WILL O' THE WISP

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OR THE ELUSIVE SHAKESPEARE

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TO SIR GEORGE GREENWOOD
FROM THE STUDY OF WHOSE WORKS, PRINCIPALLY,
I GAINED MY OWN EMANCIPATION FROM THE
TRAMMELS OF AN OUTWORN CREED

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PREFACE

We all of us have friends with whom we know, only too well, it is useless to reason on matters concerning which they have, as they term it, 'made up their minds.' Whatever that curious phrase may imply, it certainly does not imply a logical process; at least not necessarily or even usually. It rather implies a somewhat wilful act of our own than a state of mind forced upon us by logic. Conclusions that have not been acquired logically cannot, as a rule, be displaced logically. The difficulty is the greater as the proportion of logic in the process of acquirement is less. Now, the vast majority of those who have ever given the matter a thought at all have 'made up their minds' as to the authorship of the *Shakespeare* plays. They have not the smallest doubt that Shakspere of Stratford wrote them. But how many of them have arrived at their conclusion by a logical process? Personally, I should feel compelled to answer, none, believing that logic would have led them to the opposite conclusion. Let that pass, however, and let us give the safe answer: Not many. If questioned as to the grounds of their belief, they might say: Is not his name on the title-pages of poems and plays? The answer should be, No, it is not; but a substantially different name—but let that also pass for the present. Others who have gone, as they consider, more deeply into the matter, rely on the authority of Sir Sidney Lee. Who, they say, knows more about it than Sir Sidney Lee? I have heard some, who have barely looked inside his book, refer to it as conclusive on the matter. Of that, too, I shall have something to say. Last, but not least, and most perniciously, there are vested interests. Every dweller in Stratford is in-

terested in upholding the Stratford tradition. It is doubtful if there is a doubter in Stratford. The vested interests are in an ascending scale. Officials for whom the interest of the town constitutes a duty; authors who have staked their reputation on the issue; Trustees of the Birthplace; (he would be a sanguine man who set out to convince a Trustee of the Birthplace). All these form a standing army whose duty it is to defend the tradition of the town. 'Vested interests' is indeed a mild term. It is a matter of life and death to Stratford. What would become of it, what of the champions of orthodoxy if, perchance, the Shakespeare tradition were destroyed? The belief in it is ingrained. Orthodox writers even go the length of assuring an already prejudiced public that there *is* no Shakespeare problem; that only in an unbalanced mind could the doubt arise. Unmannerly abuse is poured on the head of a disputant: the weapons, ridicule and contempt—and they think they are doing Shakespeare service.

There must be some who dislike intolerant dogmatism, and for these I have tried to set down the facts and arguments that have most influenced myself, and can be compressed into an afternoon's reading. The fullest account, most judicially stated, is to be found in the works of Sir George Greenwood, to whom I acknowledge unlimited indebtedness, and from whom I have very rarely differed, and that not seriously. I am also specially indebted to the works of Mr. Edwin Reed.

As concerning the Baconian hypothesis I go further than Sir George Greenwood, who seems to take up a neutral position; but not nearly so far as Mr. Reed, who is of the faith. It is not the folly that the orthodox would represent it, and I have much confidence that an impartial reader will agree with me up to that point. It is, as Mr. Gladstone said of it, a thing to be considered on evidence, and I have tried to consider it fairly. I merely refuse to wear blinkers, or

to be deterred by the odium and ridicule with which the orthodox writers have sedulously and successfully managed to surround the Baconian heresy—a device in which they have had invaluable help from certain of the Baconians themselves. That is as far as I have gone at present. The point on which I approach a state of certainty most nearly is that Shakspere of Stratford did not write the plays.

The reading public, indeed any public, may be divided into two classes, the pervious and the impervious. But even in the class of the impervious, in this connection, a difference may be discovered. There are the officially or professionally impervious, such as the orthodox controversialists, Trustees of Shakespearean institutions, and, I think must be added, actors generally. All these must be classed as absolutely impervious. These will stand firm though the heavens should fall. The hostile reception by these of any heresy is a foregone conclusion. 'Madhouse chatter' is one of their most convincing phrases. But there are others, hitherto impervious, who are not so seriously committed, and who are impervious because they have not yet considered the evidence. It is wonderful how little even the surface facts are known. I was talking the other day to a lady who was becoming interested in the subject, and generally well-informed, though not in this particular, and she said, 'But do you really mean to say that 20 of the plays had not been printed at Shakspere's death, that he had taken no care of the manuscripts, left no instructions concerning them, and that no one knows where they were, and what had become of them?' She could hardly believe when told it was so. How many, one wonders, of those who are quite assured in their belief are aware of this simple fact; which I only give as an instance: I could give more. The section that I have headed *Much Cry and Little Wool* proves, I think, that, as in recent politics, so in this question of authorship, he who puts the lowest

estimate on the intelligence of his public is the most successful. Must one add, And the people love to have it so.

After much consideration I have adhered to the practice of Sir George Greenwood and others, according to which the name of the writer of the plays is spelt *Shakespeare*, as on the title-pages, and that of the denizen of Stratford, Shakspere. (It will be seen that there is reason in this, even if the two are one.) Indeed if I had the courage of my opinions—may I say, of my knowledge?—I should spell the Stratford name Shacksper or Shaxper. But I fear a premature closing of this book.

With regard to the Baconian hypothesis, I do not expect or desire to convince readers that Bacon wrote the Plays, not being convinced of it myself. Much that is the reverse of wise has been written for and against it. The idea is, on the one hand, not so absurd as orthodox writers would have us believe; on the other, there is not the conclusive evidence for it that Baconians imagine: and there are difficulties that they seem to overlook. But on the whole there seems more reasonableness on the side of the Baconians than on that of the scoffers. These cannot regard it as a question of evidence, but only as a mark for mockery. On the ground of style, the Baconians seem to have the best of the argument, as I shall try to show. Better knowledge of Bacon's range of style would have modified the derision of their opponents.

I cannot enough admire this tactic of the orthodox school, attended as it has been by such signal success, in attaching an idea of the ludicrous to the Baconian theory. Whoever thinks, according to the time-worn joke, that ' Bacon wrote Shakespeare,' has the terrible word *Crank* written against his name. Few are superior to the fear of this. Hoping to mitigate the impending stroke in my own case, I have added a short essay on *Shakespeare Inspired and Uninspired*. I hope there is nothing to shock the orthodox in this.

To a considerable extent these pages cover the same ground as articles I wrote in the *National Review* in 1911, and to a very small extent what I wrote then is reproduced. There is also a note on the madness of Hamlet; and an appendix on Mr. J. M. Robertson's book, *The Shakespeare Canon.*

CERTAINTIES AND PROBABILITIES

BISHOP BUTLER, the most commonsense of commonsense philosophers, never said a more sensible thing than is contained in his famous aphorism that 'Probability is the Guide of Life.' It is one of those truths that we all recognise at once when it is enunciated, and which yet needed saying. It is a distinct gain to get it clearly in the mind that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred in which we have to decide on a course of action, we act, not on a certainty, but on a balance of probabilities. Bishop Butler, no doubt, was thinking of the springs of action, chiefly, if not exclusively: but it is an interesting question how far the dictum applies to thought also, and to the genesis of opinion. On the face of it, there is this difference: that in the cases he is considering we are for the most part assumed to be *obliged* to act, obliged to make up our minds one way or the other; for that is the rule when we are called to decide on action; and the same stress of obligation does not obviously apply to thought. We can, or think we can, perform the philosophical feat of suspending the judgment. But the difference in actual practice is more apparent than real. In a matter which greatly interests us, especially one in which sentiment is involved, we pretty generally find that, almost unconsciously, and whether we will or no, we are left with a conviction. There is not much difference, as regards coercion, between a case in which we are obliged to act, and one in which we cannot help forming an opinion. It is equally compulsion, whether compulsion comes from without or from within. Now the important thing, and nowhere is it more important

than in dealing with this Shakespearean problem, is to recognise that opinions, equally with acts, deal with what the logicians call 'probable matter'; and that, as with contemplated acts, so with the forming of opinions, certainty is rarely possible. Nature and hard facts tell us sooner or later when an act is a mistake: but generally there is no such sanction, no such touchstone, in the case of opinions. Consequently, it is possible, indeed common, to hold as certain an opinion concerning a matter in which certainty is unattainable—except, indeed, that kind of certainty which quite classical writers have agreed to call 'cocksureness.' It is just here, as the Americans say, that in this Shakespearean controversy, I find myself almost equally repelled by extremists on both sides; by those who, on the one side, say there *is* no Shakespeare problem, and those who, on the other, infallibly settle it in favour of Bacon. No matter of opinion, it is safe to say, can be called certain and beyond discussion, in which able and competent students have taken opposite views; and yet nothing can be more absolute than the opposite certitudes of the orthodox and the heretics here. In this respect there is little to choose between them: each is positively certain in a matter where certainty is unattainable. But there is a difference in the tone that each adopts in dealing with opponents. In all generations there has been an intolerance, I might say a truculence, in the terms that orthodox has applied to heretic, not, in the same degree, reciprocated by the heretic. It may be that, while the heretic is conscious of being in a minority, the vindicator of orthodoxy well knows that he has a majority behind him; and, let him say what he may, it will meet with the applause of his co-religionists, who will not be superfluous in asking for proofs; and this gives him his superior assurance. Then, again, scarifying a heretic is an aid to faith. One easily imagines that, in the tortures he applied, the Inquisitor, here and there, found reinforcement of his

own belief; and that the reinforcement was proportional to the severity of the treatment. This trait of the inquisitor, though happily modified by modern usage, seems to me to reproduce itself in the orthodox Shakespearean. The consciousness of the multitude behind him—and in speculative matters the multitude is always conservative—tempts orthodox Shakespeareans to uncontrolled expression, as, for instance, that the 'proper domicile for their opponents is a madhouse,' and so on. But, apart from this inferior violence in the heretic, there is little to choose between the extremists: each is illogically certain, and each repels the impartial inquirer who tries to remember his philosophy.

The leading spirits of the Shakespeare orthodoxy, Sir Sidney Lee, for instance, and Mr. J. M. Robertson, surely forget what considerable names occur among the objects of their ridicule. I shall not be thought to be making unkind comparisons if I hint that of all who have taken part in this dispute concerning authorship there has been no other of quite the calibre of Emerson; whether we regard him as constructive artist or as critic. Emerson casts doubt on Shakspere of Stratford: he could not 'marry the works to the life': he found incompatibility. I am far from quoting Emerson or anyone else as an authority to whom others should bow; but I do think he should be treated with a decent respect. Nor is he to be quietly, though perhaps discreetly, ignored; as by Sir Sidney Lee. Lord Penzance is surely not negligible, and he is not alone. But all are included in the immodest gibes that lesser men have scattered broadcast in this controversy.

Premising, then, that this is a subject in which certainty is unattainable as regards the disputed issue, it is obvious that the most one can do is first to state, as far as is possible in small space, the ascertained facts; and endeavour, on the facts, to draw conclusions in the order of their probability.

First, then, as to the known facts of the life of Shakspere of Stratford. Sir Sidney Lee has given us a book which he calls *A Life of William Shakespeare*. Of this book a sympathetic reviewer in *The Times* said that 'it had been twisted by a master artificer into the cunning resemblance of a biography.' In its last edition this *Life* runs to over 700 pages. Stripped of the artifice, I think I can undertake to state all the biographical facts somewhat more briefly, say, in about a page; and this will cover all that is known :—as thus—

William Shakspere was born at Stratford-on-Avon, and was baptised there 26 April, 1564. The next fact known is 18½ years later, when, under the name of William Shagsper, he was licensed to marry Anne Hathaway, a woman who was eight years his senior, and who bore him a child (Susanna) six months after marriage. He had, in all, three children by her, whom, with their mother, he left, going to London at an unknown date, and not appearing in Stratford again (according to Sir Henry Lee and others), till 11 years later. In London he became an actor with an interest in a theatre, and was reputed to be the writer of plays that went by his or a very similar name. In 1597 he bought *New Place* at Stratford; and was living in Stratford in 1598. He engaged in purchases, sales, and law-suits. He helped his father in an application for coat-armour, to obtain which sundry absurdly false pretences were made: promoted the enclosure of common lands in Stratford after being himself guaranteed against personal loss: made his will and died at the age of 52. By the will his wife was left his second-best bed and no more. He had taken measures to exclude her from any further legal claim. There are two other records of later discovery. In one we find ' Mr. Shakspeare ' assisting his brother actor Burbage in producing an *impresa* for the Earl of Rutland, for which they were paid 44/- each. This in the year 1605 when many of the great plays had

ERROR.

p. 4, line 21, for Henry *read* Sidney.

been published and Shakspere was a rich man. According to the other, 'one Mr. William Shakespeare' (if we may trust Professor Wallace for the spelling, which I greatly doubt) is lodging with a tire-maker in Mugwell Street, helping his landlord's daughter to a husband, and acting as a witness in a law suit that followed, and, generally, as Sir G. Greenwood says, behaving as a bourgeois among bourgeois. This also when those great plays had been given to the world.

We may add, as a possibility, that he went to Stratford School, and also, as highly probable, Sir Sidney Lee agreeing, that he had to be forced by her friends into marrying Anne Hathaway, although she was pregnant by him; thus trying to desert her before marriage as he did in effect desert her after. (Perhaps his defence would have been that of Tennyson's *Northern Farmer*, 'She were a bad un shea'—not a nice defence, perhaps, but the best possible, for the meanest conduct of which man is capable. This limited palliation of Shakspere's conduct is all that is even possible, and that at the cost of Anne Hathaway's good name. It is a sorry choice.)

With the exception of what is known as the Manningham story which will be treated separately, this exhausts the positive facts and probabilities resting on contemporary documents: but the negative are equally or even more significant. There is no record of friendship with anyone more cultivated than his fellow-actors. No letters: no books: no mention of manuscripts even, although such plays as *As You Like It*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and twelve others existed only in that precarious condition; while six, including *Julius Caesar*, had neither been played nor printed: only two contemporary reports of his conversation, one with regard to the commons enclosure: the other the Manningham story just referred to. Jonson's utterances also will receive separate treatment.

In a word we know with certainty of his parentage, birth, marriage, occupation as actor, his property, his will, and his death, and absolutely nothing else: his death being received with ominous and unbroken silence by the literary world. All the rest of Sir Sidney Lee's book, so far as it concerns itself with the facts of the life at all, is composed either of traditions—generally very late traditions—or guess-work—often very improbable guess-work; of 'doubtless' this and 'doubtless' that, when neither this nor that has an iota of historical foundation.

Now the Baconians are by no means free from the error of counting arguments rather than weighing them; but even when we have sorted out the light-weight arguments, the residue is voluminous, and cannot be treated very shortly. The Baconians cannot rest their case on a few simple, positive facts. If Bacon wrote the plays one thing is certain: all that his phenomenally ingenious mind could do, was done to cover his tracks. To retrace them, even if possible, will obviously be a complicated matter and call for anything but simple treatment. On the other hand, from the point of view of logic, though perhaps not from that of popular appeal, to my mind the Shakspereans make a great mistake in going one single step beyond the simple and obvious facts of their case. When you have one or two arguments really difficult to answer it is the greatest mistake to put forth a dozen others which, though they may be hailed with delight by a huge audience already convinced, are easily answered: though, of course, it all depends on what is the object, whether to convince or to draw applause. But if the object is to convince I can only say that it is difficult or impossible to call to mind a single positive additional argument in favour of the Shaksperean authorship beyond the following simple facts: first, Shakspere's name, in the form of *Shakespeare*, or more often *Shake-speare*, plainly and indubitably on the title-pages of Poems and plays.

Secondly—and this is perhaps even more important in view of the frequent spurious use of the name, the non-existence of any contemporary expression of contradiction or doubt, negativing the ostensible authorship. If I were a Shaksperean, I should dig myself in in this trench and trust to the enemy's fire going over my head. Failing some new discovery, the attack can never completely succeed in the face of this defence: the negative can never be raised out of the region of high probability into that of absolute certainty. It starts with the burden of this enormous handicap, and cannot hope for a clear and manifest victory: but it may make, and I think has made, the Shaksperean position practically untenable. At any rate, beyond these simple and obvious facts, all the rest that has been said on the Shakspere side, though it should run to 1,000 pages, is but an attempt, successful or otherwise, to explain away difficulties that have suggested themselves or been suggested. No positive argument has been superadded.

THE NAME SHAKSPERE

BEFORE entering on controversial matter there is one point which, though not generally appreciated, may be said with certainty to be beyond controversy, and that is the original Warwickshire pronunciation of the name. *There can at any rate be no doubt as to the first syllable.* It was pronounced Shack, not Shake. Halliwell Phillips tells us that in the records of the Stratford Court John Shakspere's name occurs as Shakspeyre, Shakysper, Shakspeyr, Shakesper, Shakespere, Shackspere, with other variations: all these for one and the same person. In the marriage bond William's name is spelt Shagspere; and his countryman Abraham Turley writes him Shaxper, and Richard Quiney, Shackspere. Certain of these spellings might seem at first sight to carry the pronunciation of the first syllable to which we are accustomed: but of one thing I think we may be pretty sure—the vowel in all was *pronounced* alike. Now they will all bear the pronunciation Shăk, but many of them forbid the pronunciation *Shāke*. It is much easier to suppose that Shakespere in the records was pronounced Shak-e-spere as a trisyllable than that the first syllable of the name was called sometimes Shăk- and sometimes Shāke. Indeed, the point seems settled by the occurrence of Shakysper, which simply *must* be trisyllabic. The rustic often gets over the difficulty of a 'pestilent congregation' of consonants by summoning to his assistance a supernumerary vowel. I have, for instance, heard mushyroom for mushroom. Indeed, there is *Punch's* authority for this particular variant.

The first appearance of *Shakespeare* was in the dedication of Venus and Adonis to Southampton. Later, on the title-pages of plays it appears as *Shake-speare*, as though the object in view had not been attained in the first place. At any rate, it was still open to people to pronounce it Shăk-e-speare. This was made impossible by the later form. Shake-speare is a dissyllable, and cannot be made anything else. Now this use of a hyphen in an author's name is, so far as I know, unexampled. We do not, for instance, find Mar-low or Beau-mont. In the case of Shake-speare there would seem to be purpose. The form is even retained in the commendatory verses by Leonard Digges[1] prefixed to the First Folio, and also in the fine lines subscribed J.M. The phenomenon would seem to be singular, and 'solitary instances,' we know, tend to have interesting explanations. What is the explanation of *Shake-speare?* That we may never know; but we see the effect. By a stroke of the pen the name up to that time received as Shax-pere or its equivalent is transformed. The trisyllable becomes impossible: gently but firmly a dissyllable is forced upon us; no choice is left. Then, again, we have a new division of syllables. *Shaks*, *Shacks*, *or Shax* becomes Shake, and *per* or *pere* (probably pronounced *pare*) becomes *speare*; and lo! the conjuror has replaced the disreputable with the heraldic, the debased with the heroic. For the word *Shack* meant a lazy vagabond. One luckless bearer of the name, finding its stigma insupportable, changed it ('quod vile reputatum,' as he said), to Saunders. He had not the wit to think of Shake-speare, the chivalrous, the *hasti-vibrans*, so effectively disguising its dyslogistic

[1] This set me wondering whether, supposing there was some secret, Leonard Digges was 'in' it; and I wrote to *Notes and Queries* asking if any connection between him and Francis Bacon was known, but no reply was forthcoming. Later I accidentally came across the information that Leonard Digges' father dedicated a book to Francis Bacon's. I wonder what were the chances against this coincidence. (Coincidences, say you? When were there not coincidences?)

original. That stroke of genius was reserved for the immortal who wrote the plays, and the *nom de plume*, which, as Sir G. Greenwood points out, it undoubtedly was, whether assumed by Shakspere of Stratford or another, was worthy of its author. One word more on the pronunciation. I do not pretend to know the exact value of the vowel either in Shak or Shake as given in the sixteenth century; but feel sure there was a marked difference.

CONTEMPORARY OPINION OF THE PLAYS

WRITING in the *National Review* some years back I said, 'So sane a critic as Professor Walker of Lampeter tells us that, like Virgil and Goethe, Shakespeare was known in his own age as "a giant overtopping all his fellows."' I then went on to quote some of the facts given below. Shortly afterwards I received a letter from Professor Walker in which he said that he perceived that the statement he had made rested on insufficient grounds. When will such candour, the candour of the true critic, reappear among the orthodox?

