White's printed page, pointing at Cunningham as the forger, has hitherto overborne all doubts and questionings. Besides, belief in his guilt offered the simplest and most obvious solution of the problem, and, with that great recommendation, naturally

appealed strongly to the world in general—especially supported as it was by “the opinions of the experts.”

As to the editors of Shakespeare : the two leading ones in England at that time—Dyce and Halliwell-Phillips—just as they had originally accepted Cunningham’s play-list with implicit faith, so now they both at once, in entire confidence, as already indicated, received without questioning the verdict of the paleographers—doubtless, little suspecting on what a perfunctory examination of the manuscripts it was founded. Moreover, they both—if Grant White’s statement to this effect is to be believed—confirmed it on their own account by going to see the documents in the Record Office for themselves. Dyce, however, though a sound literary critic of the text of the plays, never made any pretensions to expert knowledge of old writings ; and he merely noted, in the subsequent issues of his fine scholarly edition of the dramatist’s works, that the play-lists were no longer to be relied on. Halliwell-Phillips, on the other hand, being a skilled reader of sixteenth and seventeenth century writings, and having made more extensive researches among old records than any other investigator into the life and works of Shakespeare, declared his positive opinion that the play-list of 1604–5 was “unquestionably a very modern forgery,” adding that “the character of the ink encourages the suspicion that it could not have been perpetrated until long after . . . 1812.” The list of 1611–12 he does not seem to have examined, or troubled himself about at all ; though

he afterwards elsewhere referred to it as being as plainly fraudulent as the other. Little doubt that both these critics, nevertheless, can have made no really independent inspection of the documents at all, and must have been mainly guided by what they were told by Duffus Hardy and the others. We shall see later on how very unwise this was of them, and how dangerous it always must be for people to accept as conclusive the bare pronouncements—however confident—of “an expert in hand-writing,” however honourable, and however distinguished, even in what may be his own limited and specially chosen sphere, unless he will deign to reveal the grounds for the faith that is in him, and to explain by what process he has arrived at his conclusions.

Neither Halliwell-Phillips nor Dyce, however, ever went so far as to allege that Cunningham was the forger : nor did Dr. Furness at that time : though it was probably more his citations from Grant White’s article than anything else which gave the belief in the accusation its wide currency. As to the supposed fact of there being a forgery by somebody Dr. Furness, being at a distance, naturally and properly enough could but take as incontrovertible the absolute assertions of those on the spot—Halliwell-Phillips especially—that the forged nature of the play-lists was “a settled fact.” How could he, in Pennsylvania, devoting the most extraordinary and scrupulous care to the testing of the very smallest fragment that has gone to the building up of the most magnificent monument ever reared by a single

individual to our great poet—his “New Variorum” edition—how could he be expected to know that a question touching the authenticity of records so precious in the sight of Shakespearean scholars on both sides of the Atlantic would be investigated by those who had the care and custody of them in London in so happy-go-lucky a way? For this misplaced confidence of his there was more than an excuse, there was justification.

Thus stood the state of the case for some time. That the play-lists were forged was a “settled fact”—*chose jugée*—that they were the handiwork of Peter Cunningham was an almost equally “settled fact”; and still more was it a “settled fact” that no one wanted to have that decision controverted, or the discussion reopened, or anybody troubled about it any more. Two or three weeks after Cunningham’s death a kindly notice of him appeared in the “Athenæum,” with an appreciative account of what he had accomplished in his earlier days, but without any reference to the painful matter of the Revels Books; and with that every one concerned was well content that the whole affair should pass into oblivion.

And so, in truth, for nearly nine years it slumbered; though, of course, during that period the 1611-daters of “Othello” were in a state of high jubilation, preening themselves on their superior perspicacity, which had led them to resist the seemingly conclusive evidence for the earlier date. On the other hand, those of the 1604-daters

who were still determined to adhere to their original views had to reconcile them as best they could with the altered state of the evidence—which they did, mainly by relying on Malone's final and positive decision—or by seeking for fresh vindications of them.

These, as it happened, were not long forthcoming. For about this period a band of new and pretty acute critics—Spedding, Dowden, Ingram, Hertzberg, Fleay, Furnivall—had come on the scene, and begun attacking the vexed problems of the dates and sequences of Shakespeare's plays, armed with the strange and unfamiliar weapons of metrical tests—the whole *apparatus criticus*, in fact, of "the middle pause," of "weak endings," and "light endings" and "double endings," "the extra syllable," and "run-on-lines"—analytical methods which, entirely unwarranted as they were by precedent, exasperated the intuitionists—relying on their own "unerring instincts," and confident in a special "psychological inwardness" peculiar to themselves, sufficient for deciding all questions of dramatic chronology—to the point of frenzy. Still more did these despised and hated methods—so degrading to the users, so debasing to the subtleties of Shakespeare's verse—infuriate them, when it began to be everywhere more and more acknowledged that whatever else they might do, or might not do, they certainly acted as most powerful solvents of mere æsthetic, thin-spun, personal theories.

One of the first plays subjected to the new criticism

happened to be "Othello," which, by a provokingly remarkable consensus of results, these terrible new-fangled analysers, all, on metrical grounds, reassigned to the year 1604 or thereabouts.