Now, as a matter of fact, there *was* a dramatist recognised by the great majority of his contemporaries, cultured and uncultured, as a giant overtopping all his fellows; but his name was not *Shakespeare.* Ben Jonson occpied that exalted position in contemporary opinion; and *Shakespeare* was reckoned a bad second, or even assigned a lower place. The proof is overwhelming, and it is simply astounding and unaccountable that writers, who cannot plead ignorance of the literature of that day, can maintain the contrary. What happened when Shakspere died? Not a solitary sentence or couplet to grace his memory. Nothing till six years later when Jonson wrote the famous commendatory verses prefixed to the 1623 Folio; concerning which there is much to be said. But among those who write in praise of Jonson we have Chapman, Donne, Beaumont, Fletcher, Field, Shirley, Cartwright, Ford, and other scholars, some of whom overflow in Greek and Latin verse. One of these informs us that 'just as the uncultured strain of Lucretius, and the formless numbers of Ennius, led

up to the perfect Virgil, so and not otherwise did the toys of Chaucer and his rude followers and the "twin bards" (apparently Beaumont and Fletcher) and *Shakespeare* lead up to the 'divine Jonson.' He addresses them as *divi*, Jonson as *deus*—'Sed parcite, divi, Si majora vocant, Si pagina sanctior urget,' to wit, Jonson's. Several specifically compare the two dramatists, and invariably and vastly to the detriment of *Shakespeare*. Then, as contrasted with the ominous and universal literary silence that followed on Shakspere's death, the chorus of praise that celebrated Jonson when he died was of such volume that it was felt that nothing less than a book to record it would meet the case: and *Jonsonus Virbius* was the outcome. At another date and in a different connection we have this of Camden, one of the most distinguished scholars of his time, quoting and expanding Richard Carey. After mentioning *Shakespeare* by name he says 'Will you have all in all for prose or verse,? take the miracle of our age, Sir Philip Sidney.' We of the twentieth century think of Shakespeare not as the miracle of that or any age, but of all ages: to the sixteenth he was not miraculous at all, either to that or any age: and the sixteenth century spoke its thoughts quite plainly to those who have ears to hear, and wish to listen.

If exhaustive proof were wanted Dr. Ingleby has furnished it in his *Century of Prayse* (1874). Meaning to bless, he has unwittingly cursed altogether. In this book he has brought together every hint he could find of contemporary praise of Shakespeare. The result is ludicrous. As far as the Plays are concerned, it is *totum nil*; much indeed is a *minus* quantity, its weight in the other scale: and what praise there is is of the Poems rather than the Plays. (It is not denied that the Poems met with some appreciation.) The *Century of Prayse* is an artless production. Supposing the proof were not otherwise complete, one could ask for no more conclusive argument than Dr. Ingleby has

supplied. For what could be better evidence than an exhaustive search by a most competent and painstaking scholar, with a negative result?

But what could have been Dr. Ingleby's motive in compiling such a book? He himself had written 'The prose works published in the latter part of the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth centuries contain abundant notices of every poet of distinction save Shakespeare, whose name and works are only slightly mentioned . . . *It is plain that the bard of our admiration was unknown to the men of that age*' (my italics). Yet later he set himself the barren task of finding a century of praise. What is the explanation? Can it really be that the orthodox faith is fatal to candour? Could it be that he realised too late that there was an audience with a voracious appetite for aids to faith, but none for impartial inquiry; an audience that rather than 'look up and not be fed' would welcome pretence? And so Dr. Ingleby proceeded to feed his *Century of Prayse* to it, though he himself had said that the praise was not forthcoming.

'It is plain that the bard of our admiration was unknown to the men of that (*i.e.* his own) age,' says Dr. Ingleby. 'Shakespeare's eminence was fully acknowledged by his contemporaries, and their acknowledgments have long been known to scholars,' says Sir Sidney Lee. Then, we are to suppose, Dr. Ingleby was not a scholar, or at any rate was not when he wrote that sentence. Dr. Ingleby, it is true, seems to have become a convert, or a pervert, which we prefer, but he as absolutely failed to prove himself in error as Sir Sidney Lee has failed to prove him. All the facts are against contemporary appreciation of Shakespeare's dramas, and no more complete proof of this is possible than exists in *The Century of Prayse*. So far as it is possible to prove a negative that little work has done it; and I challenge anyone to read it and to come to a different conclusion. It is little better than a farce. It *is* a farce.

But really there is no disagreement. Sir Sidney Lee confirms Dr. Ingleby; his witness also is that our bard was unknown to his generation. And if this question were being tried before a bench of judges, skilled in weighing evidence—and I could wish for nothing better—I should call Sir Sidney Lee as chief witness. With amazing candour, and speaking with unsurpassed knowledge, he has said 'Of all the many testimonials paid to Shakespeare's literary reputation at this period of his career,[1] the most striking was that of Francis Meres.' Now in passing we remark that praise of the Plays is not necessarily testimony to *Shakespeare's* literary reputation. Plays may be popular for qualities other than literary: and it is pretty clear that this was the case with *Shakespeare's*. But now as to Francis Meres. Sir Sidney Lee says his testimony is 'the most striking'; so when we have dealt with Francis Meres we may feel that we have dealt with the protagonist on that side. If we can successfully deal with Francis Meres, there is no other we need trouble about so much. Now who was Francis Meres? Well, he was a clergyman and a schoolmaster, and is chiefly known for a collection which he made of apophthegms, interspersed with criticisms of his own. It is a calendar of authors and composers, dealing with some 125 of them. So far as I know he is credited with no more important work; and it is pretty certain that if a disinterested list were made of a dozen or twenty of the best literary critics of the day, Mere's name would not appear among them. So that when he is put in the front of the battle we know what his fellow-soldiers must be like. On the other hand, there were writers of a very different stamp, men in the first rank of the literature of the

[1] This would seem to imply that at other periods of the career more or equally striking testimonials are to be found; so that we might expect further on in the *Life* to find them. Needless to say we do not. It might be thought that I make too much of this: but it should not be forgotten that this book is, as the *Times* critic says, the work of a 'master artificer.' Every phrase has intention and significance.

day, who expressed equally striking opinions of Shakespeare, strangely unlike Meres's, and indeed quite incompatible with it. Of these we hear nothing, although Sir Sidney Lee's knowledge of the literature is all but exhaustive. He must have known, for instance, what Carey and Camden had said: he must have known that if Camden were put in one scale, as an authority, and Meres in the other, Meres's scale, like Satan's, would 'up fly and kick the beam.' Yet the unwary would read from end to end of Sir Sidney Lee's book without an inkling that better authorities than Meres had spoken on the subject, and to the exactly opposite effect. The master artist is shown by what he omits no less than by what he includes in his picture.

But it is time to ask, before we go further, Who *is* this bard of our admiration? There is no more important question in this connection. Is it as a playwright? Certainly not. *Shakespeare* is a great playwright: perhaps the greatest; but it would not outrage our feelings if anyone should hold that others were as great: that the *Duchess of Malfi*, for instance, was, from the point of view of action, as great as *Macbeth*. We might allow that to be an open question. Do we, again, find our unapproachable poet in the Poems and Sonnets? Again, I think not. Had he written only the Poems and Sonnets, he would have been *one* of our admired poets, but not the poet of 'our wonder and astonishment.' It is in the plays that the transcendent genius of *Shakespeare* manifests itself. But even here we notice a gradation. First there is the plot and dramatic situation. In this he excels, but is not immeasurably superior to others —his contemporaries. It is for this that we read Shakespeare in boyhood, and, I strongly suspect, it was for this that he was appreciated, so far as he was appreciated, in Elizabethan times. In the next stage, though not his highest, his genius is unequalled. In this stage we have his individual characterisation, as

opposed to the type-characterisation of his fellow dramatists. Coupled with this, and, no doubt, an inseparable part of it, is the humour of *Shakespeare.* The humour and the characterisation are both new: so new as to be unintelligible or even repellent to his contemporaries. Both, for instance, repel Ben Jonson, who, entirely to his own satisfaction and, no doubt, the satisfaction of his audience, dealt with types, and with humour of the broadest. *Shakespeare's* humour was two hundred years before its time: Jonson's has been antiquated as long. They are so different that we cannot imagine the same person to laugh, really to say laugh, at both. We know they laughed at Jonson's—I shall presently give a specimen—I conclude they did not laugh at the subtleties of *Shakespeare.* If it is true, which it probably is not, that Queen Elizabeth asked for a play showing Falstaff in love, then *Shakespeare* knew how to meet her taste. She would thoroughly enjoy seeing the fat man rolled out of a clothes-basket into the Thames. So he gave her that. But in his last and highest stage, beyond this character drawing and the subtle humour that delight us, there is a stage that awes us; in which he is superhuman; in which he seems rather to belong to the irresistible forces of Nature than to such as we ourselves experience and can more or less control—to forces we cannot conceive. Of this stage I need not speak. Here he is absolutely alone from then till now; alone on the highest mountain-peak; and—he wrote for gain, we are told by Pope and Sir Sidney Lee. But this is to anticipate.

We are now in a position to deal with Francis Meres. Speaking of Shakespeare he said 'Among the English he is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage' in tragedy rivalling Seneca, and in comedy Plautus. He, therefore, was apparently unaware that Shakespeare was immeasurably superior to either. *Shakespeare*, our *Shakespeare*, had not dawned upon him. He gives a list of six of Shakespeare's comedies and

six of his tragedies. These not being exhaustive lists, he is seen to class *The Merchant of Venice* with *The Comedy of Errors* in Comedies, and *King John* with *Titus Andronicus* in Tragedies. So that, if he is offering us a literary judgment, his judgment is seen to be beneath contempt. But was he? I think it is pretty clear that he was not. He was judging the Plays by the first of the three qualities by which we have found *Shakespeare* is to be judged, *viz.* excellence of plot and action. He says 'for the stage'; that is, I take it, from the spectacular point of view. 'Shakespeare,' says Sir Sidney Lee, 'figured in Meres's pages as the greatest man of letters of the day.' There is no proof that he did anything of the kind. Even if Meres's judgment were worth more than it is, this statement is unsubstantiated. Meres uses the superlative only when he speaks of the quality of the Plays 'for the stage'—their acting qualities. He is not passing, in this case, a literary judgment at all. It is true he speaks of *Shakespeare's* 'fine-filed phrase'[2] and his 'sugred sonnets,' but these hackneyed epithets are clearly not meant for the Plays. The epithets themselves are really and truly applicable to the Sonnets and Poems, in which the composition is in strong contrast with the composition of the Plays. At any rate, there we have it. Meres is admittedly the best witness Sir Sidney Lee can produce. He could be overwhelmed by witnesses on the other side, who are not called; but, as he stands, he is a broken reed. Sir Sidney Lee's best witness gives the case away. Dr. Ingleby was strictly correct when he said that *Shakespeare* was unknown to the men of his own generation. Nothing can be more certain; nothing more essential to the understanding of the problem; nothing more fatal to the orthodox view; as,

[2] Jonson, of course, uses practically the same hackneyed phrase in the Dedicatory Verses of the Folio. But as in private conversation and his *Discoveries* he says exactly the reverse, little attention is to be paid to this. He may have taken his 'true-filed lines' from Meres. Jonson's utterances are fully discussed on other pages.

indeed, no one sees more clearly than Sir Sidney Lee himself. His logical mind constrains him to seek this support: but it absolutely fails him when tested by the facts.

Well, then, the *literature* of *Shakespeare* was a region Meres had not explored. The heights to which *Shakespeare* rises in the *Constance* scenes in *King John*, the moonlight idyll in *The Merchant of Venice*, were out of his ken: he could not lift his eyes to them. They meant little or nothing more to him than the horrors of *Titus Andronicus* or the surface drolleries of the *Comedy of Errors*. The question is, was Meres alone, or nearly alone, in his benighted state? or was it shared by Elizabethans generally? Sir George Greenwood, from whom, as the most judicial of all writers on the problem, as well as the most exhaustive, I should differ with the greatest hesitation, thinks Dr. Ingleby's assertion that Shakespeare was unknown to the men of his age an exaggeration; and so, no doubt, if taken literally and without qualification, it is. But if, when he speaks of the 'bard of our admiration,' he means, as I think he does mean, the Shakespeare who, as the greatest of all poets, is regarded with wonder and astonishment by later generations, then I think he is speaking within compass. The Shakespeare that *we* know *was* unknown to the men of his own generation. I know of no contemporary expression, and, what is much more to the point, it is clear that Sir Sidney Lee knows of no expression—nothing, indeed, till we come to Milton, that in the least accords with the modern estimate. If so, it is only the modesty of truth to say with the yet candid Ingleby that Shakespeare was unknown to the men of his day. It is true beyond contradiction: and to assert the contrary is to trade on the ignorance of the public.

BACON AND THE PLAYS

IT cannot be too often repeated that the authorship of the Plays is not, and cannot be regarded as a matter of certainty. As has been said before, nothing can be held certain that has been called in question by those who would appear to be competent judges; such, for instance, as Emerson and Lord Penzance. What follows here is a personal statement. I am not a convinced Baconian; but think it *possible* that Bacon wrote the Plays; and I think that the grounds on which that has been held impossible or even ridiculous are fallacious: and this it will be my object to set forth. Asked whether I believe that he did, my answer would be No: if whether he did not, it would have to be the same. I have not arrived at belief either way—no doubt a most unsatisfactory condition. I quarrel with those who are positive that he did, and with those who say that the idea is absurd. I think I can show that it is not absurd. I ought, perhaps, in candour to go one step further and admit that I am almost sure that Shakspere of Stratford was not the author. I am not at all sure that Bacon was not. There are many things that point to Bacon. If there were not it would be foolish to regard his authorship as even a possibility; and it is the part of anyone who believes in that possibility to set in order to the best of his ability the main grounds on which his belief is rested. I do not attempt this exhaustively: it is sufficient to set down the arguments that have most affected myself. In stating them as strongly as I can it must not be supposed that I find them conclusive. I do not: but I think the view has not received fair treatment; and that facts and arguments in its favour

are such as no impartial inquirer can disregard. I close this personal statement with apologies for its length.

Orthodox ridicule has been heaped on the Baconian theory on the ground of style. Were I a Baconian, there is no ground on which I would be more ready and eager to meet the enemy. Apparently it is the ground that the enemy would also choose. Nothing has struck me more as an argument in favour of Bacon than this quality of style: nothing has led Mr. J. M. Robertson so strongly in the opposite direction. In a few masterly, not to say masterful, words he thus hits off the style of the two authors. In Shakespeare, he says, the gift of speech was 'lyric, impassioned, creative, rhythmic, poetic': in Bacon it was 'judicial, deliberate, critical, analytic, didactic.' Everyone will agree that there is a modicum of truth in this pronouncement; but how ridiculously it falls short of the real and complete truth, I will now quote passages from the two authors to show; and first a passage from Shakespeare (Henry V. 4. 1.).

King Henry, the night before Agincourt, is, unrecognised, going the rounds of his camp and talking to some of his soldiers. This is the way he talks:

> So, if a son that is by his father sent about merchandise, do sinfully miscarry upon the sea, the imputation of his wickedness, by your rule, should be imposed upon his father that sent him; or, if a servant, under his master's command, transporting a sum of money, be assailed by robbers, and die in many irreconciled iniquities, you may call the business of the master the author of the servant's damnation. But this is not so: the King is not bound to answer the particular endings of his soldiers, the father of his son, nor the master of his servant. . . . Therefore should every soldier in the wars do as every sick man on his bed—wash every mote out of his conscience; and dying so, death is to him an advantage; or, not dying, the time was blessedly lost wherein such preparation was gained; and in him that escapes, it were not a sin to think, that making God so free an offer, he let him outlive that day to see his greatness, and to teach others how they should prepare.

I do not find this 'lyric, impassioned, poetic': on the contrary, I find it 'judicial, analytic, critical, didactic'—and strikingly like Bacon, especially towards the end. 'Making God so free an offer' is absolute Bacon. But that is by the way.

I will now quote from Bacon. It is a passage from the *Philautia* device, a dramatic piece spoken in character:

> Let him offer his service to the Muses. They give alms continually at their gate that many come to live upon; but few have they ever admitted to their palace. There shall he find secrets not dangerous to know, sides and parties not factious to hold, precepts and commandments not penal to disobey. The gardens of love, wherein he now playeth himself, are fresh to-day and fading to-morrow, as the sun comforts or is turned from them. But the gardens of the Muses keep the privilege of the golden age; they ever flourish and are in league with time. . . . That hill of the Muses is above tempests, always clear and calm; a hill of the godliest discovery that man can have, being a prospect upon all the errors and wanderings of present and former times. Yea, in some cliff (cleft?) it leadeth the eye beyond the horizon of time and giveth no obscure divinations of times to come.

I do not find this 'judicial, critical, analytic,' but something quite different; in the highest degree 'lyric, impassioned, rhythmic, poetic.'

Style is the magic by which the supreme artist expresses the inexpressible; but, as Mark Pattison said of Milton, the expression is 'subaudite.' Shakespeare and Bacon apart, Milton is its greatest master in English. Mr. Robertson, if I rightly remember, finds little in Milton's style beyond the clever or ingenious use of words. So that perhaps I am addressing an argument to ears somewhat deaf to what, after all, is only subaudite.

In the quotation I have given from *Henry V* I have tried to point out how curiously like Bacon *Shakespeare*, on occasion, can be; and I think those familiar with Bacon's manner will not seriously disagree. I will now try to show how Bacon can reci-

procate. Here is a passage from the speech of the Sixth Counsellor in the Acta Graiorum.[1] The other five have spoken on serious matters gravely and reverendly. Number Six just pokes fun at them, by no means in the judicial, deliberate, didactic style that Mr. Robertson would expect from Bacon. The first has advised the *Exercise of War* to the Prince: the second, *Study of Philosophy*: the third, *Eternisement and Fame by Buildings and Foundations*: the fourth, *Absoluteness of State and Treasure*: the fifth, *Virtue and a Gracious Government;* all these in Bacon's unmistakable philosophical style. Then comes in No. Six. Into this gentleman's mouth is put a specimen of 'admirable fooling' such as we might expect from the farceur that we know, on good evidence (which I produce later), Bacon could be, in season and out of season—little as Spedding and Mr. Robertson seem able to grasp the fact. He is, no doubt, didactic in a sense; and this is his highly moral teaching. 'All these estimable people,' he says in effect, 'have been advising you to do in your own person what any prince who knows his business can get done for him. My advice is, study to enjoy yourself: that is the one thing a prince cannot do *per alium*'—therefore:

> Leave your wars to your lieutenants, and your works and buildings to your purveyors, and your books to your universities, and your state matters to your counsellors, and attend you that in person that you cannot execute by deputy: use the advantage of your youth; be not sullen to your fortune; make your pleasure the distinction of your honours, the study of your favourites, the talk of your people, and the allurement of all foreign gallants to your court. And in a word, sweet sovereign, dismiss your five counsellors and only take counsel of your five senses.

'Use the advantage of your youth: be not sullen to your fortune: make your pleasure the distinction

[1] This was an interlude played by the members of Gray's Inn (of which Inn Bacon was himself a member), on New Year's Eve. Spedding prints these speeches in his largest type, showing that, though anonymous in the Quarto that was published of these Gesta, he has no doubt whatever that they are Bacon's own.

of your honours,'[2] where, I venture to ask any student of Shakespeare, has he heard that tune before? So with the speech of the First Counsellor: 'For in few words what is your strength, if you find it not; your fortune if you try it not; your virtue if you show it not?' The very note of *Shakespeare* in one of his favourite triplicate sentences.

It might be said in reply that either could write in any style he chose to assume, and I certainly should not dispute the fact. But what an admission would this be! Were there, then, two who could write in all the styles of Bacon, or in all the styles of *Shakespeare*?

To sum up these paragraphs, I think I may claim to have established the position that *Shakespeare's* 'gift of speech' was not invariably lyric, impassioned, poetic; and on the other hand, and what is more to the purpose, that Bacon's could be the extreme opposite of didactic, judicial, critical: could, indeed, when the spirit so moved him, be impassioned, poetic, lyrical: and then, as it seems to me, he developed a quality of beauty unequalled in our literature except in the pages of Shakespeare himself. In a way, we are more affected by such a passage as I have quoted than by anything in *Shakespeare*: it is the effect that Plato produces: we feel that he is speaking in his own person, and discovering to us his own sublime, inmost thoughts and feelings; an impression we seldom, if ever, receive from Shakespeare.

As a matter of fact, I do not quite know what is meant when the epithet *critical* is applied to anybody's 'gift of speech.' If in this case it is meant to apply to Bacon's intellect, nothing could be wider of the mark. Even a normal critical faculty would have saved him from the obvious mistakes of which his philosophical writings are full. These present us with

[2] *I.e.* 'Distinguish with your honours those who will contribute to your pleasures'—exactly, as it seems to me, one of those elliptical, somewhat obscure, inverted phrases in which Shakespeare constantly indulged.

grand conceptions, often marred by ridiculous details. He was as careless in the small change of thought as in his domestic economy. The parallel with Shakespeare I have tried to bring out in the short essay at the end of this volume, *Shakespeare Inspired and Uninspired.*

When the Gray's Inn revels during the Christmas of 1594 came to an untimely end in failure and confusion, Bacon, of all men, was called in to devise other and better revels, and so assist in 'recovering the lost honour of Gray's Inn'—which he triumphantly did. Ought not this to surprise Mr. Robertson, even surprise him out of those limitary epithets of his, 'judicial, deliberate, critical, analytic, didactic,' by which he tried to describe Bacon's style? Bacon might have had all these qualities, though I do not think he had, and yet have been the last man in the world that the benchers of Gray's Inn would have summoned to their aid to redeem their reputation for Masques and Revels.

BACON'S PSALMS

THE adversaries of Bacon, or rather the adversaries of those who have made a claim for Bacon that he never made for himself, which claim, nevertheless, has caused him to be the butt of endless libels, have taken a mischievous pleasure in ridiculing his version of some of the Psalms—ridicule that, it must be confessed, is only partially misplaced. But before dealing with these it is worth while to show that, even if he had been a great poet, he was not the only great poet on whom the Psalms have exercised a strange and baneful influence. Milton himself came under it—Milton in whom self-criticism was as highly-developed as it was deficient in Bacon. Well, Milton wrote demented paraphrases of the Psalms, and in his case the alienation was more severe and more protracted than in Bacon's. The mass of his paraphrases is much more considerable, and individually they are worse. What possessed the 'mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies' to emit such discords is one of the curious problems of literature. Here is a specimen:

'Psalm VII Upon the words of Chush the Benjamite against him' (David).

> But the just establish fast,
> Since thou art the just God that tries
> Hearts and reins. On God is cast
> My defence, and in Him lies;
> In Him who both just and wise
> Saves the upright of heart at last.

This is doggerel pure and simple; but there are specimens of comic doggerel. I will give one: it must be seen to be believed. Here it is.

With these *great* Ashur also bands
And doth confirm the knot:
All these have lent their armèd hands
To aid the sons of Lot.
Do to them as to Midian *bold*
That wasted all the coast,
To Sisera, and *as is told*
Thou didst to Jabin's host.

One's first impulse is to exclaim: An enemy hath done this, with the object of making Holy Scripture ridiculous. But, no, it is meant religiously, and is the careful work of the great master of style and music in poetry, the 'organ-voice' of England, the 'mighty puritan' himself: and as if to show that the wonderful worst in these most wonderful productions is quite gratuitous, he has had the passages which I have underlined printed in a different type from the rest. This to show that these happy phrases are Milton's own, and that the Psalmist is in no way responsible for them.

Now let us turn to Bacon's versions; and let it be admitted at once that there is much in them that can only be called doggerel; but, I think only once comic doggerel. This is the much and gleefully quoted couplet:

There hast Thou set the great Leviathan,
Who makes the seas to seethe like boiling pan.

Comic certainly, but the comicality is really a sort of accident. At any rate, the comic element is not additive and gratuitous, as in Milton's case. For do we not read in the book of Job, 'He maketh the deep to boil like a pot'? Might not Bacon with his consummate reverence for Scripture have felt it was not for him to improve on Holy Writ, or shrink from an expression that he found consecrated there—found, even, puf by the inspired writer in the mouth of the Almighty? Was he to improve it according to his mundane ideas of composition? I think he may have felt this: I think some such feeling also explains Mil-

ton. This may be or may not: but I have sometimes wondered whether the scoffers were always aware of the passage in Job. I have come across some who were not a little surprised to hear of it.

But there is this difference between Milton and Bacon. Milton evidently set out with the fixed intention, however unintelligible, of keeping his poetical faculty in abeyance: and, as we have seen, was eminently successful. In these Psalms of his he never—I think I may say never—gives it play. Bacon was of different temper. A greater contrast to Milton, temperamentally, it would be difficult to imagine. Just as in his conversation his humour would break out of bounds, so, in these psalms, whatever may have been the intention with which he set out, his poetical powers insist on asserting themselves. Consequently his psalms, although they contain much that is prose, and doggerel prose at that, also include passages of great beauty; which, by the way, have always and completely been overlooked by the scoffers. This is from *The Waters of Babylon* psalm: no wonder that Bacon felt touched by it as he recalled it. His verses show his emotion:

> Jerusalem, where God His throne hath set,
> Shall any hour absent thee from my mind,
> Then let my right hand quite her skill forget,
> Then let my voice and tongue no passage find;
> Yea if I do not thee prefer in all
> That in the compass of my thoughts can fall.

Contrast the easy movement of these lines with the halting measures of Milton's psalms. Milton surprises us with the contrast with his other work. This is just what we should expect from Bacon's. Like his prose it has the force that comes of volume and flow. There is a peculiar pathos about the second line (*Shall*, by the way, is not interrogative, it is future conditional), a pathos intensified, perhaps, for us by its reminiscence of Hamlet's dying words to Horatio: and they seem to show that Bacon had at his command

for poetry that last magical gift of the poet, the faculty of charging words with meaning and emotion that words, as words, cannot convey—a power that we knew from his prose that he possessed. These Psalms were written on a bed of illness, a casual exercise to prevent time from running to waste, and sustained effort is not to be looked for; still less, careful revision. But the passage quoted does not stand alone. There is more that is striking; with flaws, no doubt, but with undeniable beauties, and always the same easy movement.

> Upon thy head thou wear'st a glorious crown,
> All set with virtues, polished with renown,
> Then round about a silver veil doth fall
> Of crystal light, mother of colours all.
> The compass heaven, smooth without grain or fold,
> All set with spangs of glittering stars untold;
> And striped with golden beams of power unpent
> Is raised up for a removing tent.
>
> * * * * * *
>
> In the beginning with a mighty hand
> He made the earth by counterpoise to stand;
> Never to move, but to be fixed still;
> Yet hath no pillars but his sacred will.

It seems to me that the contrast between the material connotation of *pillars* and the immaterial *will* is fine. Then, we observe, not *mighty* will or *powerful* will, but *sacred* will. It is the holiness of the Lord that gives the heavens their steadfastness. It seems to me a grand thought and finely expressed: and again we notice the tidal flow of the lines. Once more:

> Before the hills did intercept the eye,
> Or that the frame was up of earthly stage,
> One God thou wert and art and still shall be;
> The line of time it does not measure Thee.
>
> * * * * * *
>
> Much like a mocking dream that will not bide,
> But flies before the sight of waking eye;
> Or as the grass that cannot term obtain
> To see the summer come about again.

This seems to me the work of a poet, actual or potential. For in such production, being little more than an exercise, done under such circumstances and under the influence of such secondary inspiration, we must not look for more than indications. But what is especially to be noticed is the conspicuous ease with which Bacon moves in verse.

No doubt Mr. Robertson's conception of Bacon's style is the common conception, *viz.* that the philosopher was always the philosopher, and that his style could never approximate to that of the poet. It is absolutely necessary to clear the mind of such delusions before approaching this aspect of the problem of authorship; for delusion it is. The poetical as the humorous was as abnormally developed in Bacon as the philosophical.

But in the matter of poetical judgment shall we elect to follow Mr. Robertson or one of the greatest of poets? This is what Shelley in his *Defence of Poetry* said of Bacon: 'He was a poet. His language has a sweet and majestic rhythm that satisfies the sense no less than the almost superhuman wisdom of his philosophy satisfies the intellect. It is a strain which distends and then bursts the circumference of the reader's mind, and pours itself forth into the universal element with which it has sympathy.' (Could a better description, by the way, of *Shakespeare's* style be given?) Shelley also said that alone among mortals Bacon could be compared to Plato, whose 'language is that of an immortal spirit rather than a man.' On a question of philosophy perhaps Mr. Robertson might compete on equal terms with Shelley: but Shelley should know something about language and the gift of speech—possibly more than Mr. Robertson.

BEN JONSON

IF ever there was a man of genius calculated to present us with surprises and paradoxes, it was Ben Jonson. We have in him the strangest mixture of coarse animalism and delicate spirituality that the history of literature has preserved for us. Animal courage was a marked trait. As a private soldier in Sir Francis Vere's army in the Low Countries, he, on one occasion, invited a champion from the enemy's camp, and fought and killed his man in view of the two armies. Later he killed a fellow-actor in a duel. The coarseness in his works was at least equalled by coarseness in his life. There are episodes, related by himself, not producible in modern print. And yet this man of moods, almost brutal in some, could produce lyrics unsurpassed for beauty and delicacy: such as the chaste and statuesque *Queen and Huntress*; itself, like the lily he praised so thrillingly, 'the child and flower of light,' and *Drink to me only with thine eyes*, with its lovely extravagances; as exquisite a mixture of charming sentiment with delicate fancy as is to be found in our or any language,—surely the most beautiful flattery ever offered to a lady: so well known, however, that we have to remind ourselves how beautiful it is. A strange man, from whom we must expect change and mutation.

BEN JONSON, SHAKESPEARE, AND BACON

BUT temperamental variability will not account of *Shakespeare*: for here variety becomes for Jonson's varying attitude towards the plays contradiction. The cause, it would seem, is to be sought elsewhere: it may or may not have been found. That is another question. There is, at any rate, a general consensus among critics, Sir Sidney Lee being one, that up to a certain point of time Jonson had, to put it mildly, a very poor opinion of *Shakespeare's* plays. There was, indeed, a natural antipathy between the 'learned sock' of Jonson, and 'the native wood-notes wild' of *Shakespeare*; the one standing firmly for a classical tradition, which the other simply disregarded. Critics are pretty well agreed that the younger sneered at the elder; that the *poor Poet-Ape* epigram of Jonson was aimed at Shakespeare; and so with other derisive references in Jonson's works to works of *Shakespeare*. The passages have been so often quoted and are so easily accessible that it is unnecessary to quote them once more: it is the fact of their existence that is important just now; and this is not questioned. The history of his moods in this connection is curious and interesting. First we have, as we have just seen, the unqualified sneer of open aversion. Then succeeds a sort of middle period. In 1618 or 1619 Jonson was visiting Drummond of Hawthornden, who made notes of his conversation. What he said of Shakespeare is recorded. It is disparaging but no longer plainly contemptuous: 'Shakespeare,' he said, 'wanted art' (he did *not* say 'and sometimes sense,' as quoted by

Gifford—that is a gloss). No doubt, as reported by Drummond, Jonson spoke disparagingly of most of his contemporaries also; but that, if anything, makes his disparagement of *Shakespeare*, whom formerly he had distinguished with special ridicule, the lighter. He also at this time, it is to be observed, parenthetically formulated a list of the principal writers of his day: not, on this occasion, exclusive of the poets as in the *Scriptorum catalogus* in the *Discoveries*. *Shakespeare's* name is absent: surely a strange omission of the idolised friend who had died but two short years before. Then some four years later appears the 1623 Folio of the *Shakespeare* plays. All at once, and to the amazement of all concerned, he who was formerly the Poet-Ape has become 'Soul of the Age! the applause! delight! the wonder of our Stage!' (The punctuation of the facsimile). He is to be left 'alone for the comparison of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome sent forth . . . He was not for an age but for all time'; also he was 'Sweet Swan of Avon.' Then, finally, some years later, apparently not earlier than 1626, and possibly later, Jonson seems to suffer a relapse, at any rate so far as regards the Plays. In a passage in the *Discoveries*, in which he tells us that he almost idolised the writer, he has only carping criticism of the Plays themselves—and that founded on a misquotation. Jonson really ought not to have misquoted the First Folio; at least, he might have taken the trouble to look the passage up. One is reminded of John Stuart Mill's complaint in the House of Commons that the respect expressed for his works in that assembly was somewhat impaired by the evidence that Honourable Members had not read them.

Jonson, then, sounded the whole gamut from abuse to veneration. Was there ever such a tissue of contradiction, and is any explanation possible? Certainly there is, say the Baconians, a perfectly satisfactory explanation. Invoke the name of Francis Bacon,

and all difficulty vanishes. And it must be confessed that many of the difficulties do vanish on their hypothesis; and, at any rate on this occasion, they can cite some very curious facts that no impartial inquirer can afford to ignore. At least they must be considered. They start with pointing to a very strange coincidence. We have seen that in the verses which he prefixed to the First Folio, Jonson had declared that the work of *Shakespeare* would bear comparison with all that 'insolent Greece or haughty Rome' had sent forth. In his *Discoveries* he says of Bacon that he 'hath filled up all members and performed that in our tongue which may be compared or preferred either to insolent Greece or haughty Rome . . so that he may stand as the mark or ἄκμη of our language.' (The Baconians would force the word *numbers* to indicate poetry; but this will not hold water). Note in passing that Jonson puts Bacon above all, the ἄκμη of our literature: he has no equal or rival in Jonson's deliberate and mature judgment. Now let us, as the scientific people do, assume provisionally and without prejudice, that Bacon wrote the plays; that it was a great secret; and that Jonson was in the secret. How does the hypothesis fit the facts? It being a great secret, if Jonson spoke at all, and he was a man in whom the fire burned if he held his peace, if he spoke at all, I say, he would speak in riddles. Now we note a sequence. The Poet-Ape Epigram, published in 1616,[1] seems to mark the end of what we may call the vitriolic period. In 1618 we know he was acquainted with Bacon; how closely at this period we do not know: he may or may not have been in the secret then. At any rate, his expressions have toned down. In his conversations with Drummond he is censorious of Shakespeare, but not acrimonious. By 1620 he was in the closest touch with Bacon, living with him at Gorhambury apparently, and acting as one of the 'good pens' that translated Bacon's philoso-

[1] The year of the death of Shakspere of Stratford.

phical works into Latin. Like all who came within the sphere of attraction of that great magnetic personality, he was powerfully attracted, and emotions were generated that years after found expression in, perhaps, the most magnificent tribute ever paid by one man of genius to another acknowledged greater. 'I have and do reverence him for the greatness that was only proper to himself, in that he seemed to me ever, by his work, one of the greatest men, and most worthy of admiration, that had been in many ages. In his adversity I ever prayed that God would give him strength, for greatness he could not want. Neither could I condole in a word or syllable for him, as knowing no accident could do harm to virtue, but rather help to make it manifest.' These great sentences achieve a double triumph. Nothing, not even Tobie Matthew's offering, gives us such a glimpse of the beauty of Bacon's character—or, when all is said, of Jonson's own. Jonson was not a hero; but he was next best; he was a hero-worshipper.

This is not a digression: it is necessary to the understanding of Jonson's attitude towards the plays —a thing extremely difficult, but made more intelligible if, for the moment, we assume that Bacon wrote them, and Jonson knew it as a great secret. It would explain the apparent *volte face* in his literary judgment; the apparent revulsion of feeling that made him anxious to give the collected Plays a good send-off. The praise is superlative; its expression vigorous even to the excess that suggests strain: but is it more than an extraordinarily fine performance? Except as an indirect expression of affection for the author, is it sincere? I more than doubt it. I have spoken of a revulsion of feeling. I doubt whether there ever was any revulsion of feeling. I venture to think that those who picture to themselves a Ben Jonson lost in admiration of *Shakespeare's* plays do not know their Ben Jonson. Do they really suppose that when everyone else was putting him first, Ben Jonson was

the man to put himself second? Never in the world. Jonson, we may be quite sure, never wavered from the true faith, and the true faith was this: that there was one superlative poet of that day, and Ben Jonson was that poet. Was *he* to be the only heretic? This I take to be certain in any case—that Jonson, in his heart of hearts, never put *Shakespeare* first. This being so, why did he write these dedicatory verses in that superlative style? Nay: why should he have written dedicatory verses at all? He let Shakspere of Stratford die without a couplet to his memory; and up to the date of the Folio had never had a word of praise, or, indeed, anything but contumely, for his Plays. Whence this sudden blaze of enthusiasm, seven years after Shakspere's death, for works that both before and after we *know* he underrated? The Baconians have an answer: and it is, so far as I know, the only answer that explains the riddle. One thing seems clear, *viz.*, that the Folio verses are official—a brilliant performance; but a performance. They are not spoken from the heart.

DE SHAKESPEARE *NOSTRAT*

THIS is the heading of one of Jonson's *Discoveries*, and has in part already been alluded to. Speaking for myself, I have read this particular Discovery over and over again without ever feeling that I have at all got to the bottom of it. I find it one of the most confusing things I have ever come across. Some think that it is itself confused, and this may be the explanation. I should be glad to think it was so. Let us examine it. 'I remember,' he says, 'the players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare that in his writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted a line. My answer hath been: Would he had blotted a thousand.' This seems plain-sailing enough, until we remember that the best judges of style from Malone down to Andrew Lang—orthodox Shakespeareans all—have no shadow of doubt that Jonson himself wrote the address, *To the Great Variety of Readers*, prefixed to the First Folio. Here we find him saying in the players' name the very thing he reproves them for saying in their own: 'What he thought, he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers.' Jonson, put on his defence, might be conceived as saying, 'I am a dramatist, and when I am set the task of writing in the name of other people I put into their mouths what those other people would have said.' Well, I can only say, for my part, if a man provided such a defence for my consumption, I should ever after receive anything he offered me with great caution. As a writer he has written what he knows to be false. It may have excused itself to him as a pious fraud; but it was a fraud.

Leaving the Address, however, and returning to the

Discovery, *De Shakespeare Nostrat*, had Jonson ever heard the players say anything of the kind? Would they, in their private capacity, adhere to the pious, but patent, fraud to which they have been made to put their names in public? For the necessary implication is that the players had original manuscripts in their hands; which we may say we know to be untrue. Did honest Ben think they had; and was he himself the victim of this little deception so often repeated by these dishonest players? Very hard to believe: easier to believe that Jonson had never heard the players say it. Had he forgotten that he had made it all up himself, and had put it into the innocent mouths of the players? Could anything be more confusing? What are we to think? I candidly confess that I, for one, do not know what to think. The more I think, the worse confounded the confusion seems to get. Jonson's entire deliverance touching the *Shakespeare* plays is so confused, so self-contradictory, even so irreconcilable with known facts, that any witness giving such evidence in a court of law would be told by the judge to stand down: it would be so obvious that he had some undisclosed preoccupation that prevented him giving straight forward evidence. This is the only possible explanation.

Then in this *Discovery*, Jonson goes on to say that he tells posterity this to justify his own candour, 'for I loved the man and do honour his memory on this side idolatry, as much as any. He was (indeed) honest and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy, brave notions and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped: *sufflaminandus erat*, as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his own power, would the rule of it had been so too.' Here the personal comment ends, and he proceeds to make a criticism on the misquoted passage above referred to; and, as usual with him in his *obiter dicta* concerning the plays, in a hostile spirit.

Now I cannot think that I am singular in finding all this confusing to the last degree, even on the hypothesis that I am assuming, that Jonson had this great secret in his keeping. Is Jonson here in this personal part speaking of Shakspere of Stratford? If there were no other reason for suspecting him of equivocation in this matter, one would say, undoubtedly. But things being as they are, Jonson having on other grounds laid himself open to the suspicion of mental reservation, we are led to doubt even this. For, on the face of it, it is, to say the least, unlikely, indeed almost inconceivable, that he should speak of Shakspere of Stratford in these terms. Remember that he was not enthusiastic about the Plays. Always, except when he was speaking as the official mouthpiece of the publishers, he ran them down. So that it is only as a man that he almost idolised Shakspere; not at all as an inspired genius. Remember, too, that we know no single fact of Shakspere's life that is even creditable to him; much less honourable. Of their social relations only late traditions survive. One such ascribes Shakspere's death to the after-effects of a drinking-bout with Jonson. The squalid story is not rejected by Sir Sidney Lee, who thinks it probable Shakspere would have Falstaff's contempt for 'thin potations.' No doubt, in the dearth of evidence of intimacy between the two men, any is thought better than none: and I suppose we are asked to infer the sort of affection between them that existed between Tam O'Shanter and Soutar Johnny:

> Tam loved him like a vera brither;
> They had been fou for weeks thegither.

There is another tradition, not to be traced back further than Charles II's time, according to which Shakspere stood godfather to a child of Ben Jonson's. Beyond these two unreliable legends I am aware of no evidence on which the 'old intimacy' which Sir Sidney Lee says existed between Shakspere and Jonson is founded.

Looking at the known facts, and disregarding the legends—for the growth of legends is one of the mysteries—one feels pretty sure that Jonson, 'arch-poet Jonson,' would look on Shakspere as an actor, and a not very eminent actor at that, and of not very attractive private character either: for such is the character that history, apart from legend, awards him. We have seen the noble tribute that Jonson paid to Bacon. Can we imagine it transferred to Shakspere of Stratford, of whom the best that his greatest admirers can say is that he was out for gain. Can we imagine him saying of this mediocrity or worse (in his private character): 'I have and do reverence him for the greatness that was only proper to himself . . . . for greatness he could not want.' When we turn from this picture of what the author of the plays ought to have been—some would say, *must* have been—to what the reputed author was, we cannot help an involuntary feeling of disgust. Considering what we know of Shakspere of Stratford on the one hand, and Jonson's estimate of Bacon on the other, can we imagine Jonson worshipping both? And, strangely enough, here we are met with another of those parallelisms which are so striking in Jonson's treatment of Bacon and *Shakespeare*. He tells us, in another of the *Discoveries*, that Bacon was 'a noble speaker, full of gravity in his speaking. His language (*where he could spare or pass by a jest*)[1] was nobly censorious.' Compare this with the passage just quoted—'excellent phantasy, brave notions,' but sometimes one had to check him—'his wit was in his own power; would the control of it had been so too.' Again, the two criticisms are identical. Strange that two men so different as we know Shakspere and Bacon to have been should have produced so exactly the same impression on Jonson. They were both attractive speakers, he tells us: but the fault of the one was that he could not resist an unseasonable jest; of the other, that his wit was liable

[1] My italics.

to get out of his control. Truly the Baconians seem to have reason when they say that Jonson spoke in riddles. We have convicted him of deception, and deception is deception even when it is practised in so good a cause as another man's secret.[2] It weaves a tangled web just the same—and there never was a more confused and confusing tangle—let the explanation be what it may.