In the meantime, while the Shakespearean world was thus rent and agitated by the conflict between methods ancient and modern—the controversy developing into a general engagement, with much mutual flinging about of such choice missives of literary polemics as "flat burglary," "long ears," "infinite self-conceit," "teaching your grandmother to suck eggs," "sham stuff," and so on—an altogether unexpected and most surprising resuscitation of the Revels Books sensation was preparing for it. For the mystery of the famous forgery was far from being ended. Indeed, it seemed only just beginning, when in 1880 Halliwell-Phillips announced in a tiny booklet of 24 pages—entitled "A Note on 'Measure for Measure'" of which only two dozen copies were printed, signed and numbered for distribution among his chosen friends—that he had found among Malone's papers, in the Bodleian Library, a memorandum, made prior to 1812, of Shakespeare's plays, with the dates of their performances at Court in 1604-5, all but exactly tallying with Cunningham's notorious list. It almost seemed as if some of the critics were conspiring to mystify the world, so great was the perplexity of scholars and readers of Shakespeare when the news of this startling development spread among them.

Here, indeed, was a bomb-shell for the 1611-daters! to have the discarded and discredited year 1604 suddenly cropping up again! and in a new, and more aggressive form, too, than ever! Here, indeed, was a perplexing puzzle for all the experts and all the editors, all the commentators and all the critics—æsthetic and mechanical, idealistic and materialistic—alike! How to explain the complete anticipation of the contents of a “forged” document in an obscure bit of paper, written fifty years before the forgery was perpetrated, and twenty-five before the “forger” was even born?

The mystification was not lessened but rather increased when Halliwell-Phillips in 1885, in the fifth edition of his “*Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*,” gave full particulars of what he had discovered, and discussed the whole question in all its bearings. In view of what had gone before—especially the confident announcements made about the worthlessness of the information furnished by the play-lists published by Cunningham—it was truly amazing to learn that almost every item in one of those lists, and almost every word of it, dates, and names of plays, and names of companies alike—even to the eccentricities of spelling, such as “Shaxberd”—was to be found on a sheet of paper, which had formed part of Malone’s notes and collections, got together by him between 1791 and 1812—the year of his death—which, therefore, could not be assigned to a later period than the first decade of the nineteenth century, and

which probably belonged to the last few years of the eighteenth.

It was further shown by Halliwell-Phillips that the piece of paper had been in the Bodleian since 1821, when it came, with the rest of Malone's material for the new edition of his book, as a gift to the Library, in a bag or loose bundle with many other similar scraps, excerpts and notes, which remained uncatalogued—unsorted even—and inaccessible to readers, for some fifty years or more ; so that with no probability could it ever have been seen by Cunningham at all, and with no possibility by him or by anyone else until long after 1842—indeed until some thirty years subsequent to that date. Halliwell-Phillips's eyes, in fact, must have been the only ones to light upon that startling scrap of writing since Malone's death—for it evidently escaped the notice of his editor, Boswell—except Mr. H. S. Harper's, one of the officials of the Bodleian, who explained how he had, in recent years—apparently in the seventies—sorted and arranged all such bits of memoranda and extracts, and had them, under his own direction, bound up together in a single volume (now Malone MS., No. 29).

The particular sheet of paper in question has been examined by the writer, who can testify that its appearance is correctly described, as well as its contents accurately transcribed, in the *Appendix* to the second volume of the "Outlines."

Now, as to the origin of what is written on it. It is

impossible to conceive of anyone, who has read the account of the matter given by Halliwell-Phillips, doubting for one moment that his explanation of it is the true one: namely, that it is a genuine transcript, slightly abridged, taken for Malone—for it is not in his own handwriting—from some early seventeenth century document, contemporary with Shakespeare, to which he would have had access between 1790 and 1812, when collecting material for his intended new edition—the great work, which saw the light nine years after his death (though, owing to the absence of his revising hand, necessarily in a somewhat fragmentary and disjointed form), generally known as the “*Variorum*” of 1821, or “*Boswell's Malone*.”

That he had access to the Revels Accounts, then preserved in the Audit Office, we know from his own note distinctly stating so, and from the letter to him of Sir William Musgrave, First Commissioner of the Board of Audit, on 7th of November, 1791, telling him that arrangements had been made for his inspection of these documents at Somerset House, whenever he wished to see them. The results of his researches—voluminous extracts from the accounts of the time of Queen Elizabeth—were printed by Boswell among the “*Prolegomena*” of the “*Variorum*,” vol. iii. pp. 361–409, together with Musgrave's letter, Malone's note—intended by him to be incorporated in his “*History of the Stage*”—and a memorandum on the “*State of the Books of Accounts and Records of the Master of the*

Revels, still remaining in the Office for Auditing the Public Accounts in 1791."

Neither this list, however, nor the results of Malone's researches, as published, contain any reference to any Revels records of the time of James I. ; nor were any such mentioned at all, either by Musgrave or Malone. Halliwell-Phillips, it is true, stated in his survey of the whole matter, that the "Records for 1604 and 1605" were specifically mentioned by Musgrave as among those placed at the disposal of Malone ; but this is not so. He probably mistook for dates the consecutive numbers, 1604 and 1605, attached to two manuscripts of Queen Elizabeth's time. As a fact, Malone rather seems to imply that when he went to the Audit Office in 1791 the Accounts for the year in question, if in existence at all, were not then available. This little inaccuracy of Halliwell-Phillips's, trifling as it is, though important to his argument, is one of the very few to be detected in all the vast extent and multiplicity of his writings on Shakespeare.

Nevertheless, there can be but little doubt that the records for 1604-5—and probably those for 1611-12 as well—must have turned up at Somerset House very soon after Malone's visit there ; and that his transcript list of plays was derived therefrom—probably sent to him by someone in the Office, and perhaps by Musgrave himself.

But, however that may be, the original document—wherever and whatever it may have been—of Malone's still

existing transcript must certainly, in any case, have been the "indisputable evidence"—whenever he may have lighted on it—by which, as he stated in 1800, in a note to a passage in Dryden's "Ground of Criticism in Tragedy," he *knew* that "Othello" was not as he had formerly supposed, "one of our great dramatic poet's latest compositions"; and must likewise have been the authority on which he made the declaration in his final revised notice of "Othello," in his Essay on the "Chronological Order of Shakespeare's Plays": "We *know* that it was acted in 1604." This is, indeed, an inference almost as irresistible in its force, and as conclusive in its consequences, as anything of the sort in such a case could very well be.

Further, it may be added that the authenticity of the information supplied by Malone's scrap of paper—putting for a moment Cunningham's list out of the argument—is corroborated in a most remarkable manner, by a reference to a performance of "Love's Labour's Lost," early in the month of January 1605, before the Queen of James I., at Lord Southampton's house in Holborn. The reference is contained in a well-known letter of Sir Walter Cope's to Cecil, then Viscount Cranborne, preserved at Hatfield, which was not discovered until 1872, and which it is impossible could have been known either to Malone or to Cunningham. This and other similarly significant facts render the essential genuineness of the information, on which both versions of this play-list of 1604-5 are based, absolutely, beyond

question : and there are analogous reasons, almost equally strong, for saying the same of that of 1611-12.

For, though of this later list there is no transcript among Malone's papers—a thing sufficiently accounted for probably by the comparative meagreness of the references in it to Shakespeare—there is nevertheless every likelihood that the substance of the information it contains—whether the existing writing be genuine or not—was in his possession several years before his death. For, in his review of "The Tempest," prepared for his projected new edition, and printed by Boswell in the Essay on the "Chronological Order of Shakespeare's Plays" ("Variorum," vol. ii. p. 465), he plainly stated that he had evidence "placing it beyond a doubt," not only "that this play was founded on a recent event," but also, "that it was produced in 1611." Further, in another Essay, entitled "An Account of the Incidents of the Tempest," privately printed by him in 1809, and afterwards reprinted as a supplement in the "Variorum" (vol. xv.), while elaborately discussing the whole problem of the source, origin and date of the play, he declared positively that he *knew* "The Tempest" "had a being and a name in the autumn of 1611."

Halliwell-Phillips's cogent arguments, indeed, on these several points and his deductions therefrom no critic has ever yet disputed ; none, who expected to be taken seriously, could ever think of attempting to dispute.

Not so his final summary and conclusion on the whole

matter. "There appears," wrote he, "to be only one solution that reconciles all the known facts of the case. It is that the forger had met with and reproduced in a simulated form trustworthy extracts from a genuine record that had disappeared from that office." That there might be another solution plainer and more obvious, and more reconciling with all the facts, making them each fit easily and simply into its place; in fact, that the supposed forged writings were, after all, genuine, does not, unfortunately, appear to have occurred to him.

It is no wonder that Halliwell-Phillips's conclusion, being what it was, did not altogether commend itself to Dr. Furness. "The puzzle of these Revels Accounts," wrote that distinguished scholar in 1892, in an admirable review of the whole hundred-years discussion on the date of "The Tempest"—in that superb and wonderful work of his, never to be superseded, never to be surpassed, for which all lovers of Shakespeare, now in being and to be, must ever owe him and his son an inexhaustible obligation of gratitude; and which may well still endure as an imperishable shrine "to the memory of our beloved, the author . . . and what he has left us" when "Time dissolves his Stratford monument"—"The puzzles of these Revels Accounts," wrote he, "may some day be solved. At present it is inscrutable. Halliwell-Phillips' treatment of it in his 'Outlines' is unsatisfactory. He acknowledged in private correspondence that the subject needed revision;

but unfortunately the lassitude of his fatal illness was even then upon him, and he was unable to accomplish the task." Moreover, he was then living permanently at Hollingbury Copse, near Brighton, which must greatly have militated against his making the necessary investigations in London. Had he regained his health and lived, we cannot but feel sure that eager, ardent, passionate even, as he was in the pursuit everywhere of truth and accuracy, as it affected the smallest particular relating to the poet's life and works, he would not have been satisfied with a solution so little conclusive or satisfying ; but would eventually, by re-examining the supposed forgeries for himself, have reached the true answer to the conundrum.

But as it has happened the puzzle has remained in all its perplexity for a quarter of a century ; and since his death in 1889 no further light has been shed on it from any quarter.

In fact, there are few things more curious in this business than the way in which the mystery was allowed to remain a mystery, and the fresh crop of difficulties, raised by the finding of Malone's transcript, was acquiesced in by all those on the spot in England, leaving it to Dr. Furness in America to point out insistently, in volume after volume, how unsatisfactory it all was. To no one does it seem to have occurred that if Peter Cunningham's guilt had appeared, for the reasons given above, to many dubious enough before, how much more so was it now, as long as these

further obvious queries were without an answer: Why should he have forged the lists at all, when, *ex hypothesi*, he had the originals lying open before him? Why, if he did so, should he have gone out of his way to depart so much from his model, as to make use of a style of lettering different to that employed in the undoubtedly authentic portions of the documents—thus at once arousing suspicion? Why, again, should he have printed the play-lists from his forged versions instead of from the originals? Why, too, should he have made away with the originals, instead of trying to sell them, in preference to his fraudulent copies, to the British Museum?