[2] It is commonly said of Sir Walter Scott that he went the length of categorically denying his authorship of the Waverley novels when directly questioned. This does not do justice to Sir Walter. In my edition of the General Preface (the Waverley) the account is thus given (I quote from memory): An impudent person held a pistol at his head in that suddenly asked question, 'Are you the author of Waverley?' Sir Walter said 'No, I am not, *but I should have given you the same answer if I had been.*' If this answer is examined it will be seen that the result is not deception; but leaves the questioner exactly where he was before. It merely withholds information. Had Scott given any other answer, he would have given information to which his inquisitor had no sort of right.

NOSTRAT

ONE of the most curious and puzzling points remains—this odd word *nostrat*. It belongs to a group of words not very common even in their native Latin. *Nostras* of our country; *vestras* of your country; *cujas* of whose country. If there are others, I do not call them to mind. *De Shakespeare nostrat*, then, would seem to mean *our English Shakespeare*. But why should it apply to Shakespeare alone of all the distinguished Englishmen mentioned in *Discoveries*? Especially when we consider, and it is a point always to be borne in mind, that it is only the character, not the works, of Shakespeare that is quoted for admiration. Now it so happens that to us—I cannot say whether it was so to Jonson—'*our countryman Shakspere*' is a familiar expression. The phrase occurs twice in letters addressed to Shakspere of Stratford; by one Abraham Sturley. But Sturley was a Stratford man; and *our countryman* meant not merely an Englishman but a Warwickshire man, to Sturley. Jonson would feel no special pride in claiming the author of the *Shakespeare* plays, as such, for England—he thought his own superior—but there might be a point in claiming him for his county, Middlesex, as opposed to Warwickshire, if he could. And here, the Baconians may come in. As they read the riddle—and riddle there certainly is—the whole passage really refers to Bacon, *i.e.* to Shakespeare, not to Shakspere. Suppose the whole emphasis is on the word *nostrati—our* Shakespeare as opposed to the Warwickshire Shakspere. We know almost for certain that in the very first sentence of this *Discovery* Jonson is dissembling with us, in speaking of MSS. in the

hands of the Players which he must have known they did not possess. This prepares us for any further artifice that he may see fit to practise upon us. Suppose he is, in reality, saying: 'You talk of your Stratford Shakspere, now let me say a word as to the real writer of the Plays, our home-counties Shakespeare, the man who was born and lived in Westminster, and whose pen-name is on the title-page of the Plays.' Jonson and Bacon were of the same county, as Shakspere and Sturley were of the same county, and *Shakespeare nostrat* in Jonson's mouth would have a precisely parallel application to *our countryman Shakspere* in Sturley's. All this will, no doubt, be condemned as far-fetched, but there are riddles whose only possible solution is far-fetched, and this may be one of them. The thing is not simple: some solution is asked for. What is the solution? Is it appreciated what a curiosity this word is as used in this passage? What induced Jonson to use it? The more it is considered the more strange it will seem—at least that is how it impresses me.

It is worth while, just in passing, to sum up the points connecting Ben Jonson with the problem. In the first place his evidence, next to the evidence in the title-pages, is recognised as the hardest nut the unorthodox have to crack. Then again he is the one man whose name has come down to us as being intimately connected both with Bacon and with the plays. For both these reasons everything he said and did in this connection is worth our closest attention.

First we have to consider his extraordinary temperament; in itself a mixture of contradictions, and preparing us for contradictions in his moods and conduct. This will affect our whole judgment on his attitude.

Then, we absolutely convict him of a necessary implication that he knew to be unfounded. He must have known that the Players (if they had anything to do with the matter, which is doubtful) had not the

original MSS. before them. This again will affect our judgment of anything else that he says or implies. He, in this matter, is not to be trusted.

Twice he applied a most singular and peculiar description to both Bacon and Shakespeare.

He expresses the utmost admiration for Bacon, using phrases, ludicrous as applied to Shakspere of Stratford, and yet brackets them as equally objects of his worship.

What did he mean by *nostrat*? It seems almost impossible that he merely meant *Englishman*. That would make nonsense, or something very near it.

SHAKESPEARE OUT FOR GAIN

POPE, in much quoted lines, wrote that Shakespeare

> For gain not glory winged his roving flight,[1]
> And grew immortal in his own despite.

It is with true insight, as to its bearing on the main purpose of his book, that Sir Sidney Lee adopts this odious view; and yet he is not generally reckoned as among the 'detractors of Shakespeare.' From his own point of view Sir Sidney Lee is right, inasmuch as it is, on the very face of it, the only theory that squares with the known facts of the life of the reputed author: the only theory that in the words of Emerson 'marries the works to the life.' The craftsmanship of the 'master artificer' is nowhere more in evidence. Once believe that the author of the plays must have been a great and good man, and what becomes of Shakspere of Stratford, who was neither great nor good? and to whom gain, not even glory, was the first consideration? Sir Sidney Lee is a severe logician, and his logic insists on the premisses that are necessary to his predetermined conclusion. His conclusion he *must* have; if the premisses shock our moral sense, then our moral sense must be shocked. If Shakspere of Stratford was the author, his eyes were, like Mammon's, 'ever downward cast,' and he himself 'the least erected spirit' that ever put noble thoughts on paper. The man who wrote

> What friends thou hast, and their adoption tried
> Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel

[1] The *rover* shot with a *flight-arrow*, not at a regular target from a stated position, but at any chance mark that presented itself as he ranged the open field.

was, all the while, 'sidling a glance at the coin of his neighbour': and wrote like that because he thought the sentiment a 'good seller': not because he was himself (as Bacon, for instance, was) 'a friend unalterable to his friends.' I cannot understand how anyone can read Hamlet, and find himself uplifted by the nobility and tenderness of the portrayal, and can also believe that the great sentences were written in a spirit of cold-blooded calculation of what the play would fetch.[2] Still less does one feel able to argue with those who do not feel so uplifted. But that is the instruction of the leading counsel for the defence; that is the choice before us. Either we must accept this nauseating view of Shakespeare's character or we must have the gravest doubts, insupportable to some minds, of the Stratford authorship. I, for one, accept the position: if Shakspere of Stratford wrote the plays, Sir Sidney Lee is right: Shakespeare wrote for gain. Let those believe it who can. I only ask that they realise the implications of their belief.

For myself, I should have thought, if ever in these later ages there appeared an inspired writer, that writer was Shakespeare: and if an uninspired writer may presume to judge of an inspired one, I should have thought there was something approaching a contradiction in terms between inspiration and commercialism. The very idea of gain is excluded—and the idea of glory also, for the matter of that—the truth being that an inspired writer, in the sense of which we speak of a great poet being inspired, writes because he must, not with a view to any object or advantage whatsoever, either gain or glory. The motive force is from within; an impulse, not an attraction; an instinct, not a calculation. It is an outrage as much on the intellectual as on the moral sense to speak of Shakespeare, most of all, as writing for gain. It is bad analysis: there is no such ingre-

[2] The odd thing is that incidentally Sir Sidney Lee shows how little, compared with Shakespeare's total accumulations, the Plays did fetch.

dient in genius. One would say Pope had never felt the full power and quality of Shakespeare. And there was no excuse for Pope; the folly is gratuitous: he was under no compulsion such as presses on Sir Sidney Lee. The question and doubt of authorship had not arisen in Pope's time: but Sir Sidney Lee must either believe this or renounce another belief on which he has staked his reputation.

But, after all, one would have thought it did not matter very much what those deemed of Shakespeare who could read Hamlet and not feel that the poet had 'poured his soul' into it; that it was impassioned: that to hold it written for such an object as gain, or any material object at all, from anything except a sublime instinct, verges on profanity. Such a belief libels human nature. It is a sort of atheism: for how could we believe in anything good in human or superhuman, if we could believe that he who had attained the highest had no aim but the lowest? Do students of Shakespeare believe this? They must, if they believe in the Stratford authorship.

Clearly they do not believe it, whatever else they believe, however inconsistently. They are saved by the indiscriminate hospitality of the human mind. It can entertain contradictions; in turn, if not simultaneously. Still there is hope that when the contradiction is pointed out, one side of it may be discarded.

All I ask is that lovers of Shakespeare should pause and consider what they are committed to if they follow Sir Sidney Lee. That writer's ability and acumen are equal to his learning; and there is no more learned critic of Shakespeare. But his attitude is one of constraint. He assumes, he presents it as a certainty, that Shakspere of Stratford wrote the Plays. This is his axiom; and axioms are things with which all facts and all reasoning must accord. We do not argue about axioms: but everything that is in opposition to them must be refuted or explained away. A seeming fact that contradicts an axiom cannot be a

fact; contrary argument must be unsound. It is impossible, he says, that one who wrote from inspiration, from an inner impulse that would take no denial, could have given up writing when he was four years younger than Milton was when he began *Paradise Lost*: could retire to the pettiness of provincial life at Stratford, engage in small trade and the little legal squabbles arising out of it; without books, without literary society, with some of his greatest works not yet secured in print, even the manuscripts not being in his own keeping at the time of his early death—he sees all this, and looks about for an explanation. Pope's couplet is ready to his hand. Accept that and all is explained. He did *not* write from inspiration: he wrote for money; and when he had made enough money he stopped writing. Gain was his end, and his life in Stratford was only the supplement to his life in London. Inspiration is ruled out: it contravenes the axiom.

Is Sir Sidney Lee's position understood? All I ask is that it should be. His view is that the commercial view is the necessary view, the only view compatible with the life. And he is right: it is so. Believe that Shakespeare wrote from higher motives, and he is not Shakspere of Stratford. Do we or do we not accept the low motive? For my own part if I were asked whether I could believe that Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* for money, and as soon as he had made enough money he left off writing Hamlets, I could only answer, God forbid!

It is objected that Shakespeare evidently was *not* satisfied with the gains from his plays, since he still pursued a profitable trade in other commodities, and, as we know, he once amassed the sum of two pounds four shillings—his share in the Earl of Rutland's payment for an *impresa*. Then, I suppose, the theory is that he grew discontented with what people paid him for his plays, the prices in the market, as we are told, ruling low, and came to the conclusion that he would

do better to supply a village market with the commodities in demand in villages: so he exchanged London for Stratford and tragedies for malt. His case may have been even worse than others; for, whereas we have record of payments, small but regular, being made to nearly all other Elizabethan dramatists, research has not discovered that anybody ever paid *Shakespeare* anything; although the great paymaster, Philip Henslowe, was specially connected with the theatre, where, as Sir Sidney Lee tells us, Shakespeare 'doubtless made his first pronounced successes.' The Baconians, I suppose, would say that nothing ever *was* paid or asked for the *Shakespeare* plays; the 'grand possessor' being above such considerations—but that is another story.

But the second half of Pope's couplet is, if possible, more preposterous than the first. The first attacks Shakespeare's morals, the second his intellect. It tells us that that acute and omniscient intellect did not understand the quality of what it created. This reminds one a little of the 'good old lady' in the Breitmann ballads,

> . . . who went to hear Artemus Ward,
> And said it was shame of the beoples to laugh themselves almost tead
> At the pore young veller lecturing who didn't know what he said.

Pope's first line makes *Shakespeare* a charlatan, the second a fool. Who, then, are the real detractors of Shakespeare? Surely, the answer must be, Pope and Sir Sidney Lee.

If, on the whole question at this stage, some one should reply that he sees his way to repudiate Pope and yet believe in the Stratford authorship, I take leave to tell him that that is because he is less logical than Sir Sidney Lee, who sees that it cannot be done. There is a limit to the hospitality of the human mind when it realises that two would-be guests are mortal enemies: at least there should be a wise host.

One word more before leaving this part of the subject. It might strike one of the unorthodox that, in misappropriating the Plays, Shakspere of Stratford, though he sought only gain, had gone off with both gain and glory; thus adding one more unattractive fact to the history of his unattractive life. This, I think, would be injustice; and there is enough to repel us without that. I do not suppose for a moment that he thought there was any particular glory attaching to their authorship. If Camden could see nothing very extraordinary in the Plays, why should a man like Shakspere of Stratford?

MUCH CRY AND LITTLE WOOL

I HAVE spoken of the well-founded confidence shown by the orthodox writers that nothing they can say need fear rejection at the hands of their faithful followers. In this rôle, as in others, Sir Sidney Lee distances all his associates. A most instructive and illuminating example is given in his first Appendix to the *Life*. I quote the opening paragraph. 'The scantiness of contemporary records of Shakespeare's career has been much exaggerated. An investigation extending over two centuries has brought together a mass of detail which far exceeds that accessible in the case of any other professional writer. Nevertheless, a few links are missing, and at some points appeal to conjecture is inevitable.' In the earlier edition the last sentence stood thus: 'Nevertheless, some *important* links are missing, and at some *critical* points appeal to conjecture inevitable.' (My italics.) So that, putting the two together, the later state of the writer's mind may be expressed: 'some links are missing, but they are few, and I no longer consider them important; and at some points appeal to conjecture is inevitable, but I no longer consider these points critical.' The interesting thing about the amended statement is the tendency to ever stronger and stronger expression as the writer tests the receptivity of his public.

And, first, as to the scope of the inevitable conjecture. Of the 639 pages of the *Life*, so far as these pages are biographical at all, it would be safe to say that 638 are occupied with the inevitable conjecture and the remaining page with contemporary records. I have, indeed, exhibited all the facts of the life founded on contemporary records in about this space. Yet, with the exception of that one passage in the

Times' review of the *Life*, in which the admiring reviewer speaks of 'the master-artificer twisting his material into the cunning semblance of a life,' I know of no sign that any single critic on the orthodox side has commented, even in gentle irony, on this enormous disproportion between conjecture and recorded facts. I may mention that this appendix is headed, '*Sources of Biographical Knowledge*' (my italics), and there is a marginal inset to the paragraph, 'Contemporary records abundant.'

I suppose we may take it that the pages, packed with references, that follow, are intended for detailed evidence of the general statement of the first paragraph. If not, they seem purposeless. If so, we get a valuable insight into the meaning Sir Sidney Lee attaches to the phrase, contemporary records. The paragraph is a promise: we shall see how it is redeemed.

But first, what *is* a contemporary record? The word record is used in several senses, and I am not sure that I should care to commit myself offhand to a positive definition; but, for the present purpose it is quite easy to define it negatively. Though it is not easy to say comprehensively what it is, there is no difficulty in saying what it is not. It is most decidedly not an oral tradition: that is the very last thing it can be identified with. So that to speak of an oral tradition as a record at all, let alone as a 'contemporary record,' betrays, at the best, careless use of terms; and nothing will persuade me that the master-artificer is a careless writer. Now I quote from the second paragraph of the Appendix, which I take to be a detailed expansion of the first. 'Fuller, in his *Worthies* (1662) attempted the first biographical[1] notice of

[1] His only *biographical* allusion that Sir Sidney Lee quotes is to the wit-combats between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson at the Mermaid that he saw *in imagination*. There is also an allusion to the martial sound of Shakespeare's name, and another to Shakespeare's introduction of Sir John Fastolf into the Plays. Neither of these is biographical. (At p. 5 we are told, Aubrey was the first biographer, and on p. 45, Nicholas Rowe, and now Fuller.)

Shakespeare, with poor results.' Now we perceive what is Sir Sidney Lee's idea of a contemporary record. It is a hearsay tradition that finds its way into print forty-six years after the death of its subject. I proceed with the quotation from the Appendix. 'Aubrey, the Oxford antiquary, in his gossiping *Lives of Eminent Men*, based his ample information (observe the use of the word "information") on reports (as though a report was a record!) communicated to him by William Beeston (d. 1682), an aged actor whom Dryden called the chronicle of the stage, &c.' Dryden might call him what he chose. It would not convert a report into a record or an aged actor into a chronicle. We are given nothing that by any leniency can be called a record; and, as to contemporary, in half a page we find ourselves in the eighteenth century and in another quarter-page in the nineteenth; so here we have our two centuries in full measure, and records in 'abundance,' if ancient gossip can stand for records.

But now as to the main fact asserted, that investigation has discovered in contemporary records a mass of details concerning Shakespeare which far exceeds that accessible in the case of any other professional writer of that day. As the inset, 'Contemporary records abundant,' is placed opposite the sentence, we have a perfect right to read it in. Also we have the right to read the whole in the light of the title of this Appendix, *viz.* 'Sources of Biographical Knowledge'; and the whole therefore conveys, and is quite clearly meant to convey, the intimation that on the authority of Sir Sidney Lee, the first of experts in Elizabethan literature, our knowledge of the biography of *Shakspere of Stratford* exceeds that of the biography of any contemporary author. No one who will examine the passage (p. 641 of the 1915 edition) will question the fairness of this statement, and it is a statement that has only to be made to be laughed out of court. Now that is a strange thing to have to

say of a carefully expressed judgment of a great authority. One is driven to the conclusion that the object of the *Life* is not merely biographical, but is partly, perhaps even mainly, to make out a case. It is controversial from beginning to end—and facts are not always safe in the hands of the controversialist. In this case the facts seem to have become subservient to the argument.

As I have said before, the extreme care, at any rate so far as this controversy is concerned, with which this book is written, reminding one, indeed, of the discreet sentences of the expert witness of the old school in a court of law, makes it necessary to look hard at every word in every sentence. No word that seems in the least strange must be allowed to pass without inquiry. Now 'professional writer' is a very curious expression to apply to the author of the plays, and there may be some limitation here that I have not appreciated. So that it is advisable to select some author who was, beyond controversy, a professional writer exactly in the same sense that Shakespeare was. I select Ben Jonson: no possible objection can be raised to him on the ground that he is not fairly comparable with Shakespeare. Now I was able to include all the known facts of Shakspere's life in about a page. In times like these, when brevity is one of the most pressing obligations of a writer, I could not think of giving the known facts of Jonson's life: they would cover too much paper—which it is no longer 'foolish to spare.' If I did, the contrast with Shakspere's case would be striking indeed; but that contrast would not by any means measure the difference. What *is* biographical knowledge, and how do we get it? What are the most important items? Well, if I were asked what single item I would put before all others as giving me insight into the life and character,[2] in a word, knowledge of a man, I should say unhesitatingly the possession of a

[2] Buckle calls biography 'the study of the peculiarities of individual character,' thus making the external facts of less value than the internal.

good portrait. Of the Shakespeare portraits, all are agreed, the less said the better. The Droeshout portrait is fairly hit off by Sir G. Greenwood as 'hydrocephalous'; the Stratford bust borders on the idiotic. Of Jonson there are excellent likenesses: that by Gerald Houthorst gives us the impression of being the man himself. But if I were not confined to a single item, I would ask for a record of a man's thoughts, of the way he talked. Now Jonson has talked to us through more than a hundred pages of Gifford's edition, giving us, almost orally—one can almost hear his voice and intonation—in his *Discoveries* (by which he meant short paragraphs in which he *discovers* himself to his readers) his sincerest opinions and inmost sentiments regarding men and things. These *Discoveries*, he tells us, 'flowed out of his daily readings, or had their reflux to his peculiar notion of the times.' They disclose a sound and refined critic of literature and life; and, generally, a high-minded, warm-hearted, attractive character. More intimate still, and from an aspect not meant for public view, we have Drummond's report of his private conversation.[3] What would not the orthodox give for a single sentence of Shakspere's revealing him to us in this way? In addition we have in Jonson's case scores of epigrams, sonnets, &c., inscribed to friends or well-known personalities. Of Shakspere not a word written in his own person, not a letter, not a stanza, not a note. What can Sir Sidney Lee mean by treating us in this manner? He heads his chapter 'Sources of Biographical Knowledge,' he side-notes the paragraph 'contemporary records abundant'; and naked nothing to show for it. Does he purposely insult our intelligence?

At a time, many years ago, when it was my lot to study such things, we used to say that *Paley's Evidences* was more subversive of orthodox belief than

[3] Of Shakspere we have one recorded sentence, embalmed in the low-lived Manningham story.

any heretical work written with that object. It raised all sorts of questions and gave them unsatisfactory answers. Was that, really, all that could be said for Christianity? Impartially studied, Sir Sidney Lee's *A Life of Shakespeare* will be found to stand in the same relation to Stratford orthodoxy.

SHAKESPEARE'S *RICHARD III*

THE plays printed for the first time in the 1623 Folio, seven years after the death of Shakspere of Stratford, have always been a source of serious doubt in the mind of the candid critic, and a thorn in the side of the orthodox apologist; though the discomfort caused by it is always manfully concealed. Explanations have, of course, been offered; some less, some more, incredible; but none at all convincing. Possible, but improbable, must be the verdict pronounced on the best among them. These posthumously printed plays number twenty in all; sixteen, including *Macbeth*, had, so far as is known, never been secured by print at all; six, including *Julius Cæsar*, had neither been printed nor played. The facts concerning several, *Othello* for instance, are strange enough; those concerning *Richard III*, as it appeared in the 1623 Folio, are staggering. At the same time nothing has a more direct bearing on the question of authorship. These facts constitute a riddle in themselves.