Then there was the point about the spelling in Malone's transcript. Nothing had contributed more to the immediate condemnation of Cunningham's play-lists than the quaint version of the name "Shaxberd," in which the knowing ones had at once detected the mock-antique of the tyro in seventeenth century forgery. And yet here it was, in the Bodleian Library, so copied for Malone, a hundred years before, from the original document, assumed to be at that time still intact among the archives of the Audit Office. And then there was Halliwell-Phillips, with his provokingly-wide antiquarian lore, coming forward with several instances from contemporary records at Stratford-on-Avon, exhibiting almost exactly similar peculiarities in the spelling of the immortal name—"Shaxpere," "Shaxber," "Shaxbeer"—plain indications, by the way, of the original universal pro-

nunciation of the name, still preserved among the peasantry of Warwickshire round about Stratford, and best represented by the two French words, *chaque espère*—Shakespeare himself always having used a spelling which shows that he retained these original native sounds to the end.

Nevertheless, as time went by, editors and critics disregarding all these many difficulties, and not unnaturally, perhaps, impatient of uncertainty, when their readers were clamouring for positiveness one way or the other, by degrees became less reticent about the accusation of forgery, blurted out twenty years before by Grant White against Cunningham, which, not being contradicted or disputed in the meanwhile, gradually came to be generally believed in, and plumply asserted by nearly all. The way was led by the late Mr. Fleay, a Shakespearean scholar, who, when engaged in literary discussion, invariably expressed his views in a most violent and denunciatory style. In this case, without apparently ever having seen the documents, he stigmatized Cunningham's play-lists—and strangely enough especially that of 1611-12—as “the most glaringly impudent of all the forgeries published by Collier and Cunningham”—an artfully contrived “*suggestio falsi*,” which so mixed the two up together as to make it appear that Cunningham had perpetrated other forgeries besides those in the Revels Accounts, and that he was probably concerned with the arch-fabricator in some of his many wide-spread frauds (for which there was certainly not the slightest vestige of

foundation); though, in order, apparently, to fix him with the full discredit for this particular one, he declared it to be “ so inexpressibly clumsy that Collier could have had no share in it. It took in Halliwell,” he added, “ but he knew very little of stage history outside Shakespeare’s career.”

Fleay even went so far as to couple with Collier’s name that of Halliwell-Phillips also, against whom he seems to have nourished a special grudge, denouncing “ the procedures of this triad of worthies ” as “ a tangled web of deceit,” and declaring that “ nothing could be more blameworthy than the support given ” by Halliwell-Phillips to the other two—though he never gave them any support at all! The only thing he did, which could have afforded any ostensible reason for Fleay’s preposterous suggestion that he had supported Collier in his proceedings, and, perhaps, had taken some part in them, was that he had been cautiously slow at first in admitting their fraudulent nature. The real reason of Fleay’s rancour, however, seems to have been the encyclopædic knowledge of the author of the “ Outlines ” on questions, he himself had scarcely touched the fringe of, which irritated him so excessively that, while quick to avail himself of all his rival’s discoveries and to treat them as the common stock of information on the subject, he never omitted disparaging his learning, or trying to catch him out in a mistake.

After all his arguing in a circle and confusing the facts, Fleay proceeded to demonstrate by intrinsic evidence, so he

said, and certainly to his own complete satisfaction, the utter worthlessness and concocted character of both play-lists ; particularly that of 1611-12, which, of the two, as we have already explained, more bears the impress of authenticity, and has been less doubted than the other.

The apparent discrepancies which he made so much of are, however, if tested, found to be, most of them, susceptible of ready explanation : while, if the play-lists are really genuine we need not, of course, trouble overmuch about a lot of supposed inaccuracies, which, according to Fleay, he found to be inconsistent with other information collected by him.

Such were the parodies of proof and argument with which Fleay sought to hold up Cunningham—and would, if he could, have held up Halliwell-Phillips also—to the whole literary world as a forger. He had clearly mistaken his line and calling : his style and tone being rather those of a party politician on the stump, than of a student of Shakespeare, seeking honestly and single-mindedly, as he should, to arrive at the truth.

Misled by such torrents of confident asseverations in England, Dr. Furness, unfortunately departing from his previous prudent reserve, referred to the play-lists as undoubtedly “forged by Peter Cunningham,” and to his offering “his forgery for sale to the British Museum.”

And so certainty in the matter grew and spread, until it drew in even Dr. Furnivall. For that impulsive but

essentially fair-minded enquirer, though a scrupulously careful verifier of documentary evidence, never made any claim to be considered a skilled archivist, so that while he took the precaution of seeing the impugned writings for himself, he was evidently too much influenced by Sir Thomas Duffus Hardy, who showed them to him. Like the rest of the world, therefore, he was convinced by what he was told—so much so that in a note to the recently published “Century” Shakespeare he coupled the play-lists with Collier’s fabrications as “rank forgeries,” and in another note spoke of Cunningham as “the utterer” of them.

In fact, Mr. Sidney Lee—than whom there is no one, who when discussing Shakespearean problems, is more restrained and more cautious in what he gives currency to, and more provided with warrant for everything he asserts—has been almost the only recent writer on the topic who has, with both fairness and prudence, abstained from fastening the supposed forgeries on Cunningham—though, in common with everyone else, he could not but accept the universal condemnation passed on the play-lists by all those best qualified to judge.

In the meanwhile, Dr. Furness could only exclaim from across the Atlantic, at last almost in despair: “Time is the only thing that will ever solve the mystery of these pages of the Revels Books”—Time, which is, indeed, at last about to do so.