As compared with the Quarto (Quarto 6), on which it is founded, the play now contains 193 new lines and some 2,000 minor emendations. 'The expanded text' being, in the opinion of the Cambridge Editors, 'quite in the manner of Shakespeare,' and they 'can have no hesitation in attributing the additions and alterations to the author himself.' Sir Sidney Lee is of the same opinion, *viz.* that the text of the Folio is authentic *Shakespeare*. No critic, so far as I am aware, has held a contrary opinion. But now we are met by this very curious and surprising fact. Twelve printer's errors existing in Quarto 6 re-appear in the

Folio, leaving no room for doubt that, as I have said, the Folio text is founded on this Quarto. What are we to conclude? A complete new manuscript is ruled out by the fact of these printer's errors. A careless editor—and it must be confessed that the author of the Plays, whoever he was, was a careless being—might conceivably have overlooked printer's errors in a book; but it is not conceivable that he could have reproduced them in a new manuscript. This would be a proof rather of perverted carefulness than of carelessness. We are driven to the conclusion that the Folio Editors had before them a copy of Quarto 6 interleaved and interlined with these additions and corrections, or its equivalent. An equivalent would be, for instance, separate sheets, or interleaved sheets, of manuscript and notes, supplementing a copy of the Quarto, and unintelligible except with line-by-line reference to it. It would come to the same thing whether they had such separate sheets or a Quarto treated as indicated. But—and here is the crucial difficulty—Quarto 6 did not exist until six years after the death of Shakspere of Stratford. It was printed in 1622 and varied little from the earlier Quartos. It had, however, these printer's errors which identify it as the text on which the Folio is founded. It would seem, therefore, either that the view of the Cambridge Editors that the Folio is Quarto 6 'expanded' by the author himself needs reconsideration, or that the author of *Richard III* was not Shakspere of Stratford—which, it must be confessed, would more than throw a doubt on his authorship of the plays generally. There is, of course, a third possibility—that Shakspere of Stratford did not die when he was supposed to die. I believe some Baconians hold a parallel view concerning the received date of Bacon's death.

Sir Sidney Lee's view, if I understand him, is different. He holds that the perfect play existed from the beginning, and that the Quartos are versions abbreviated for stage purposes. This might be a pos-

sible, though, even then, hardly a probable view, if we merely had to deal with a 'cut' of 193 lines—Mr. Puff suffered from such—but there are some 2,000 minor changes which, in the opinion of the critics, constitute altogether a great improvement in the Folio, as compared with the Quarto. Conversely these 2,000 changes would have been for the worse in the Quarto, as compared with the perfect original manuscript of Sir Sidney Lee's imagination. Can we conceive anyone taking so much senseless trouble? The view seems hardly worth considering.

Is there a solution that is consistent with the Stratford authorship? I can think of only one; and that is, unfortunately, not consistent with commonsense; but as it is just within the limits of possibility, however far removed from probability, we will examine it. It may be suggested from the orthodox side that although Sir Sidney Lee's idea of a perfect play from the beginning, of which the Quartos were degenerations, is untenable, Shakspere of Stratford may, shortly before his death, have rewritten the play, and the enlarged and amended manuscript may have remained. This, we may be asked to believe, the 1623 editors had before them. Then, how to account for the reproduction in the Folio of the printer's errors in the Quarto? We may imagine, since we may imagine what we please, either that they interleaved and interlined the Quarto with the 193 new lines, and the 2,000 emendations—an emendation, on the average, to every other line—or, as before suggested, they used, as an equivalent, separate sheets elaborately correlated with the Quarto text, showing where the 193 new lines should be inserted, and the 2,000 emendations in the sheets connected up with corresponding erasures in the text—a proceeding calculated to drive the printer crazy; and, in view of the fact that they had the complete and correct manuscript to print from, if they chose, either plan would argue a near approach to lunacy on the part of the editors. Still it does, just

within the bounds of possibility, account for the facts. Assume universal idiocy, said Stuart Mill, and you can account for anything. In this case less idiocy will serve the turn; it is only necessary to assume that of the editors. I suppose the orthodox will assume it.

Now, suppose the alterations and additions made by a living writer. What was before idiotic becomes the most natural thing in the world. To interleave and interline is a rational proceeding when it saves the writing of from 30,000 to 40,000 words. In any case a dramatist rewriting a play would not shut up the existing book and start afresh; he would consider it as it stood, line by line. Sometimes he would add a line or two, sometimes a long passage. In one place (Act IV, scene 4) some fifty lines, an important speech of the King's, are inserted, and, one would say with the Cambridge Editors, greatly to the improvement of the scene. The saving of work, especially in the case of the emendations, would be enormous compared with complete rewriting. It would also be more easy and convenient. How would it be done?

Well, if I were a convinced Baconian, which I am not, I would tell the world exactly how Bacon did it. The publisher's shelves were loaded with copies of the just printed 1622 Quarto. Bacon would bespeak a couple. (He would want two because the leaves would be printed on both sides.) The printing was too close for direct interlining, so he would set a couple of handy men—it would want a little thinking out; but Bacon was himself a handy man, and would show them exactly how to do it—to cut up the sheets into lines (pairs of lines would meet the case), and paste the cuttings on fresh sheets of paper, leaving, say, half-an-inch between the pastings—not a highly paid task. Bacon then would erase and write over (or under) in the usual way; and there would be nothing for the printers to do except something they were quite used to. As to the enlargements, Bacon himself would cut through the spaces, and paste them in.

To sum up; it would really seem that the evidence under this head against the Shaksperian authorship of the play gets uncommonly near to demonstration.

NOTE.—Mr. J. T. Looney has lately advanced the claims of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, to the authorship of the Plays, with, I think, greater assurance than can belong to such doubtful matter. Oxford died in 1604, nineteen years before the date of the First Folio: so that the difficulties in the case of Shakspere of Stratford arising from the facts of *Richard III* are magnified in the case of de Vere. Perhaps Mr. Looney is dealing with these. Part of this section appeared in the March No. of the *National Review* for this year: and I have to thank the Editor for permission to reproduce it.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

GREAT, not to say violent, efforts have been made to connect localities mentioned in the Plays with Stratford-on-Avon—not once with complete or undoubted success. They contain, of course, no mention of, or any allusion to, Stratford itself. Only once is the scene laid in Warwickshire at all, by name. 'How now, mad wag,' says Falstaff, 'what dost thou in Warwickshire?'; and this only on the march, when Falstaff is leading his ragamuffins through Warwickshire into Shropshire. Gloucester and the 'Cotsalls' are again and again mentioned by name: and Gloucestershire and the Cotteswold country stand out unequivocally, and are of the essence, in scene after scene; in strong contrast to the few and doubtful references to Warwickshire. If we read the Plays without preconceptions we should conclude that their author was much more interested in Gloucestershire than Warwickshire.

Whenever the task is to handle the evidence so as to connect the great dramatist with Stratford-on-Avon, we naturally turn to the 'master-artificer.' Sir Sidney Lee's treatment of the Christopher Sly episode in *The Taming of the Shrew* well illustrates his courageous methods. 'Shakespeare,' he says, 'admits into this induction' (the induction of *The Taming of the Shrew*) 'a number of literal references to Stratford and his native county'; (*native* county seems casually let fall, but nothing, as we shall see, is casual in the work of this artist). Sly says he is 'old Sly's son of Burton Heath'; and that he can call to witness 'Marian Hacket the fat ale-wife of Wincot.' Let us take the last first. Our author tells us there are

three Wincots in Warwickshire, and a 'good claim' has been set up for each as the scene of Sly's exploits; which seems a liberal allowance of good claims for one individual incident. He decides in favour of Wincot in the parish of Quinton. He tells us that it is a very small hamlet, and we welcome for once a statement of his with which we can thoroughly agree; for he goes on to describe it as 'consisting of a single farm-house' —quite the smallest hamlet, one would say, that is or has been. Still, a hamlet is a hamlet, and, as such, more likely to harbour a fat ale-wife than a single farm-house would be: so a hamlet it is. But here the biographer is met by a cross-wind. Warwickshire tradition—and who is he that he should treat a Warwickshire tradition disrespectfully?—shows a consensus in favour of Wilnecote, near Tamworth, pronounced and written Wincot, and famous for ale about the time of Shakspere. And now we see the virtue of 'his native county.' Tamworth is on the extreme edge of the native county, within an ace of being in Staffordshire, and some 33 miles as the crow flies from the native town. Now, in such a case, what shall an investigator, who can only see Stratford when he looks at a map, do? Sir Sidney Lee is at no loss. He has a solution, and a solution that would not have occurred to everybody. Shakespeare made a medley of the two; or, in Sir Sidney Lee's own more dignified language, 'he consciously invested the home of Kit Sly and Kit Sly's hostess' (apparently both inhabited the one house constituting the hamlet) 'with characteristics of Wilnecote as well as of the hamlet near Stratford.' But now comes the master-stroke, if it is not invidious to single out one where there are so many—'Burton Heath,' he exclaims, 'is Barton-on-the-Heath, the home of Shakespeare's aunt, Edmund Lambert's wife, and of her sons.' No 'ifs' or 'ans,' not even a 'doubtless'; this is absolute; a thing not to be questioned or gainsaid. And yet to anyone who can see other places on the map of England beside

Stratford, a place called Burton is not undiscoverable, moreover one third of the distance of Stratford from the Tamworth Wincot, and a heath country; and it has the advantage of not violating the Folio text. Whether it was famous for its ale or not, I have no means of knowing: but if it was not, it ought to have been. At any rate we know now what is Sir Sidney Lee's idea of a 'number of literal references,' *viz.* two in all, and those extremely doubtful. These, he considers, singularly precise. They may be. All things are comparative.

In 2 Henry IV 5, 1, as we now have it, Davy says, 'I beseech you, Sir, to countenance William Visor, of Wincot, against Clement Perkes of the Hill.' Folios and Quartos read *Woncot* and *Woncote*. Reed, having, I suppose, Stratford in his eye, could make nothing of this, so he calmly altered it to Wincot; and modern editors followed their leader. Madden, however, after, as it is said, satisfying himself that the village of Woodmancote was formerly and locally called *Woncot* (probably pronounced *Wuncot*) was for restoring the text. I have not tested this; but of one thing I think we may assure ourselves; that the rustic of 300 years ago did *not* call it Woodmancote. The district is full of abbreviated names: and he seems never to have used three syllables when two would serve his turn. Sir Sidney Lee, very properly, would restore Woncot. He also tells us, quite correctly, that Justice Shallow's house, being in Gloucestershire, was in 'a county which touched the boundaries of Stratford.' All of which is verbally and literally true. But this very careful writer does not tell us that Woncot, or Woodmancote, was quite a long way from those boundaries, being, in fact, close to that Cotswold town, Dursley. All the evidence seems to show that Shallow's house was in the neighbourhood of this Woncot, which was by no means near the boundaries of Stratford—being at a distance of 48 miles as the crow flies. But *is* it not strange,

how perversely coincidences point to Bacon? No doubt, as Sir George Greenwood says, that way madness lies. Yet facts are facts, and it is a fact that Bacon had large property in the Cotswold district, that is to say, neighbouring the Woncot of the text: and he probably knew Gloucestershire and the 'Cotsals,' almost as well as Shakspere of Stratford knew Warwickshire. These coincidences remind one of what happened in the early days of geology when Bible-Christians believed that Satan himself had put the fossils where the geologists would find them, in order to disturb faith in the date and order of creation as revealed. Has the same old Sower of Tares devised these Baconian coincidences in order to shake orthodox Shakesperean faith? Who shall say?

SPEDDING AND THE BACONIAN THEORY

SPEDDING knew *Shakespeare's* work better than most students of literature, and Bacon's better than any. It would therefore appear befitting to accept his judgment on this question of Bacon's possible authorship of the Plays as nearly, if not quite, final. I cannot call to mind whether that judgment was expressed anywhere in his published writings, but I happen to know what it was when expressed privately in conversation. In a word, it was that the thing was impossible and even ridiculous.

When a man of very exceptional powers, quite able to make his own great mark in philosophy and independent literature, spends his life in endeavouring to obtain worthy appreciation for a long departed man of genius, holding up for admiration one whose memory had for generations been a mark for obloquy and libel, we must, and we do, accept his work not only with respect but with deference. Such is the relation between Spedding and Bacon, and such is the motive of Spedding's great work. If there is any general criticism of the hero-worshipper's treatment of the hero to be made, it is that he carries a virtue to excess, and, as a result, fails of his effect on the world at large. He is, from this point of view, too restrained. He admires, but his admiration is very much left to be inferred : it is covertly conveyed rather than openly expressed. He is so consistently judicial that the strong feeling that lies behind is imperfectly communicated.

So much for general criticism; and from this it will be understood that any special criticism that it is found necessary to make will be criticism that is compatible

with the profoundest respect. Now in Spedding's account of Bacon there is the strangest omission. I fancy if one were estimating a man of one's acquaintance, next to points of fundamental morality and kindly, or unkindly, temper, one would put his sense of humour. In Bacon's case, almost every conversational saying that has been preserved contains a jest; we know from Ben Jonson that Bacon's otherwise supreme perfection of speech was liable to be marred by the uncontrollable jest—and it is quite unlikely that Jonson himself was over-fastidious in a matter of that kind. We have hints that the jest was not always of the most decorous; which would not surprise those who think that Bacon wrote the plays. Of all this, this exaggerated and irrepressible quality in Bacon, no appreciation is to be found from beginning to end of Spedding's seven volumes. He cannot have been unaware of the vista that that one short sentence of Jonson's opens up; but, apparently, he so disliked what it revealed that he shut his eyes.

Was Spedding himself deficient in a sense of humour, putting him out of sympathy with the humorous in Bacon, which was of that description that occasionally explodes in farce?[1] I cannot say: but this I think I *can* say, that there is no gleam in those seven volumes of the *Letters and Life*, or, with the exception of a sort of grim humour in the way he wipes the floor with Macaulay, in the *Evenings with a Reviewer*. The only positive touch is in a title—'Reviews, and Discussions, Literary, Political, and Historical, *not relating to Bacon*.' (My italics.)

I believe that this defect of humour and of sympathy with humour once led him to a wrong critical judgment. In his account of the *Gesta Graiorum* he prints the speeches of the Six Counsellors in his largest type, which means with Spedding

[1] Once when Bacon went to see the galleries of Lord Arundel, where were ranks of nude statues of gods and goddesses, he threw up his hands, exclaiming 'The Resurrection!' In another connection we hear how he jeered and flouted at his gout.

that this portion is undoubted Bacon: but he prints the *Articles of the Order* in small type, and even makes a sort of apology for printing them at length when he is convinced that Bacon had no hand in them. Why did he think this? Solely, I believe, because they are too farcically comic; and he could not, or would not, conceive Bacon playing the fool, 'admirable' though the 'fooling' were. There are items as humorous as, and not more decorous than, might be expected from a possible author of the Plays. Of Bacon's 'wildly-witty' humour there can be no manner of doubt; but there was a blind spot on Spedding's retina. I suggest that this incapacitated him as a judge of this particular question.

THE ELIZABETHANS' DIFFICULTY

THE attitude of the Elizabethans towards the Plays is so important: its recognition so essential to the right understanding of the problem of authorship; the facts so demonstrable, and yet so subversive of orthodox beliefs, that I make no excuse for dwelling upon the point at greater length. Of the facts there is no doubt whatever; and I think as little as to the cause. Never was a greater revolution in the literary world than that effected, though not in his own lifetime, by the author of the Plays. He asked no less of his audience than that they should turn their backs on all that had gone before; on all that they had been accustomed to expect and admire in drama. The contemporary dramatist dealt with types: he could also deal with monsters. Shakespeare claimed attention for individuals—for individual men and women, with differences and peculiarities of character as subtle and as varied as those we ourselves have to deal with in actual life. Intensified characters, no doubt; more humorous, more pathetic, grander, more terrific, but as individual and as various. Which of Ben Jonson's characters lives for us, as a real person we have known lives for us? My instinctive answer would be, Not one—Not one man lives in our consciousness, as, for instance, Enobarbus in *Antony and Cleopatra* lives for us—I purposely take subordinate characters —not one woman as Maria in *Twelfth Night.* The Elizabethans could not enter into these subtleties, rather they were repelled by them, as Ben Jonson was repelled; for this, I feel sure, was one of the notes of discord audible in the undertone of his

repulsion. And we may be pretty certain that what repelled Ben Jonson would repel Jonson's admirers—in other words, the whole contemporary theatrical world. Perhaps, however, in their case I ought to say indifference rather than repulsion; for I doubt the ordinary play goer taking enough interest in Shakespeare's delineations to be repelled by them. All they knew or cared about was the acting quality of a play. From this point of view there were none better; so Shakespeare was popular. He was popular even while Jonson was ridiculing him.

In passing I would note that there is a curious exception to Shakespeare's subtlety and variety of delineation. He evidently knew very little about children. With the exception of Arthur, whom tragic circumstances place apart, all his children are alike, they are all boys, and have only one idea among them. Whether it is Mamillius, son of Leontes, or the children of Macduff, or a page of Falstaff, the treatment is always the same. Shakespeare's infinite variety finds limitation here. To me all his children are objectionable; insufferable little malaperts, trying to score off their elders and betters. Yet how charming would have been his pictures of boys and girls had he known boys and girls; which he clearly did not. So he imagines a type; and it is not a very nice or very natural type.

In parenthesis also I would note that the want of contemporary appreciation applies in full force only to the Plays. In the poems and sonnets there is nothing revolutionary, nothing for which the minds of the Poet's contemporaries were not more or less prepared; and here we do find contemporary appreciation; such, for instance, as we have found in Meres. Also, as I have observed before, so far as Ingleby's *Century of Prayse* justifies its title at all, it is as regards the Poems and Sonnets.

All this and more applies to Shakespeare's humour. One cannot but imagine he was speaking from his

own depressing experience in that melancholy saying of his—'When a man's good wit is not seconded by the forward child understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room.' Compare with any Falstaff scene this of Ben Jonson's. It is the famous one in *The Poetaster*, in which Jonson is ridiculing some of his contemporaries, and apparently Shakespeare among them, for their new and outlandish Latin-derived words. Crispinus is brought up before the Court, and an emetic administered to him—

> TIBULLUS: How now, Crispinus?
> CRISPINUS: Oh, I am sick.
> HORACE: A basin, a basin, quickly; our physic works.
>
> Crispinus then throws up what Budge (or was it Toddy?) called a 'whole floor-full' of unassimilated foreign words: *retrograde, reciprocal, incubus, prompt,* &c.—the scene running to at least 100 lines.

For such unredeemed farce our generation has at most a smile, and an indulgent smile at that; but it could make the Elizabethans rock with laughter. For *their* taste, since they put Ben Jonson first, no farce could be too broad. But that being so, how is it possible they could have appreciated Falstaff—Falstaff, for instance, discoursing on sherris-sack and the lack of its ennobling effects in Prince John? Still less how could they have tasted the delicate flavour of Rosalind's 'But what talk we of fathers with a man like Orlando in the forest?'[1]—I quote the first subtleties that occur to me. The taste was not developed for at least two hundred years. It was impossible for them, as it is impossible for us, to laugh at both: only *they* laughed with Jonson, while *we* laugh with Shakespeare. Shakespeare's humour fell flat, with a flatness that must have struck its author 'more dead than a great reckoning in a little room.' Shakespeare, whoever he was, must have died a disappointed man,

[1] That Germans should understand Shakespeare's humour has always seemed to me most improbable.

his wit, as his highest flights of imagination, unappreciated, misconceived; 'to sleep' as he must have thought 'without his fame,' leaving as it must have seemed to him, 'a dead unprofitable name.' Let us hope that he knows somewhere what *we* think of him, and what a glorious resurrection there has been for the seeming dead.

POSITIVE EVIDENCE FOR BACON.

IF Bacon wrote the plays, there is a special reason why the evidence for it should not be found in the place where we should most naturally look for it, *viz.* in his private correspondence. It is quite understood that his political and legal position made public acknowledgment of anything connected with the theatre impossible. That must be kept secret. But if he was the author, one would say that the fact must appear in his private papers and correspondence: and on that assumption no doubt it did. But for reasons known only to himself Bacon's correspondence has come down to us most carefully edited. When alluding, for instance, to some letter under discussion, it is introduced by Spedding with a remark of this kind: 'With, as usual, all personal references deleted.' Bacon was twenty years married; yet there is no allusion of an intimate or domestic character to his wife in the whole time covered. Perhaps he desired to go down to posterity as the statesman and philosopher, and in no other character. If so, I am bound to say I sympathise with him—looking, of course, at the matter from the opposite point of view. I intensely dislike having thrust upon me trivial details concerning the life of, say, a poet that I admire, even when they are morally unexceptionable: so that I, for one, find Bacon's practice intelligible. Once only, so far as I know (always on the same assumption), did he make what seems a slip in his writing, or an oversight in his editing. It was when John Davies, himself a poet, was following King James, lately crowned, to Scotland. Bacon wrote to him, asking a favour; and

enforced his request by expressing the hope that Davies would be 'good to concealed poets.' Spedding says he can make nothing of this. The last thing he can conceive being that Bacon should claim to be a poet, he proceeds to exclude the incident from his consciousness. But Bacon does claim to be a poet. The words clearly refer to himself, and make nonsense on any other supposition: so there we have it in black and white: he wrote himself a 'concealed poet.' I quite see how unlikely a thing it was for him to do: but when a thing is done and there is no doubt about it, that becomes irrelevant. We know that Bacon said it, we can only guess at his motives; and compared with the importance of the fact it is of little moment whether we guess rightly or wrongly. But, knowing that he said it, what, as unprejudiced and rational inquirers, ought we to do about it? Shall we, like Spedding, treat it as a thing of little meaning, and proceed to ignore it? That, I trust, will not satisfy us. Or shall we take Bacon at his word?—which, by the bye, does not prove that he really *was* a poet, concealed or manifest, but only that he thought he was. This again narrows itself down to the point, was Bacon the sort of man to think himself a poet when he was nothing of the kind? There are many such: the twentieth century seems to be producing a plentiful crop. I cannot carry it further; except, perhaps, to say that I personally do not think that he belonged to that numerous class. As he said he was a poet, and a concealed poet, I feel convinced he was a poet, but that for reasons that seemed to him sufficient he did not wish it known. I am obliged to go a little further, and hold that either his poetical works are lost, or have come down to us under another name. Spedding had painted for himself a well-defined and complete picture of his hero, but it contained no trace of humour, and scarcely a hint of poetry. He would not spoil his mental portraiture by admitting those incongruous features. Bacon's seriousness was not so

unrelieved as Spedding's. Serious philosophy and serious politics exhausted Spedding's picture: but they did not exhaust Bacon's moods.