For now the mysteries of the true date of "Othello," of Malone's enigmatical assertions about it, of the "forged lists," and of the Bodleian transcript, enter upon yet another, and what it is to be hoped may prove to be the last and final phase. What has been the occasion of it is this: the present writer, wanting to reconstruct the circumstances in which were first produced several of Shakespeare's plays at Whitehall, started, seeking to verify the ordinary statements current about their dates of composition, by examining the original documents on which those statements purported to be based. It is a golden rule in all literary, as in all scientific research, always, if possible, to get to the fountain head; to test for one's self all the authorities one comes across; and above all, in the case of any manuscripts cited by previous enquirers, to read the originals with one's own eyes.

This is especially incumbent on anyone trying to throw light on matters of such first-rate importance as Shakespeare's life or works; in connection with which to quote documents at second hand seems almost like a false pretence, and a sort of treason against that care and reverence, which should inspire all research work relating to our supreme poet. No doubt, invariably and scrupulously to follow out this practice often involves a great deal of trouble and a good deal of delay; but, on the other hand, rarely—not to say never—does it fail to yield something of value to the searcher—some new aspect of the subject, or some new light thrown on it, or the detection of some point,

whether slight or important, which had escaped former investigators.

In pursuance of this principle, the writer visited the Bodleian in order to inspect the Malone transcript : which he found to tally exactly with Halliwell-Phillips's description and printing of it in the appendix to vol. ii. of the "Outlines." His next step was to go and see the "Revels Accounts," in order to verify what had been published about them, and especially to see the leaves with the lists of plays, which he, in common with the rest of the world, supposed would appear palpable and unquestionable forgeries—nourishing only a slight hope that he might pick up some crumb of information, that might help towards the solving of the baffling mystery of these play-lists. Accordingly, a few months ago the famous "Reuells Booke An^o 1605" and "The Booke of the Reuells ending the last day of Octobar An^o Dom. 1612" were produced for his inspection by the courtesy of Mr. Salisbury in his private room at the Record Office.

On a first look, it must be admitted that there did seem so much difference in general appearance and particular form between the handwriting of the first play-list and Tylney's detailed account of expenses which follows it, that, with the foregone assumption of its being, of course, a case of forgery, it never would have entered one's head, in the first instance, to suggest that the condemnation passed on it forty-three years ago, and acquiesced in by every commentator and critic since, was not thoroughly deserved. The

two pages are, in fact, as will be seen from the facsimiles, rather indifferently written, in a large, coarse, and not very sure or uniform hand, unlike that of the skilled penmanship of the rest of the document, which, on the contrary, is a good specimen of calligraphy, neat, clear, uniform and precise—doubtless the handwriting of William Honyng (here is another “ Mr. W. H. ” for the interpreters of the sonnets !), the Clerk of the Revels. Though the bulk of the writing is Gothic, or old English, the names of the plays, the playwrights and the companies, it will be observed, are in the Italian character—whereas, only three or four words are so written in the rest of the document. The illiterateness of the scribe is particularly evident in the spelling—in the use, for instance, of the Jacobean vulgarism “ aleven, ” * and still more in that of “ Shaxberd ”—though this version of the poet’s name can be shown, as we have already seen, to be not so unusual in spelling, as might be supposed.

But, when the impugned pages were subjected to a closer scrutiny, what was the writer’s surprise to find that, point by point, in almost every particular, the published and universally accepted descriptions of the document, and the strictures upon it, showed wide divergences from the real facts—divergences, moreover, not the less significant, because they were, in almost every instance, such as, if well founded, would have seriously tended to

* It is found in the First Folio—“ Merchant of Venice, ” II. ii. 155 ; also in William Alabaster’s “ Roxana ” (1632) and Nathaniel Richards’ “ Messalina ” (1640).

strengthen the case against the authenticity of the lists. As, however, most of these points have already been alluded to pretty fully it will be unnecessary to recapitulate them here.

Two of them, however, have not been touched on before : first, that to the eye of one with merely a limited experience in sixteenth century and early seventeenth century handwriting, and with no claim to be called an expert, there would seem to be but little wrong with the form and shape of the letters ; and, more striking still, to the ordinary eye, at any rate, no apparent difference in the quality or colour of the ink, nor in its effect on the paper, when compared with the rest of the account-book—the leaf, when held up to the light, and carefully scrutinised, showing no sign of the ink having “run,” or of having been absorbed into the substance of the paper, any more or any less in the one case than in the other ; nor any indication of preparatory pencillings, nor any sign of any sort of tampering.

Thus far as regards the play-list of 1604-5. On proceeding to examine that of 1611-12, it was almost startling to find nothing—either on a preliminary glance, or after a detailed scrutiny—in the least supporting the theory of forgery. In the first place, the handwriting differs very little, if at all, from that in the rest of the account-book, whether in size, form or style of lettering. The bulk of it is in Gothic character, with an intermixture of Italian script, as in the 1604-5 list, for the names of the players and

the plays only; but in no other respect is the writing different from that on the other side of the leaf—page 4—on which begins Sir George Buc's account for the year ending October 31st, 1612. If, then, this list be a forgery, it is certainly a vastly cleverer one, and a decidedly more plausible one than the other; especially as the names of the playwrights do not occur in the margin like in the other—"Shaxberd's" name not being found opposite "The Winter's Tale" and "The Tempest," the only two plays of his mentioned out of a whole dozen by various authors. Then as to its ink. To the ordinary eye, even when assisted with a magnifying glass, it appears, in every point and particular, exactly like that on the other side of the leaf, as well as in the whole of the rest of the document.