There are not wanting contemporary allusions to Bacon as a poet, and Aubrey, a generation later, makes the curious statement that Bacon was 'a good poet, but concealed'; and yet Aubrey can hardly have seen, or had access to, Bacon's very private letter to Davies. For me, Bacon's own reference wants no corroboration. Beyond this letter the real positive evidence consists of parallel passages, seeming to amount to something beyond possible coincidences, in the Plays, and in the works of Bacon, especially in his *Promus of Formularies*.[1] I quote what is really a small selection of the parallels that have been noted, in an appendix.

As to the magnitude, the dimensions, so to speak, of Bacon's intellect, there would seem to be no disagreement. Macaulay in his monstrous essay yet said that Bacon's was 'the most exquisitely-constructed intellect that has ever been bestowed on any of the children of men.' Hume, 'the great glory of literature in this island during the reign of James, was my Lord Bacon.' Pope, 'Lord Bacon was the greatest genius that England, or perhaps any other country ever produced.' Addison, 'One does not know which to admire most in his writings, the strength of reason, force of style, or brightness of imagination.' Hallam, 'The wisest, greatest of mankind.'

So that the mass, volume, quantity of Bacon's intellect is universally conceded. It is conceded equal or second only to Shakespeare's. No other approaches these two, if they are two. It follows that so far as

[1] Bacon's *Promus* occupies 93 pages in Durning Lawrence's reprint. It is made up of striking passages from books that he seems to wish to remember for their own value, and, in addition, of numberless phrases and sayings that he seems to intend to use. Many of these appear specially suited for dramatic work, and a considerable proportion, as will be seen from the Appendix of parallel passages, appear in the Plays. Sir Sidney Lee says, not more than in other dramatists, but refrains from quoting. The reader will judge.

magnitude is concerned, *negative evidence against the one is positive evidence for the other.* Two only intellects, as known by their works, were vast enough. Show Shakspere, the reputed author, impossible, there remains only Bacon. Show Bacon impossible, only Shakspere remains. It is this last demonstration that Mr. J. M. Robertson has undertaken : and for the purpose he has evolved a Bacon out of his own consciousness as different from the real Bacon as an *ad hoc* study is likely to differ from a large and comprehensive study. He has evolved a *critical* Bacon. The epithet is almost ludicrous to the 'disinterested' student of the life and character. The *Novum Organum* is a monument of vast, quasi-poetical general conceptions, supported by a huge mass of particulars, often—one might almost say generally—remarkable for their uncritical quality. Had Bacon possessed by nature even an average critical impulse, it is hardly too much to say that a great part, perhaps even the greater part, of those illustrative details would have disappeared; or, at least, would not have come down to us in their present state—a state so strangely showing the lack of a critical censorship. Bacon was by nature an impulsive, headlong writer and speaker. As a speaker he was aware of his tendency to rush *in medias res* before he had prepared the minds of his hearers. He actually made a note to remind himself to correct this defect. I am not saying that Bacon, with his universal powers of mind, could not on occasion become critical. But there is no contrast with Shakespeare in this. For, as I have shown, Shakespeare could be critical too. But the *Novum Organum* tells us that the critical impulse was no more natural to Bacon than to Shakespeare. Then again, Mr. Robertson calls Shakespeare lyrical, as though in that respect he was, on the very face of it, the diametrical opposite of Bacon; as though to attribute such a quality to Bacon was manifestly absurd. But I have quoted a passage from Bacon which, though in

the form of prose, has, I venture to say, a lyrical beauty unsurpassed and possibly unequalled by anything Shakespeare ever wrote. I say possibly unequalled, because it has that last supreme quality, the quality of moral beauty, which is practically ruled out in drama—perhaps because a character of flawless and superlative goodness does not lend itself to dramatic portraiture. I need hardly comment on Mr. Robertson's denial to Bacon of the 'impassioned and poetic.' I am content to leave him to Shelley, who has discomfited him by anticipation.

So that, in criticizing Mr. Robertson, we have incidentally found that Bacon not merely had the mass and dimensions of intellect necessary to produce the plays, but that he had also some of the peculiar and essential qualities. What others ought we to find? Well, in the first place, humour. It is curious that Mr. Robertson, in giving us a sort of catalogue of Shakespeare's characteristics, omits the humorous. Now, Shakespeare's wit and humour are as unrivalled as his sense of the sublime: his comedy is as great as his tragedy. Of course, it may be that this is a mere oversight of Mr. Robertson's. It may be that the humorous affects him less intimately than the tragic and the beautiful. It may be—and this is the preferable view—that, as he is giving us a list of qualities in which the one writer excelled, and the other failed, he logically omits this quality; knowing, as a student should know, that it was abnormally developed in both. Yet of this all-significant trait in Bacon we should scarcely have had an inkling but for some half-dozen incidental, parenthetical words of Ben Jonson: since all those other personal friends who have paid their tribute of appreciation, seem so preoccupied with the greatness and goodness of Bacon's character that his excessive use of the humorous escapes mention. It is tragic to think how nearly we missed the knowledge, and what a difference those few words make in any true estimate of the mind of Bacon.

Of the power of individual characterization so marvellous in Shakespeare Bacon, it is true, has nothing to show. He has written nothing that involves the construction of a character. But in the *re*construction of character he has given evidence of extraordinary power in his history of Henry VII—a history which, as the Baconians point out, curiously and exactly fills the gap in the historical plays of Shakespeare. Here he has directed a piercing glance into the inmost character of the actors; and, in Spedding's judgment, has made what was darkness light for all future historians. As to actual drama we have, of course, no example. We only know that his love for the stage and its business was an ever recurring anxiety to his puritan mother; and that Gray's Inn recognised him as an authority in such matters.

It would therefore seem that an attempt to set up a *reductio ad impossibile* against Bacon on the ground that though in magnitude, in dimensions of height, depth and breadth, his intellect was all-sufficient, yet that by nature it addressed itself to totally different matters from poetry and drama, breaks down. He not only possessed the necessary sum total of power, but he also had, demonstrably, the most salient special qualities; with intimations that he possessed all.

ORTHODOX INEXACTITUDES

THINGS happen over this Shakespeare problem that happen nowhere else, except, perhaps, in the field of theological controversy. There, as here, the vision of acute and trained intellects is liable to become obscured and distorted. Things that appear right and proper to the devotee strike an observer, outside the sphere of influence, as nothing less than serious flaws. Sir Sidney Lee, chief of devotees, has not escaped these effects, and I proceed to give instances of what I can only call 'obliquities of the understanding' and consequent inexactitude in his work, *A Life of Shakespeare*.

The very title recalls one little fiction, small in itself but pervading the whole book, and, whether intentionally or not, important in the effect it is calculated to produce. No matter how the name of the Stratford native is spelt, Shackspere, Shaxper, Shakysper, &c., in the document he is quoting, in Sir Sidney Lee's pages, without notice, it uniformly appears as Shakespeare—*i.e.* as the name appears on the title-pages of the Plays and Poems. The effect is, to that extent, to identify the Shakespeare of the Plays with Shakspere of Stratford, and thus to the same extent to beg the question of identity. In this way the inexpert fail of enlightenment: the fact being that in those days, that is at the date of documents quoted, the very name, Shakespeare, so far as we know, did not exist, but only those forms in which I have shown the first syllable was short, *Shack*, *Shag*, or *Shax*. There is one interesting case in which Sir Sidney seems to be torn by conflicting emotions. In Shakspere's marriage licence to

marry Anne Hathaway the name is spelt *Shagspere;* but, on the day before, another licence was issued to William Shaxpere to marry quite another lady; the names being spelt thus differently. For reasons of his own it is Sir Sidney Lee's object to prove that these were different men (though the mathematical chances against this can be shown to be of the order of thousands to one). But he does not avail himself of the argument from the different spelling. He denies himself this in order to write both *Shakespeare;* the permanent instinct, as in Darwin's profound theory of the origin of the moral sense, prevailing over the temporary impulse. On this occasion the biographer even goes the length of putting 'William Shakespeare' in inverted commas, without a hint that the name in the document at Worcester is William Shaxpere. I cannot explain this. No doubt Sir Sidney Lee with his mental pre-occupation would defend this as a natural, right, and proper thing to do, but I think I am moderate when I call it an inexactitude.

In the matter of dealing with documents in a way that has the effect, whether intended or not, of making them seem to support one theory rather than another, the late Dean Beeching is not blameless; and on one occasion his preoccupation led him, scholar as I suppose he was, into a rather curious blunder. He tells us of a certain Oxford scholar who shared the name of the famous Stratfordian, and who changed it to Saunders, 'quod vile reputatum,' as he said. Dean Beeching says his original name was Shakespeare, but we may be quite sure it was nothing of the kind. The Dean seems to have had Sir Sidney Lee's questionable habit of reducing all these names to a common denominator and spelling them all Shakespeare, whatever he found in original documents. I have not seen the original in this case, and can only judge from internal evidence: but the internal evidence is quite conclusive. It is clear as clear can be that the unfortunate man's name began with a *Shack* syllable. Now *Shack* was a lazy

vagabond, and no wonder the Oxford scholar wished himself well rid of it. If his name had been *Shake*-speare, why want to change it? It is a good-sounding name enough; rather grand than not. This can only be made reasonable by mistranslating *vile*. Canon Beeching translates it 'common.' But *vile* does not mean common in the sense that air is common. *Homo vilis* would mean a worthless fellow, a man of no account, ἀχρήιος ἀνηρ. Besides, imagine a man changing his name because it was *reputed* common. Surely he would have taken means to get at the fact for himself before he took such an unusual step. No, his name was not Shakespeare, but Shacksper or its equivalent in pronunciation. But *is* it not strange that writers of the standard and culture of Dean Beeching and Sir Sidney Lee should take these unusual liberties with documents without a hint that they are not reproducing the originals? Why do they not follow the universally accepted rule to quote documents as they find them? Why should this Shakespeare problem induce in critics a frame of mind unknown in other discussions?

The next instance that I shall give is much more serious, and, at the same time quite comic in its extravagance. It is also a very instructive example of Sir Sidney Lee's method. At p. 500 of the 1915 edition of *The Life* we find this: 'Some misgivings arose *in literary circles soon after* Shakespeare's death (my italics) as to whether he had received appropriate sepulture.' The inset to the page reads 'Shakespeare and Westminster Abbey.' Further on we have, 'The news of Shakespeare's death reached London after the dramatist had been laid to rest amid his own people at Stratford. But men of letters raised a cry of regret that his ashes had not joined those of Chaucer, Spenser, and Beaumont in Westminster Abbey.' Now, taken in their obvious meaning, and as they would be understood by his readers, what do these words imply? They tell us, or seem to

tell us, that as soon as the news of Shakespeare's death had time to reach London there was a general outcry in 'literary circles' that his burial at Stratford was unworthy of his fame; the outcry containing a note of regret that he had not 'received appropriate sepulture' in Westminster Abbey. Without doubt this is the effect of the words. Well, it is at absolute variance with the facts. The literary world of London took not the smallest notice of, or interest in, the death of Shakspere of Stratford. The sole proof that Sir Sidney Lee attempts of his amazing statements, amazing in face of the universal silence that we know followed Shakspere's death, consists in the well known lines of William Basse, written according to Malone and Ingleby, at least six years[1] after Shakspere's death. The object is, of course, the excellent and pious one of glorifying Shakspere, and upholding the orthodox faith; but observe the tissue of the fabric—I had almost said the fabrication. William Basse, the sole voice crying in the wilderness, was a representative literary man of that eminence that, if the index is to be trusted, his name is not to be found in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. He—it would have been to his own amazement—has the honour thrust upon him of representing the whole literary world of London. So that, comparing Sir Sidney Lee's rhetorical statement with fact, we find that 'literary circles' = William Basse; 'soon after' = a number of years; 'men of letters,' one insignificant voice. I commend p. 500 to the attention of any one who would like to judge for himself of the accuracy of the *Times* epithet for this 'master artificer.' Possibly each phrase is just on the border line of truth, but the total effect is well in the region of the untrue.

I add one more instance—it is really two—and with that I must content myself.

[1] Sir Sidney Lee reduces this to 'some three or four years,' but gives no reason for differing from the older authorities. But we notice that at any rate it was a matter of years.

There is, of course, no difficulty in connecting Southampton with Shakespeare. Even if Sir Sidney Lee is right in his confident, but highly debatable, assertion as to references in the Sonnets,[2] it would have no bearing on the problem of authorship. But if proof were forthcoming of any connection between Southampton and Shakspere that would be a different matter; that would constitute a piece of evidence invaluable from the orthodox point of view. Accordingly, Sir Sidney Lee addresses himself to the task, using all the art of which he is such a master. Now there *was* a story afloat which would, if well-founded, have established such a connection; the story that on one occasion Southampton presented Shakspere with £1,000 to buy a piece of land that he had a mind to. The evidence for the story is, as we shall see, all but worthless; but, as arranged by Sir Sidney Lee, it puts on quite a respectable appearance. In his Appendix III he speaks of 'the account given by Sir William D'Avenant, and recorded by Nicholas Rowe, of the Earl's liberal bounty to the poet.' Now I ask, what would the plain man think was the plain meaning of this? The idea conveyed would, I think, be that D'Avenant had given the story by word of mouth, and Rowe had reduced it to writing. At the very least he would imagine that there had been communication between Rowe and D'Avenant, and that Rowe's part in the business was to 'record' what D'Avenant had told him. The plain man might not recall the fact that D'Avenant had been dead for forty years when Rowe produced his record. Failing, however, personal communication, surely he would suppose that Rowe had first-hand authority for D'Avenant's responsibility in the

[2] He specially cites Sonnet CVII, which Beeching, another ardent Shaksperian, finds the most obscure of all the sonnets. Others have thought the reference is to Elizabeth. Sir Sidney speaks as though references to Southampton were clear and undoubted. They would seem to be quite imaginary.

matter. But nothing of the kind. With candour, even amounting to audacity, Sir Sidney Lee refers to p. 197 of his own work. There we find the following sentences, calculated, as one would say, to surprise anyone who happened to read this Appendix first; or who, as is more likely, had forgotten p. 197. On that page we read, 'According to Nicholas Rowe, Shakespeare's first adequate biographer,' (the insinuation here is masterly—the rest is quoted from Rowe). 'There is one instance so singular in the magnificence of this patron of Shakespeare's that if I had not *been assured* that the story was *handed down* by Sir William D'Avenant, who was *probably* very well acquainted with his affairs, I should not have ventured to have inserted': then follows the £1,000 story: the italics are mine. Sir Sidney calls this a 'trustworthy tradition.' He elsewhere calls it 'well-attested.' Let us examine it.

Rowe produced this 'first adequate biography of Shakespeare' in 1709, ninety-three years after the death of Shakspere of Stratford. The adequate biography forms part of Rowe's preface to his edition of the Plays. This preface occupies thirty-nine and a quarter pages, of which about thirty-five consist of criticism of the Plays, the remainder relating to the life of their author. Of this remainder only about two pages—small pages of rather large type—can be called biographical; the rest being, in the opinion of the best and most impartial judges, apocryphal. As it occupies the larger space, we may take the apocryphal first. Here we have the deer-stealing legend; finally exploded, on legal grounds, by Sir G. Greenwood. It further tells how Shakespeare recommended a play of Jonson's to his own company, contemptuously rejected by Gifford; wrote a doggerel epitaph for John Combe; and how he received the £1,000 from Southampton—the subject of this note. These items, though, in a sense, more than adequate, are hardly biography. In the slight attempt at bio-

graphy we hear that John Shakspere, the father, was a wool-stapler and butcher, had a family of ten; how he took his son at a very early age from school to help in the shop ('enlisted him in an effort to restore his decaying fortunes' is Sir Sidney Lee's more dignified phrase); how that William married 'the daughter of one Hathaway'; had three daughters (incorrect): went to London and was employed in lowly offices about the theatre till he distinguished himself by his plays; died and was buried: and that is the entire adequate biography.

But now as to the Southampton story, and the evidence for it. Clearly it struck Rowe as highly improbable. He would not have believed it himself, he tells us, unless he had been assured that it rested on the authority of Sir W. D'Avenant who had 'handed it down,' Sir W. D'Avenant being, in Rowe's belief, very well acquainted with Shakspere's affairs. Whatever his biography may be, Rowe's estimate of probability would seem to have been anything but adequate. D'Avenant was just ten years old when Shakspere died. So far as we know, he had neither at that early age, nor later, any personal relations with Shakspere or Shakspere's family; although he is said to have encouraged the scandalous story as to the authorship of his own being. So that Rowe himself would have given no credence to the Southampton legend but for certain ideas about D'Avenant in which he was plainly mistaken. Sir Sidney Lee, on the other hand, would believe it; although he can be under no illusion as to the facts concerning D'Avenant. From which we may perceive how greatly the faith of Shakspere's last biographer exceeds that of the first.

So much, then, for 'the account given by D'Avenant and recorded by Rowe.' We see how yawning a gulf may be bridged over by the simple expedient of juxtaposition in a sentence. We see also how an adequate biography, shorn of apocrypha,

may consist of less than half-a-dozen items which tell us next to nothing about the man himself. Rowe is the sole authority for this legend, which he got from Betterton the actor, which Betterton may or may not have got from D'Avenant, which Rowe believed on the strength of what Sir Sidney Lee must know to be in all probability a mistake: yet, in the face of all this, Sir Sidney Lee pronounces it trustworthy and well-attested.

Shakspere's money accumulations have always been somewhat difficult to account for. It would not therefore be matter of surprise if it were discovered that he had unsuspected sources of income. In this connection the question naturally arises as to the origin of this story of the Southampton gift of £1,000. How did it originate? It may have been something like this. People got to know that someone had given Shakspere, no doubt for service rendered, £1,000; the name of the donor being a blank and probably a secret. What more natural than to fill up the blank with Southampton's? Was not his name in the dedications of the poems? That would be quite enough for the maker of legends. But after all, the attempt to track a legend to its source is a wild-goose chase. The really interesting thing about it is that we learn what meaning Sir Sidney Lee attaches to such epithets as 'trustworthy' and 'well-attested.' Surely it is a weak case that asks for such advocacy as is exhibited under these heads.

Sir Sidney Lee's figures concerning Shakespeare's income seem to be very deceptive. His object is to prove that it is not, as he says, of 'mysterious origin.' Clearly, the way to prove this is to exhibit the non-mysterious sources as sufficient. To this task he addresses himself. He starts by estimating, on a 'reasonable system of accountancy' the takings of the Globe Theatre, at £3,000 per annum. Malone, writing before the 'Shakespeare Problem' had presented

itself, would, on Sir Sidney Lee's own lines, have put it at £1,800—whether or not on a 'reasonable system of accountancy,' I cannot say: but at any rate he has no obvious axe to grind. This, following Sir Sidney Lee's method of reckoning, reduces the £1,500, that he allots the shareholders, to £900. But Sir Sidney Lee's £1,500 is arrived at by the assumption that the theatre was a cent-per-cent paying concern. If it paid 50 per cent. the shareholders would get £600, and if 25 per cent. £360, as against Sir Sidney's £1,500: making Shakespeare's fourteenth share about £26 instead of £107 that Sir Sidney Lee credits him with. And this seems the more likely figure, inasmuch as the capital value of a share was generally reckoned at not more than one year's takings, from which, I suggest, three-fourths had to be deducted for outgoings; so that a share was sold at from three to four years' profits—a transaction more in accordance with a 'reasonable system of accountancy,' than a sale at the rate of one year's profit—which would, indeed, be almost incredible on any system of accountancy.

SHAKSPERE AND SOUTHAMPTON

CONSIDERING the gulfs that separated the main classes of society in the time of Elizabeth, and especially the vast gulf between the nobles and the despised actor class, one would have thought that if there was one thing more than another, calculated to put a breaking-strain on the faith of the faithful, it would be that item of the creed that affirmed the friendship between Shakspere the actor and Lord Southampton. And one would have thought that the more fully and vitally those divisions were realised, the more difficult would be the acceptance of that article of belief. Now, I imagine that no one has more fully and more exhaustively made his own the conditions of society in Elizabethan times than Sir Sidney Lee himself; yet his faith emerges victorious from the trial. He eagerly and unreservedly subscribes to the dogma, going even further than the immediate necessities of the case and telling of friendships between Shakspere and other habitués of the Court for which, so far as I am aware, no tittle of evidence exists. If an article of faith commends itself by its impossibility, then, no doubt, the matter is explained, especially if dogma asserts what we desire to believe: for, to paraphrase the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the substance of faith is the wish that something may be true; and in the absence of visible grounds of belief, faith is its own evidence. It is under such conditions that faith triumphs. I humbly agree with the inspired writer in the matter of which he is speaking; but whether his dogma is applicable to literary criticism is another question.