Yet it was precisely the peculiarity in the character of the ink which was cited by Halliwell-Phillips as fatally discrediting the writings, and proving them both to be of a period long subsequent to the seventeenth century.

The modern "character of its ink"! This, in fact, had been just the decisive point, which had weighed more than any of the confident asseverations of all the commentators and all the experts. If the ink was plainly and unmistakably recent, then the lists were, of course, forgeries—"palpable, barefaced, senseless, impudent, wicked, rank, gross," and all the rest—through the whole gamut of vituperative adjectives, applied by irritated editors to the documents they supposed had deceived and misled them so long. But

if "the character of the ink" was, on the contrary, anything but suspicious—in fact, in all ways and in all appearances absolutely ancient and original, what then?

The writer, on communicating his impressions to one or two officials in the Record Office, found that his half-formed scepticism was by no means so scouted by them as he had anticipated—though responsibility naturally obliged in them a more reserved attitude than was incumbent in an outsider, in questioning a verdict, which, more or less officially adopted, had remained so long unchallenged.

His next step was to invoke the aid of Dr. Wallace, Associate Professor of English Language and Literature in the University of Nebraska, the well-known scholar, whose researches in the Record Office have resulted in some of the most interesting discoveries about the personal life of Shakespeare, which have been made known for a very long time. Dr. Wallace, having with his wife searched through hundreds of thousands of documents—nearly a million between them—belonging to the years covered by the latter half of the dramatist's life, has acquired an unrivalled familiarity with manuscripts of this period, and the methods of their writers. Examining with great care the two lists of plays, Dr. Wallace unhesitatingly confirmed the writer's view that each is in a handwriting of the time; that each is exactly what it purports to be, that they are both absolutely genuine, and that there is not a scrap of anything modern or forged about either of them.

The writer next applied to Sir George Warner, Keeper of Manuscripts in the British Museum, who most obligingly came and met him in the Literary Search-Room of the Record Office, and, without bias either way, closely examined the writings in question. Now, Sir George Warner is known not only in England, but throughout Europe and America for his extensive acquaintance with ancient manuscripts. Moreover, as an expert, he is a specialist, not only in old English documents, but particularly in seventeenth century ones, a specialist, too, in literary frauds, and especially a specialist in Shakespearean forgeries. For it is he who, in his article on the life of John Payne Collier in "The Dictionary of National Biography," and in his admirable catalogue of the Dulwich Manuscripts, has followed the forger over several of the most extensive fields of his fabrications, remorselessly tracking him letter by letter, and stroke by stroke, until the whole methods of the man's widespread and mischievous trickeries have been laid bare.

Sir George subjected the accounts—especially the one of 1604-5—to a prolonged and searching scrutiny, and though he allowed that, on a first glance, the two pages in that document have a somewhat suspicious air about them, he proceeded to point out many little features which told strongly in favour of their genuineness. He was almost at once convinced that they were, at any rate, not the handiwork of Collier, whose "style" in forgery is only too

well-known to him. Finally, he declared that he could detect no sign of any modern fabrication at all, nor even any tampering with the manuscripts ; and that he saw no reason whatever for supposing that the lists were not, in every regard, absolute genuine writings of the early seventeenth century.

With so much strong corroboration in favour of the writer's challenge of the "forgery" verdict, it might be thought that it was unnecessary to do anything more to carry conviction to the minds of all reasonable men. But in a literary matter it is no light thing to controvert a universally-accepted decree of competent persons, who are no longer alive to vindicate their opinions ; still less to try to unsettle "a settled fact," of half a century's standing, written about and acted on by a whole host of commentators and critics—many of them, too, still very much alive. Moreover, there would have seemed something inconclusive about the whole thing, unless the crucial and unanswerable tests of microscopical and chemical analyses were applied to the papers and the ink. If the ink were proved to be, after all, modern, no literary arguments would go for very much against scientific evidence. If, on the contrary, it was shown to be ancient, the demonstration would be overwhelming and conclusive.

Accordingly, he laid the facts before Sir Henry Maxwell-Lyte, Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records, who has, as all interested in the subject know well, with most inade-

quate means, worked wonders in the arranging and rendering accessible of the National Records, since he was appointed their custodian in 1886. To the request that the documents might be subjected to such a scientific inquisition, Sir Henry, recognizing the importance of the enquiry, at once gave a cordial assent; and he forthwith submitted the Books of Revels of 1604-5 and 1611-12 to the Principal of the Government Laboratories, Professor James J. Dobbie, F.R.S., for examination and testing.

The process, which took place at the Government Laboratory in Clement's Inn Passage, Strand, in the presence of Mr. Stamp, of the Record Office, was of a most stringent and exhaustive character: the results being fully set out in an elaborate report furnished to the Deputy-Keeper. This report the writer has been privileged to read; and every part of it decisively confirms what has been stated above, as to the general appearance of the ink being uniform throughout the book, and as to none of it having faded more in one part than the other.

When examined microscopically, the identical characteristics of the ink throughout the whole document of 1604-5 were still more clearly perceived. "It has consistently the same glistening gummy appearance; and in drying has frequently shrunk from the paper, forming fissures and cracks through which the unstained fibre of the paper may be seen." No difference is discernible in any of these respects between the ink on the second leaf and that in other parts

of the document—though a different ink has been used for the signatures, with the one exception of Tylney's—nor has the ink penetrated into the paper fibre to a greater extent on that leaf than on the others. It was, therefore, most probably of the same degree of fluidity, and the paper, at the time of writing, of the same surface and condition.

The ink was also tested with chemical reagents ; but the effects produced gave no indication of any difference either in the constituents of the ink, or in the degree of resistance to bleaching agents, in any portion of the document.

In an appendix Professor Dobbie gives a list of the letters, or portions of letters, which have been treated with chemicals ; and a list of the chemicals used : “ Saturated, and 5 per cent., solutions of oxalic acid ; a solution of hydrogen peroxide ; 50 per cent. solution of acetic acid ; 10 per cent. of sodium hypochloride ; potassium ferrocyanide solution ; and hydrochloric acid (concentrated).”

The conclusions of the Government Analyst are “ that the ink used is of the same character throughout the document,” and that “ there is no evidence to support the suggestion that the writing on pages 3 and 4 is of a different date from the writing on the remainder of the document.”

This being the result of the testing of the play-list of 1604-5, it was obviously superfluous to subject the less impugned one of 1611-12 to any similar analysis.

Such is the decision of the Principal Government Analyst ; and to his name the writer is permitted to add those of Sir Henry Maxwell-Lyte, of Mr. Scargill-Bird, the Assistant-Keeper of the Records, of Mr. Salisbury and of Mr. Stamp, who superintended the testings, as each emphatically concurring in the conclusions deduced therefrom.

The result of these various investigations is, the writer ventures to think, entirely to clear Peter Cunningham of the charge of forgery brought against him, and completely to remove the stigma affixed to the documents in 1868.

The two play-lists, therefore, should henceforth assuredly take their place on an unshakeable basis, as the most curious of all contemporary references to the performances of Shakespeare's plays at Court in his life-time, and the most valuable extrinsic evidence we possess—with the single exception of Meres's list in his "*Palladis Tamia*"—for the sequence of their composition, and, consequent thereon, for the interpretation of that interesting psychological problem—the development of our great dramatist's mind and art.

At the same time, it is to be noted, in connection with this question of the dates of production of the plays, that since Peter Cunningham's time, much progress has undoubtedly been made in the elucidation of their chronology ; most of it being of so sound a quality that the results of æsthetic criticism, as applied to the thoughts and conceptions of the dramatist and the style and expression of his

poetry, are found, when checked by internal evidences coinciding with external data—historical events, social circumstances, and so on—as well as by the analytical testing of the form and metre of his verse, to be not only unshaken, but positively confirmed, by these authentic contemporary records of the Master of the Revels.

As these give us for certain the correct dates of presentation of several of Shakespeare's greatest masterpieces before the Court, it will now be possible to proceed confidently with the reconstitution of the surroundings and conditions, under which each of them was performed for the first time at Whitehall.

This, however, is not the time or place to examine fully the various consequences in this respect, and in others, of the establishment of the authenticity of these two play-lists. The genuineness of the earlier one has been already assumed by the writer, in a couple of articles of his recently published, describing the First Night Performances before King James and his Court at Whitehall in 1604, of "Othello" on "Hallamas Day" in the old Banqueting House, and of "Measure for Measure" on "St. Stiuen's Night," in the Great Hall.

A reconstruction was therein attempted, by the aid of old plans, unpublished contemporary manuscripts, and the original bills of account, stored in the Record Office and elsewhere, of all the circumstances and conditions of both productions—the halls and their appearance, in

which each play was acted ; the seating arrangements for the King and Queen and the rest of the audience ; the position, shape and size of the stage ; the lighting, the scenery, the accessories, and the music—all the splendid surroundings, in fact, which rendered Court performances so entirely different from those on the public stage ; in their atmosphere of greater refinement, and with their varied sensuous appeals, heightening the theatric illusion, and producing a most marked effect on the audience, the actors, and the style of acting alike.

One or two special points, however, in regard to the play-list of 1611-12, it may be convenient and interesting to set down here. In the first place, the list affords conclusive proof, at last, as to the true and exact date of the composition and production of "The Tempest"—that beautiful and delightful creation, wrought by Shakespeare at the close of his career, and forming a rare and delicate crown—"the top of admiration"—to the vast and varied fabric, reared by the magic of his invention, to the accompaniment of all the enchanting rhythm and music of his verse.

The certain proof, long sought and long desired, is here : that this marvellous and most exquisite play of his, must have been written in the winter of 1610-11, immediately after the publishing of the pamphlets, which described the wrecking of Sir George Somers's flag-ship on one of the Bermudas, and the adventures of his sailors on the

mysterious island, so "full of noyses"—facts and fancies, which, transmuted by the alchemy of the poet's imagination and refashioned by his consummate skill, came forth as the substance of the "insubstantial pageant" of that wonderful work.

A new proof, too, and a more pregnant significance, is thus given to all that has been written on the origin of "The Tempest," in recent years, by such sound and trustworthy scholars as Mr. Sidney Lee, Mr. Gollancz, the late Mr. W. J. Craig, Professor Herford in the "Eversley" Shakespeare, and especially Mr. Luce in his incomparable study and analysis of the play in the "Arden" edition.

It follows that "The Tempest" must have been produced in the spring or summer of 1611, while the news of the storm and the wreck off the "still-vex'd Bermoothes" was still fresh in people's minds, and acted undoubtedly (for reasons not necessary to be specified here) at the "Blackfriars"; and afterwards presented at Court—a testimony to its recent popularity on the public stage of London—before the King and Queen and Princes at Whitehall, in James I.'s then newly-built first Banqueting House, on "Hallomas Nyght."

This performance, in many ways one of the most interesting in the whole career of the poet, will be described, with all its circumstances reconstructed as far as possible, on a future occasion.