Of the friendship with the writer of the Poems, who signs himself Shakespeare—in any case, as we have seen, a *nom-de-plume*—there can be no doubt. This is how the poet addresses the nobleman—I extract a few sentences—'I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your lordship. . . only, if your Honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour.' So far, in the dedication of *Venus and Adonis*. Then we have this with *Lucrece*. 'The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end . . . What I have done is yours, what I have to do is yours, being part in all I have devoted yours . . . My duty is bound to your Lordship, to whom I wish long life still lengthened with all happiness. Your Lordship's in all duty, William Shakespeare.' I wonder whether there is any other instance of an actor, in those days, sending a copy of verses, with his love, to an Earl! But let us pass that for a moment: we shall see how it is accounted for.

Now looking at these two dedications apart from preconceptions, if that is possible, what should we say of them, judging from style? I think we should say they were written by one gentleman to another, both moving in the same social class, though clearly not of the same grade in that class. We know, as a matter of fact, that there was a very small section in that class of the same grade as Southampton. He was one of the most powerful nobles of the day; and it would be quite in the manner of the time for another gentleman to address a noble like Southampton as his superior, and yet offer him the tribute of his love. But one would say that, except under some strangely exceptional circumstances, only a gentleman born would in those days venture to proclaim love as the feeling with which an Earl has inspired him. Otherwise, that is, barring such exceptional conditions, we seem to hear this gay young lordship's reception of

the message: 'This actor-man must be mad. Sends me his love, doth he? He will devote me his idle hours. Will he so, indeed? A murrain on him!' His idle hours. Yes, Shakspere must have been pretty well occupied. Actor-managers, such as Shakspere was, are busy men. Theatres are not managed without hard work; to say nothing of conning and rehearsing parts. Money-making, too, which we are told was his chief preoccupation, is an uphill struggle, especially when one starts from nothing. This is the sort of employment from which the actor-manager will snatch idle hours (!) in which to honour a great nobleman. It would be a poor compliment unless the recipient happened to know that the writer was deeply engaged on important matters. Indeed, such a bêtise is inconceivable unless he was actually so engaged, and knew that Southampton knew it. Nothing else could explain it.

The orthodox explanation is that Shakspere, the actor, was recognised as a giant overtopping all his fellows, and that ordinary rules did not apply to his case. The proudest were proud to bow before his transcendent genius. Now, putting aside the general question of contemporary appreciation of Shakespeare, the dates here are troublesome. The date of *Venus and Adonis* we know: it was 1593. The first Shakespeare play that showed the inimitable Shakespeare quality was *Romeo and Juliet*. *Romeo and Juliet* was first published in 1597; but, with regard to its production, all we can say with any approach to certainty is that the date was between 1591 and 1596. Malone, on the only external evidence we have to guide us, puts the date of production at 1596. There is no evidence of earlier production; and, on the whole, it is extremely improbable that Southampton could have seen *Romeo and Juliet* performed. On the strength of what seems to me the flimsiest evidence, Sir Sidney Lee puts it at 1592. Others, relying on the casual expression of the gossiping old Nurse,

have put it as early as 1591; but in reality we have no guidance. The dedications themselves tell us that Southampton had not seen the poems that are dedicated to him. There is nothing left us but the possibility that he had seen some of the sonnets, believed to have been handed about in manuscripts before publication—a scant foundation on which to build the nobleman's friendship for the actor. Even if Southampton had been gifted with a critical intelligence above all his contemporaries, even if we credit him at the age of twenty, and in 1593, with an appreciative judgment that such a man as Camden had not attained to in 1615, we are still confronted with the fact that the works on which to exercise that intelligence did not exist. Shakespeare, so far as we know, had produced nothing worthy of Shakespeare, nothing that, as Sir Sidney Lee admits, was beyond the range of others, his contemporaries. And the miracle, the monstrosity (for it is no less) of the friendship between actor and nobleman remains unexplained.

One word more on the general subject of contemporary appreciation, the importance of which cannot be overrated. Ben Jonson and Grant White between them give us a list of some five and twenty names of eminent men living in Shakespeare's time. Not one of these can be put in the witness-box to prove the high estimation in which the works of Shakespeare are supposed to have been held. Sir Sidney Lee has to fall back on such nonentities as Meres and Basse. If I were arguing the case in Court I should, as I have said, call Sir Sidney as my principal witness. Next I should call Dr. Ingleby, who (though later, under temptation like Naaman's, he 'bowed himself in the house of Rimmon') would find it difficult to go back on his published statement that what excites our admiration in Shakespeare was hidden from the men of his own generation. The current explanation, therefore, of the dedications to the *Venus* and the *Lucrece* breaks down, and we find ourselves driven to the only

possible conclusion that the dedicator could not have been Shakspere of Stratford.

As to Sir Sidney Lee's assertion that Shakspere had other courtly friends beside Southampton, so far as I am aware, the only nobleman with whom there is evidence of his having come into personal contact was the Earl of Rutland. The terms on which they associated are instructive and, from this point of view, amusing. The Earl paid Shakspere and his fellow-actor, Burbage, 44/- apiece for making him an *impresa*. Doubtless, as Sir Sidney would say, the two were accommodated in the servants' hall; or, at highest, in the steward's room. If I remember rightly, at the date when this discovery was made, Sir Sidney (then Mr.) Lee wrote to the *Times* claiming this as a proof of the esteem in which Shakspere was held by the aristocracy of the day! How very sure of his public Mr. Lee must have been!

SIR SIDNEY LEE AND THE BACONIAN HYPOTHESIS

IN all, Sir Sidney Lee has devoted about 4½ pages to the discussion of this subject. Needless to say he has nothing but contempt and ridicule for it. Any stone is good enough. With his vastly superior knowledge of Elizabethan literature he does not share Mr. J. M. Robertson's fanciful estimate of Bacon's style compared with Shakespeare's: nor, again, does he adopt the attitude of Prof. Churton Collins, who confesses that any view differing from that of the orthodox is so repulsive to him that he cannot even consider it. Sir Sidney Lee makes at least a show of considering. I cannot enter on the whole controversy though I have indirectly treated it at some length; but one or two minor points in Sir Sidney Lee's contribution to the discussion present themselves.

He says (p. 654) 'Such authentic examples of Bacon's effort to write verse prove beyond all possibility of contradiction that he was incapable of penning any of the poetry ascribed to Shakespeare. *His translation of Certain Psalms into English Verse* (1625) convicts him of inability to rise above the level of clumsy doggerel.' Now I cannot call to mind any passage in Sir Sidney Lee's works in which he speaks as a judge or as a lover of poetry—which, indeed, shows that he took any interest in poetry as poetry; and therefore the passages that I have quoted from Bacon's Psalms which, I feel confident, will appeal to lovers of poetry as rising far above doggerel, clumsy or otherwise, may not appeal to him. I pass this: it is the general proposition that interests me, the proposition that anyone who wrote doggerel

psalms could never rise above doggerel. It is a rash, a headlong assertion. A moment's pause would have reminded him that Milton wrote psalms, doggerel psalms; more psalms and worse doggerel than Bacon's; and, moreover, psalms never rising above doggerel, as, whatever impression they produce on Sir Sidney Lee, Bacon's undoubtedly do; and that in quite sustained passages. So, in proving to his own satisfaction, and, no doubt, convincingly to the already convinced, that Bacon could not by any possibility have written great poetry, he has incidentally proved that Milton could not have written Lycidas.

MIRACLES

MIRACLES, viewed in a certain aspect, are like the fancy waistcoat of the proverb: there is no arguing about them. *You* admire a particular waistcoat pattern. I do not. There the matter ends. You believe in a certain miracle. I see no sufficient reason for that particular belief. We get no further. This is not to say that there is no waistcoat that I admire, or that there is no miracle that I believe in: only that in these particulars our tastes and beliefs differ. Especially do I demur to unnecessary miracles. Thus the orthodox school calls in aid a miracle to explain the wide and precise knowledge and learning to which the Plays bear witness. Shakspere of Stratford, according to these, displays knowledge of the world and learning that Shakspere of Stratford could not have acquired except by miracle. What miracle? we ask. The miracle of genius, they reply. I admit the genius, but ask again, what kind of genius? Even the Shakespeare of the Plays had not all kinds of genius. He shows no signs, for instance, of military genius. What was his kind of genius? I find it in his sublime and subtle imagination; in his sense of beauty; his sense of the ludicrous; his dramatic characterisation; his power of expression that made words the willing, one might almost say the ardent, ministers of his thought and passion. But nowhere do I find signs of native acquisitive power of an equally abnormal quality. Simply looking at the Plays, and not regarding the question of authorship, I find miracles of imagination and beauty, such as no other presents me

with : but not such miracles of knowledge and learning. I find nothing abnormal here; nothing that I do not find in others. Nay, he was immeasurably surpassed by others. A Scaliger, a Casaubon, a Samuel Johnson, men born to 'devour whole libraries,' leave him out of sight. No doubt a genius such as Shakespeare's will even in these respects exceed the average, even greatly exceed it, but it will not place him among the pre-eminent in acquisitive powers. In a multitude of things miraculous, I see no sign of this particular miracle; and miracles are not to be easily assumed. *Miracula non fingo* should be the blazon of the critic. And this is to be remembered : a genius may be born with imagination, but no genius is born with knowledge. Knowledge can only be acquired in the ordinary way. All we can say is that one man will acquire it more easily, and retain it more perfectly, than another. The process is the same, though more rapid and more perfect in one case than another : but the history of Shakspere of Stratford seems to rule out the process. At any rate this will be admitted, that if the question is between two possible authors, and in the one case a miracle is required to account for the facts, and in the other not, the presumption is in favour of the non-miraculous production. As a matter of fact even the early plays show *experience*, and no miracle can give experience. Experience must be lived.

THE MANNINGHAM STORY

THERE is one, and, as Sir Sidney Lee tells us only one contemporary anecdote of Shakspere as actor. It is known as the Manningham story. Obviously, from its unique character it should be scanned word by word and syllable by syllable for any light it may shed on the character of Shakspere, and the estimation in which he was held by the world at large; and, especially, on his connection with the authorship of the plays. John Manningham was a barrister-at-law of the Middle Temple: his diary was published by the Camden Society. The story is the reverse of decorous, but, as the sole contemporary source of such information, and it is difficult to conceive a motive for its invention, it must be given. Under date 13th March, 1601, he makes the following entry:

> Upon a time when Burbage played Richard Third there was a citizen gone so far in liking with him that before she went from the play she appointed him to come that night unto her by the name of Richard the Third. Shakespeare, overhearing their conclusion, went before, was entertained, and at his game ere Burbage came. Then message being brought that Richard the Third was at the door, Shakespeare caused return to be made that William the Conqueror was before Richard the Third. Shakespeare's name William.

Now, Manningham was a man of culture, and moreover a playgoer. A few weeks before this entry he had been to see *Twelfth Night*, and yet he does not seem to have identified the actor of the anecdote with the author of that play. I find it very interesting to notice that what struck him most in *Twelfth Night*

was not the exquisite characterisation of Maria, Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, but the ingenious device of the letter. It is as I have said. Even in the case of an educated man like Manningham, the play is not recognised, as we recognise it, as the work of unequalled genius; it is just a clever and amusing piece. It is for Manningham about on the level of a modern Revue. Probably he was not interested in, possibly he did not know, the name of the author. Plays were acted before they were printed: they were produced by the gross: sometimes by two or three, sometimes by even half-a-dozen playwrights working together against time. The names were unimportant. With perhaps some exceptions, as in the case of the classic Ben Jonson, plays were scarcely regarded from the point of view of literary merit. The output was something enormous, like the output of the modern novel, which, in fact, they replaced. At any rate there is no sign that Manningham identified the Shakespeare of the anecdote with the author of *Twelfth Night*, or *Richard III*. William Shakespeare is so little famous or even well-known that he thinks it necessary to tell people his Christian name. Those last words of the entry, 'Shakespeare's name William' (omitted by Sir Sidney Lee) tell a tale. If William Shakespeare was so famous, the entry would be more than superfluous. It is as though after giving an account of the Battle of Naseby the historian should add—'Cromwell's name Oliver.'

This short, sole, contemporary anecdote is in reality singularly informative. In the first place, it seems to tell us exactly what we wanted to know, but only guessed, *viz.* what the Elizabethans looked for in a play, and what they appreciated most in the plays of Shakespeare. Here we have a barrister of the Middle Temple, and therefore, we must suppose, a man above the average intelligence and education, and what chiefly does he find to admire? Nothing, apparently, very particular beyond plot and situation. The typi-

cal Shakespearean wit and humour, at its best in *Twelfth Night*, passes him like the idle wind that he regards not. Then, secondly, light is thrown on the character of Shakspere; something gross and shameless is suggested. It is not so much the immorality as the vulgarity of the amour—'joyless, rayless, unendeared, casual fruition'—that we cannot associate with the man who has drawn Desdemona and Cordelia for us. Lastly, we have a measure of the fame attaching to the name of William Shakespeare even at that comparatively late date. It is not known and has to be explained. For its length we could hardly possess a more illuminating document.

A CURIOSITY

I MUST be allowed to recount a little experience of my own. I am not one to attach too great importance to coincidences: they often happen in a complicated world. Neither am I much impressed by cyphers and cryptograms: but, even so, this experience of mine will be allowed to be curious. For some reason that I have forgotten the number 53 has, for Baconians, a mystic importance attaching to it. The late Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence, an ardent Baconian, a 'whole hogger,' so to speak, following the 53 clue, finds on the 53rd page of the comedies the words 'Hang hog is Latin for Bacon,[1] I warrant you.' On the 53rd page of the histories he finds 'I have a gammon of bacon and two razes of ginger to be delivered as far as Charing-Cross.' Then, Sir Edwin tells us, this is Rosicrucian business and the third instance is the concealed instance and consequently we must, instead of counting forward from the first page, count backward from the last. The last page of the tragedies is or ought to be 399 (it is misprinted 993). Subtracting 53 from 399 he obtains 346; and on page 346 by violent contortions and distortions he succeeds in extracting the word *Pig*. But, of course, the 53rd page from the end is not 346 but 347. Count forward on your fingers, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. The fifth word from the end is not 5 but 6. As this occurred to me I turned to page 347 and received quite a little shock when the

[1] A wretched man named Hogge was being tried for his life by Sir Nicholas Bacon, and claimed relationship with his Judge on the score of the names. Sir Nicholas made the brutal joke that Hog could not claim kinship with Bacon till it was hanged.

very first words that caught my eye were these—'Eight Wild-boars roasted whole at a breakfast.' One remembers how very wild is the wild-boar of Bacon's crest. Well, then I thought, just for experiment, I would count the words from the beginning of the scene, when I experienced another little shock: *Wild-boar* was the 53rd! I may add that the word occurs only this once in Shakespeare. It is what the grammarians call ἅπαξ λεγόμενον.

SIR GEORGE GREENWOOD ON SHAKESPEARE AND SHAKSPERE

MY own object has been to write what can be read at a sitting, or is of that order. Exhaustive treatment is already in existence, and it is pre-eminently to be found in Sir George Greenwood's writings, especially in his books *The Shakespeare Problem Re-stated*, and *Is there a Shakespeare Problem?* These books are full of learning and research—far beyond any to which my notes make pretension—but the learning is relieved by the conversational tone, and often by amusing sallies. Above all they are entirely free from the irritability and rancour so much in evidence in the attacks that have been made upon him—attacks in the last degree ineffectual; no single flaw of the slightest importance in his facts or arguments having been brought home to him; while in numerous instances he has carried successful war into the enemy's camp; and always, as a trained lawyer, has shown a power of handling evidence conspicuously absent in his assailants. Intemperate epithets, except as quotations from his critics, are not to be found in his writings. If my short essays should be the means of exciting in a few minds the desire for more exhaustive information I can assure them that they will find it in an attractive form in the two works whose titles I have quoted here. Sir Sidney Lee unable to refute *The Shakespeare Problem Re-stated* has called it 'pretentious'—I suppose because it is a rather large volume. This from the writer of *A Life of Shakespeare* in 700 pages! How true it is that one man may steal a horse, and another may not look over a wall!

The different methods of the two authors are well seen in their behaviour to one another. Sir George Greenwood treats Sir Sidney Lee with every courtesy. He says, for instance, that the last edition of the *Life* was deservedly received with a chorus of praise. He compares his own action in calling attention to flaws in the work to that of the astronomer whose business it is to investigate spots in the sun. What could be more polite and complimentary? Contrast Sir Sidney Lee's method. He has a short way with dissenters. He dismisses Sir George Greenwood with one offensive epithet. Perhaps he is wise; for have we not heard somewhere the instruction, 'With no case, abuse plaintiff's attorney?' But even if a wise, it is certainly a rude, method.

Sir George Greenwood's books have failed of their effect with the general public, much to the discredit of that public's intelligence. Yet, presumptuous as it may seem, I will not altogether despair of better fortune. It is not recorded that it was the master-bowman of the Syrian army whose arrow found the joint in Ahab's harness, but 'a certain man' who 'drew a bow at a venture.'

CONCLUSION

IN conclusion I wish to summarize the points on which I lay greatest stress, and which I think are certainly established so far as certainty in such a subject is attainable.

(1) The name. I consider it certain, from all the evidence, that the name *Shakespeare*, pronounced as two syllables, the first being *Shake*, was unknown till it appeared on the title-pages of Poems and Plays: that the Warwickshire pronunciation of the first syllable was *Shack*: that the actor was commonly known to his Stratford contemporaries as Shacksper: that *Shakespeare* and especially *Shake-speare* was a nom-de-plume, as Sir George Greenwood has indicated. All this is treated by the leading Shakspereans as a point of great importance, and is vigorously resisted by them.

(2) That, whether we hold, or whether we do not, that Bacon wrote the Plays, his range of style has, in order to prove it impossible, been grotesquely misapprehended and misrepresented by the Shakspere apologists. He would seem to have had all the intellectual qualities, including humour, necessary for the feat. How many, I wonder, of those who take upon themselves to laugh at the idea of the Baconian authorship are aware of the exquisitely lyrical passage I have quoted from the *Philautia* device. How many, who have scoffed at his Psalms are aware that Milton's are more laughable; and, moreover, that Bacon's contain fine passages, which Milton's do not.

(3) That the Shakespeare we know in this twentieth century, the Shakespeare of our wonder and astonishment, was, as Dr. Ingleby truly said (though he tried, unsuccessfully, to unsay it) unknown to the men of

his generation. They appreciated his plots; but the characterisation, the subtle humour, the sublime poetry, were lost upon them. They thought him inferior to others. The evidence for this is overwhelming, indeed so clear and overwhelming that Sir Sidney Lee has thought the best way to deal with it was to ignore it. The positive evidence is strong, but the negative is stronger. A list of twenty of the greatest minds[1] of the age would not contain one who shows appreciation of Shakespeare. It is as though a comet had appeared night after night 'firing the length of Ophiucus huge' and spanning half the heavens, and no one had happened to notice it. Shakespeare was no comet to the Elizabethans.

(4) That Ben Jonson's contradictory utterances are explicable only on the assumption of mental reservations, many and great.

(5) That the friendship as represented to exist between Shakspere the actor and Lord Southampton is a thing incredible: and the suggestion (Sir Sidney Lee) that he had other courtly friends, unfounded.

(6) As regards the Baconian hypothesis, I do not consider the positive evidence as by any means conclusive: but I claim to have shown that the negative evidence, especially that by which it is sought to prove, by reference to style, that he could not by any possibility have written the plays, absolutely fails. This attempt has its foundation in misunderstanding or even ignorance of Bacon's work and intellectual character.

In the course of this discussion I have had to show my opinion that some of Sir Sidney Lee's arguments are ill-founded, and some of his statements not, in my judgment, borne out by facts; but I wish to say that I am not, therefore, intending to impute bad faith to Sir Sidney Lee. The view taken in this book of Sir Sidney Lee is that he is an enthusiast wholly con-

[1] I am, of course, aware that Spenser has been claimed; but I think Sir George Greenwood has effectually disposed of this.

vinced that his main belief, *viz.* the belief in the Stratford origin of the Plays, is irrefragable. He is more than an enthusiast, he is a devotee; and if I find that, in the manner of enthusiasts and devotees, he is inclined to give undue weight to any argument that confirms his faith without due examination into its validity: if I even find that he interprets facts in a way that, as it seems to me, the facts will not bear, I am no more intending to impute bad faith to him than I should to an orthodox controversialist defending the Christian religion; although I might think that he also strained argument and misinterpreted fact. He wishes and intends to be impartial, and, no doubt, thinks he is so, even when the fervour of his enthusiasm makes impartiality a most difficult thing. If in discussion with such a one I should try to show that his logic was fallacious, and his facts unverifiable, I should not, therefore, impute to him the consciously disingenuous. So with Sir Sidney Lee. I may experience a mild surprise when I find him selecting Meres as his most important witness; surprise may rise to astonishment when I see the note, *Contemporary Records Abundant*, but, in his case also, I set these vagaries down to the frame of mind of the devotee: for many a man's religion is followed with less devotion than the Stratford-Shakespeare faith by its believers.