Here, however, we may note that by this conclusive

fixing of the date of the play are definitely disposed of, let us hope for ever, long pages of discussion in scores of books, suggesting later dates for its production.

Thus, especially, is finally and completely disproved Tieck's famous and ingenious theory, put forward by him a hundred years ago in Germany, and since adopted by a great many critics—adopted particularly by the late Dr. Garnett, who propounded it, with an almost irresistible array of clever illustrations and arguments, in a charming essay in the "Universal Review" for April 1889; adopted, likewise, as recently as 1895 by Dr. Brandes in Denmark, in his brilliant study of the poet's life and work and influence; and still clung to cherishingly by Mr. Henry James in his just published introduction to "The Tempest" in the "Caxton" Shakespeare—the theory, namely, that the play was written to be first presented at Court in February 1613, in honour of the marriage in that month of the Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine. Yet, though this theory is now entirely disposed of, nevertheless it is a fact, interesting enough in its way, that a performance of "The Tempest" was really given before the Prince and his bride, some time during the spring of that year.

So much for "The Tempest." Now a word or two as to the light thrown by the play-list of 1611-12 on the date of "The Winter's Tale." As it happens, there has never been—at any rate, for at least seventy-five years or so—anything like the same amount of uncertainty and discus-

sion on this point of date, in the case of this play, as in that of "The Tempest" or "Othello." For in 1836 there was published by Collier a document—for once a genuine and uncooked one—entitled "A Bocke of Plaies and Notes thereof," which he had found in the Ashmolean Museum, written by Dr. Simon Forman, a notorious quack physician and astrologer of the time, though a real "Doctor" of his University of Cambridge, who describes a performance of "The Winter's Talle," witnessed by him at the Globe on Wednesday, May 15th, 1611. This has provided the later limit for its production; and the surmise that it was a new play when the astrologist doctor drew a warning from it against "trustinge feined beggars and fawning fellouse," corroborated as it is by internal evidences—especially those of metre and style—is still more strongly confirmed, if not proved, by this record of its performance at court, at once after the summer recess, on the 5th of November of the same year.

For its anterior limit August 1610 has been suggested, for the reason that on the 10th of that month Sir George Buc succeeded Tylney as Master of the Revels; and his own successor, Sir Henry Herbert, recorded, thirteen years after, in his office-book, that the "olde playe, called Winter's Tale," had formerly been allowed by Buc. Though there is a flaw in this argument, owing to Buc having issued his license for plays before he was regularly instituted to the Mastership, still it is one which is far from being entirely without cogency.

But whether "The Winter's Tale" was written and produced before or after "The Tempest" remains uncertain—though there is nothing in this new bit of positive knowledge of ours to conflict with the usual opinion of the critics that it was the earlier of the two. There is, however, reason to suppose that it was not staged at "The Globe" much, if at all, before Shrove Tuesday, 1611, which in that year fell on February 10.

There remains one small point in regard to the title of the play as given in Buc's list. It is to be observed that while all other notices—contemporary as well as later—refer to it as "The Winter's Tale," this one alone describes it as "The Winter's *Night's* Tale"—a version of its title presumably furnished to the Master by Shakespeare's Company, if not by himself. Though formed apparently as a sort of balance or contrast to "A Midsummer Night's Dream"—just as Shakespeare's original title for "Othello" was "The Moor of Venice," in contrast to "The Merchant of Venice"—it has a significance of some import. For it helps to confute the contentions of some critics that the play received its name because of its plot being "a wintry one"; or because of its having been produced in the winter season—an idea of Halliwell-Phillips's.

It has, on the contrary, lately been made pretty clear that it was called "The Winter's Tale" for the reason, emphasized by Shakespeare himself three or four times in the course of the dialogue—as has been pointed out by

M. Jusserand in his admirable essay on the play in the recently published volume of the "Caxton" Shakespeare—because it was just such a fanciful romantic piece, full of strange happenings and wonders and improbabilities, as was then known as "A Winter's Tale," or an "Old Wives' Tale," told round the fire on a winter's night. Hence the significance of the word "Night" in its title as given in Buc's Revels Book—a unique variation which reinforces M. Jusserand's argument.

The phrase, however, was not entirely original; for a play called "A Winter's Night's Pastime" had been registered at Stationer's Hall in 1594; and "The Old Wives' Tale," first printed in 1595, and recently reprinted by the Malone Society, contains not only the phrase "A Merry Winter's Tale," but also a combination of it with the other: "I am content to drive away the time with an Old Wives' Winter's Tale."

"The Winter's Tale," or "The Winter's Night's Tale," remained a favourite piece at court for several years—being presented, with "The Tempest" and a dozen other plays of our great dramatist, in the spring of 1613, before the Prince Palatine and his bride. Shakespeare's greatest works, in fact, retained the patronage of James I. to the end of his life, and it is only fair to remember that to that King—with all his faults and foibles—is at any rate due the honour of having appreciated the marvellous plays, just as is due to him the credit of having ordered the new translating of the Bible.

It is worthy of note, indeed, that in this present year of grace, 1911, occurs the tercentenary, not only of the "Authorized Version," but also of the production, as we may now say with positiveness, of "The Tempest"—probably Shakespeare's last play, as it certainly is one of the most beautiful and enchanting of them all.

Might not some of the "King's Players" of to-day celebrate the anniversary of that first presentation at Whitehall by a commemorative performance on "Hallowmas Nyght" next, on or close to the exact spot where it was first witnessed by a Sovereign of these Realms?



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