One word as to the origin and growth of the Stratford myth. How came it to be generally accepted, if it *was* generally accepted, that Shakspere of Stratford wrote the Plays? There was, of course, his name, or an imitation of his name (in print if not in sound), on those title-pages. Against this we have the fact that the same name was on at least 19 other plays that Shakespeare certainly did not write. Still it may be admitted that, so far, the evidence was strong as to the putative author. Then again they did not in those days experience Emerson's difficulty: they had not the difficulty of marrying the life to the

works that obsessed *him*. And this not because they formed a different opinion from ours as to the life; but because their opinion was strangely different as to the works. They saw nothing very extraordinary in the Plays: why should not the Stratford actor-manager have written them? This is the question they would naturally ask themselves, if they thought about the matter at all,—which, being but little interested, they probably did not: and so there was nothing to disturb their ideas as to the putative authorship; and the tradition easily started. It is for this reason that clear ideas as to the contemporary appreciation are so all important as bearing on the question of authorship. The acutely logical mind of Sir Sidney Lee is well aware of this; and, therefore, in the face of all the evidence, he insists that Shakespeare (to quote another orthodox critic) was 'recognised as a giant overtopping all his fellows.' Loosen this brick and there is a danger of the whole structure tumbling about orthodox ears. So far from seeming a giant in those days Shakespeare was regarded as of quite ordinary human stature; and, indeed, as not so tall as some.

Once started, an opinion tends to follow Newton's first law of motion, the law of indefinite continuance in the same direction till the motion is deflected or opposed by a second force. So long as the Shakespeare plays were thought nothing extraordinary no such second force existed, but, with their truer appreciation, the Stratford myth was, sooner or later, doomed to extinction. Great as is the hospitality of the human mind, it cannot for ever entertain as guests two such mortal foes as the modern admiration of the Plays, and the record of *The Life*. Time will show.

An ordinary person, once, talking to a philosopher, unguardedly referred to man as a 'thinking animal.' 'Man a thinking animal,' snapped the philosopher, 'as soon call him a flying animal.' Well, Time loves

to make sport of philosophers and has brought about its revenges on this one. What was to him the very type and essence of improbability is with us an every-day matter of fact: we fly all day and every day: so that, looking at this Shakespeare problem, this Stratford myth, as I have presumed to call it, and in particular at the reception which such works as Sir George Greenwood's on the one side, and such as Sir Sidney Lee's on the other, have met with at the hands of the public, one finds oneself left with the disquieting doubt whether man has not learnt to fly before he has learnt to think, after all.

SHAKESPEARE INSPIRED AND UNINSPIRED

Corruptio Optimi Pessima est Corruptio

ALL writers are unequal. It would be almost true to say that the greatest are most unequal. Those who most nearly approach level excellence are the most mechanical. These are the littérateurs. Those who produce under the greatest excitement are the most unequal of all: excitement is the top of a wave, and every wave has its depression. Therefore it would be nothing against Shakespeare if we found his work greatly varying in degrees of excellence. Rather the reverse; for level excellence soon palls. We are told that even our physical affections are rhythmic, subject to waves and periods; it is certain the emotional and intellectual are. It is not therefore the variation between the more and the less in Shakespeare that detracts from our admiration, but the variation between the good and the bad. In sentiment he varies between the supremely beautiful and the heroic on the one side, and the inept and repulsive on the other; in expression, between the magical and the luminous in one mood, and the turgid and obscure in another. In humour he varies from the most exquisite and subtle that the world has seen, to miserable puns and the cheapest of malapropisms. If I were an orthodox critic engaged in the Baconian controversy, I should lay stress not on the impossibility of Francis Bacon having produced the great passages in Shakespeare, for that is not altogether inconceivable, but on the opposite impossibility, that the trained

and developed consciousness of Bacon could have oscillated between such opposite poles. But I suppose the answer of the Baconian would be, Was not the consciousness of Shakespeare all that we attribute to Bacon? Are we not only shifting the impossibility? On the one point of humour it may be admitted at once that the explanation may be found not in the imbecility of Shakespeare, but in that of the Elizabethan audience, and that he was writing down to this. On the more important incongruities there is more to say.

If we should assert a superhuman element in Shakespeare, the exaggeration would be understood: and if we divide his work into the superhuman and the merely human, we get an intelligible division. We have then, on the one hand, works that other men can be conceived as producing, on the other, works that no other man could by any stretch of imagination be thought capable of. According to this test we decide whether a given work proceeds from the inspired or the uninspired Shakespeare. Apply it to the sonnets, for instance. Could any other poet have produced the sonnets? Personally I should be inclined to say, Yes: Sir Philip Sidney.[1] But if asked whether Sidney, or any other poet known to us, could have produced *Macbeth*, the answer is, No: it is inconceivable. The one is Prospero in his own strength: the other Prospero habited in the magic robe. Not that Prospero's own strength is not great strength, as natural strength goes, but he can perform supernatural feats only when clothed in the magic garment.

If the sonnets had come down to us as the sole work of a poet, one wonders what we should have thought of them. At present the glamour of Shakespeare's name is thrown over them; and some people admire

[1] Sidney's Moon sonnet, 'With how sad steps, O moon, thou climb'st the sky, &c.,' is as exquisitely beautiful as any of the Shakespeare Sonnets, and much more modern.

them who would never so much as read them but for the name of Shakespeare. I can certainly say for myself that as to at least two-thirds of them I shall probably never read them again, except, possibly, for some special purpose. But for the name, I think we should regard them as the work of one of our chief poets of that age, but they would, neither in us, nor in Milton, have excited 'wonder and astonishment.' Only one, if I may venture such a criticism, has ever seemed to me to express real passion—that in which the lines occur—

> Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
> Within his bending sickle's compass come:
> Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
> But bears it out even to the edge of doom—

This seems to me to have the Shakespearean ring. This is direct and poignant; while as a rule the emotion of the sonnets is indirect and reflected; and, in being so, has a character strangely unlike the true Shakespearean passion. One might even go so far as to suggest that the mere fact that they were appreciated by the Elizabethans is enough to show that there was nothing very revolutionary in them: and the true Shakespeare is revolutionary. Perhaps the most we can say of the sonnets is that they are the product of an intense and prolific poetical intellect, the intellect of a man with whom, if the 'magic robe' descended upon him, *Macbeth* might result. But in the sonnets it has not descended. We have in them, probably, the best that the uninspired Shakespeare could do, by the strength that was 'his own.'

What then, was the magic robe? We are driven to the conclusion that it stands for some peculiar state of consciousness—a state of trance or rather semi-trance: for trance has connotations that I do not mean to imply. The state I am supposing is a state between waking and sleeping: but, whereas trance is more allied to sleeping than waking, the state I am trying to suggest is more allied to waking. We have some-

thing to guide us. Without doubt Coleridge had some such experience. Three only of his poems survive as in the first class of poems: *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, and *Kubla Khan*. These are of a totally different character from anything else he wrote; indeed from anything else in literature. *Kubla Khan*, he himself tells us, was a dream-poem, and, the dream being broken, he was unable to finish it. He would have given all he had to write another poem like *The Ancient Mariner*. He never could. All these poems are written under some quite peculiar influence, in some third state of consciousness or semi-consciousness, neither waking nor sleeping, that he could not command. In these three poems *his* magic robe descended upon him; but with it, as he knew to his lasting regret, he could not invest himself at will.

But Shakespeare unentranced, as in the sonnets, is vastly greater than the unentranced Coleridge; and so the magic descended upon Shakespeare with vastly greater results; namely, by the measure that *Macbeth* is greater than *The Ancient Mariner*, marvellous as that poem is. In the state that I am trying to indicate the mind is partly active, partly passive, but chiefly passive: partly originative, partly receptive: but chiefly receptive. Before the mind's eye of Shakespeare, in this state, his characters moved, acted, gesticulated: in his mind's ear they spoke. They may even at times have spoken things not fully understood by the entranced poet himself. That has been known to happen in dreams. An interlocutor in the dream says something that the dreamer does not understand and the other has to explain his saying. If I rightly remember, Myers calls these 'proleptic' dreams. At the end I give a somewhat frivolous instance in a dream that happened to myself. Not that the semi-trance that I am supposing is a state of actual dreaming. Control is not entirely lost. The normal consciousness is not actually asleep. It is possible to remember and reproduce, perhaps even to write. But

if so, it is almost automatic writing from dictation.[2] At any rate the entire presentment would be seen and heard in the imagination; as though originated by the actors in the drama, not by the poet. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth enacted their scenes before Shakespeare. He saw and heard them long before they were seen and heard on the Elizabethan stage. They were to him, for the time being, independent agents, having objective existence: not his own creations. Much, very much, indeed by far the greatest volume of the Plays, might have been written by another, but in this mood and under this influence Shakespeare stands alone. *Coriolanus* is not superior, it is not equal, to Marlowe or Webster at their best; but *Macbeth* leaves the best of Marlowe and Webster out of sight. It soars into another atmosphere where their wings, mighty as they are, will not sustain them. On no other has Prospero's magic descended.

This explanation of the prodigious difference between Shakespeare inspired and uninspired may seem fanciful: but the extreme difference is without parallel and some explanation is required. Call it what we will; call it what Shakespeare himself called it, a 'frenzy,' it is, with Shakespeare, not a difference of degree, but a difference of *kind* of mental state. In the one, in what I have ventured to call the semi-trance state he can do nothing wrong. He strains language and imagery to the limit, yet is always infallibly right. He carries us with safety to the highest heights and the deepest depths. In the other, in his uninspired state, he is often ridiculous in his extravagance. In *Macbeth*, perhaps, we feel his inspiration in its intensest, in its most superhuman form: the expression is powerful even to violence; and yet for rightness, for real sanity, it will bear the closest scrutiny. In the very same play, in the opening scenes we have the wounded sergeant describing the battle in

[2] I am really speaking from an experience of my own, but I cannot bring myself to the egoism of giving the particulars. A *vera causa* may be seen in little things as well as in great.

which Macbeth had triumphed. We have spoken of rightness; this is an extreme example of wrongness. Here is language for a wounded sergeant—

> As whence the sun 'gins his reflexion,
> Ship-wracking storms and direful thunders break,
> So from that spring, whence comfort seemed to come,
> Discomfort swells. Mark, King of Scotland, mark:
> No sooner justice had with valour armed, &c.

What could be worse, dramatically? Here we have the greatest dramatist that ever wrote a play committing dramatic error of which the average playwright of the day was incapable. The explanation of such a strange phenomenon will itself be strange. As Shakespeare is greater than the average playwright, so he is less. The corruption of the best is the worst corruption: the good is in a way the father of the bad; the best, of the worst. It is the influence of the inspired Shakespeare on the uninspired that is at the root of the mischief. The uninspired remembers the extravagances of the inspired; extravagances that are justified by sanity; being the effect of intense poetic excitement. He unconsciously mistakes the effect for the cause, and thinks the extravagances will stand for excitement. He imitates the extravagances without the excitement, and therefore without the sanity. One result is this preposterous speech of the sergeant.

There are roughly three periods or stages in the development of Shakespearean drama. A period before the great inspiration, the period when it was in full force, and a period when it was on the wane or had even ceased. The first period contains, for instance, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Two Gentlemen*, *The Comedy of Errors*. These are youthful productions, not very great, but not distasteful; and, the critics seem agreed, not beyond the powers of other dramatists. Of the period of decline or even cessation I should select, as the most important instance, *Coriolanus*. *Coriolanus* is a play on the grand scale. It is one of the great plays, a great tragedy, or it is

nothing. Now what do we look for in a great play by the greatest of poets? One would say, poetry: poetical imagination, poetical passion, poetical beauty. From beginning to end of *Coriolanus* there is none of these. From the poet of *Hamlet* we look for exalted sentiment. In *Coriolanus* we find its unpleasant opposite: there is more than defective taste, there is perverted moral sense. There is, morally, as wide a gulf between the character of Hamlet and the character of Coriolanus, as there is, intellectually, between the wit of Falstaff and the malapropisms of Dogberry and Verges. Hamlet is what we call a gentleman, if ever there was one, Coriolanus is not. I take it that one indelible mark of the man we call a gentleman is that he never too obviously asserts himself. Hamlet is every whit as brave as Coriolanus; but he is not continually telling us how brave he is. We infer it from his actions, not from his proclamations. Coriolanus is blatant in his self-glorification. If we could imagine Pistol not a coward, he would be just such another.

Coriolanus has absolutely no good attribute except physical courage, which he shares with most men and many animals. It is only because the defect of it is such an object of contempt, that its possession is so much and so generally applauded. In her own way that horrible woman, Volumnia, is just as repulsive—fit mother of such a son. Indeed if we would mitigate our judgment of Coriolanus it would be on the ground of his unfortunate maternal parentage: we might conjecture whence he derived his unbridled rant. Lady Macbeth we always respect. We even, such is the magic of the great play, sympathise with her, in a way. For Volumnia we have neither sympathy nor respect. She sets every nerve on edge. She and her congenial friend, Valeria, gloating over a little wretch of a boy (son to Coriolanus), tearing a butterfly to pieces in a fit of passion, makes a picture that, in this strange, decadent mood, Shakespeare seems to ask us

to admire; but these mock-heroic women are in shocking contrast with other Shakespearean heroines. Even Lady Macbeth is murderous with a difference; she is not bloodthirsty. No horror will deter her; but she does not love horrors. These women do.

In order to extol Coriolanus, Shakespeare defames the commons. To make the Romans cowards is a libel, and a ridiculous libel at that. They were not even fools, but, as a nation, courage they could not possibly have lacked. The whole picture is about as incongruous and untrue to life as perverted sympathy can make it: and it is as bad in art as in morals.

For with this perversion of moral sense perversion of style goes here hand in hand. The style of *Coriolanus* is turgid throughout. The language is everywhere stronger than the feeling: and what worse condemnation of a literary production could there be? There is a striving after the effect of excitement without genuine excitement. This leads to the most absurd contortions of language, and to wilful and unnecessary obscurity.

I feel called upon to give instances of this perversion of style. Here are some half-dozen, selected from a much greater number that I have noted. I also quote some of the interpretations suggested in the notes of Mr. W. J. Craig's pocket edition.

Cor. II, 2, 117: 'The mortal gate of the city, which he painted with shunless destiny.' Which we are told means 'painted with blood whose destiny it was to flow?' Perhaps it does.

II, 1, 239: 'Ridges horsed with various complexions.' This means 'roof-tops ridden' (astride, I suppose) 'by spectators very different from one another.'

III, 2, 3: 'Or pile ten hills on the Tarpeian rock,
That the precipitation down might stretch
Below the beam of sight.'

This means 'so high that when I am hurled from it the spectators will lose sight of me before I touch the ground.' And, incredible as the explanation seems, I believe it really does mean that.

I, 4, 53: 'Who sensibly outdares his senseless sword,
And, when it bows, stands up.'

Sensibly, we are told, means possessed of senses, in opposition to the sword which is possessed of none.

III, 1, 96: 'If he have power, then vail your ignorance' = 'if you ignorant people give him power, then you must bow the knee before him.'

III, 1, 128: 'All cause unborn' = 'without a shadow of foundation.'

IV, 4, 22: 'Interjoin their issues' = 'unite their children in marriage.'

Mr. Craig's notes are full of explanations of wilfully obscure utterances. I do not think one such note occurs in *Hamlet*. The most nearly parallel is Hamlet's 'Why wrap we the gentleman in our more rawer breath?' The kind of thing that is a joke in *Hamlet* is serious in *Coriolanus*. Let Shakespeare describe it himself:

'Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation, figures pedantical.'

It is commonly said that there are some blunders that only a clever man can make. *Coriolanus* shows intellect, but intellect gone astray.

One would be glad to think, if it were thinkable, that *Coriolanus* was a spurious work wrongly credited —or debited—to Shakespeare: but that is impossible. Although it is what it is, it bears unmistakably the stamp of Shakespeare. So again, one would like to fancy it was Shakespeare's satire on the Jingos, male and female, of his day—for Jingos we always have with us; but neither is that possible. It stands for us a monument of fallen greatness. How great is that fall will be appreciated by any student of drama who shall read, first, the utterances of Coriolanus; and then any single scene in which Hamlet or Macbeth speaks: or who will first take a course of Volumnia, and, after, turn for refreshment to Cleopatra. If he does not then realise the difference between Shakespeare inspired and uninspired, it will be a pity.

The same moral perversion accompanied by the same degradation of style is to be noted in *All's Well*.

We are asked to consider it promotion for the admirable Helena to marry the insufferable Bertram; because he is an aristocrat, and she only the daughter of a physician. And here is a perverse sentence:

> To pluck his indignation on thy head
> By the misprision of a maid too virtuous
> For the contempt of empire.

The last phrase my interpreter tells me means 'to be slighted by an Emperor'! There is also a degradation of humour. The Clown in *All's Well* is the dullest and most ribald of Shakespeare's clowns.

Was Shakespeare himself aware of the essential difference between the state of consciousness in which he gave birth to *Macbeth* and that in which he produced *Coriolanus*: a difference which we seem forced to assume in face of the unparalleled[3] difference in value between his best and his worst work? Coleridge undoubtedly had such a perception: he certainly realized in himself two different and well-defined mental states, one of which he could not recall at will. May this throw some light on the difference between the supernatural work of Shakespeare—we can call it nothing less—and what for want of a better term may be called his natural work? Is it possible that *The Tempest* throws such light?

The Tempest is one of the great plays, but not quite one of the very greatest. It has not the intensity *of Macbeth, Lear, Hamlet, Othello.* In these plays Shakespeare created at a white-heat of emotion, at the intensest concentration of intellect. This can hardly be said of *The Tempest.* There are flashes of his highest inspiration but it is not sustained. *The Tempest* shows us a brief reluming, a brief recalescence, before the final extinction of light and heat. It sounds a note of melancholy, a melancholy that always

[3] To a certain extent we find a parallel in the work of Dickens. Here also we have a difference not merely between the good and the less good, but between the excellent and the execrable.

attaches to a thing done for the last time, and which we feel, even before we are told that here the magic ends. Melancholy is the note of *The Tempest*, and melancholy is not compatible with the intensest excitement. But if the critics are right, and I think they are, it has, alone among the plays, the absorbing interest that in it Shakespeare is purposely telling us something about himself.

> I'll break my staff,
> Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound
> I'll drown my book.

Deeper than the unplumbed depths of the ocean: irrevocably deep, he will drown his book of magic. No mortal shall ever wield that magic again. 'Never more' is the burden of *The Tempest*. In two days Ariel will be 'free to the elements,' his occupation gone. And the note of *The Tempest*, for the first time, seems a personal note. We have not now the full universal chords, the diapason, of *Macbeth* and *Lear*; but, instead, the *vox humana*, the intimate and tender stop. And, if this has a strain of melancholy, it is a strain

> Of sorrow that is not sorrow, but delight
> To hear of, for the glory that redounds
> Therefrom to human kind and what we are.

And the magic robe without which Prospero can do nothing miraculous, and of which in the last act of the play he finally 'discases' himself, encasing himself in the 'hat and rapier' of the natural man, what of that? Does it seem far-fetched to suggest that the epilogue gives us our answer?

> Now my charms are all o'er-thrown,
> And what strength I have's my own,
> Which is most faint. . . . Now I want
> Spirits to enforce, art to enchant.

In Act I Prospero lays down his mantle with the words 'Lie there, my art.'

The Epilogue is spoken by Prospero who is thus, as it would seem, finally identified with Shakespeare.

A marked feature of *Coriolanus* is contempt for and dislike of, one might almost say hatred of, the common people. I have often wondered how the Baconians reconcile this with their theory. Bacon says of himself that 'God has given him a heart to love the public'; and in parliament he opposed the bill for the Enclosure of Common Lands largely on the ground of the hardship it would entail on the poor. But democracy or anything tending to democracy was as far as possible from his thoughts or wishes. He was probably the first Liberal-Conservative. It also seems incredible that the humane Bacon could have sympathetically drawn the character of the truculent Coriolanus.

I have, so far, omitted to cite the case of composition of poetry in a state of 'slumber' or semi-trance, the case which is, on the evidence, the most important of all, the case of Milton. Not only by reason of its importance does it ask for separate treatment, but it differs widely from the historic case of Coleridge and the supposed case of Shakespeare in that Milton produced poetry of supreme quality in both states of consciousness—both the active or energetic and the passive or receptive state. The evidence in his case is direct, not inferential. The facts are clear and unmistakable; for whatever Milton says is to be taken at its full face-value. Even apart from this, they have a unique interest as exhibiting a strange development. In his early poems Milton indicates his method at that time. It is a consciously laborious method. In the famous sonnet, that sonnet that seems to contain the first real recognition of Shakespeare's sovereignty, he contrasts his own 'slow-endeavouring art' with the flow of Shakespeare's, *his* Shakespeare's, 'easy numbers.' Then he tells us that Lycidas

knew
Himself to sing and *build the lofty rhyme.*

And it is quite clear that, though he speaks of his friend, it is his own conception and his own experience

of poetic composition. Later in the same poem he cries

> Alas, what boots it *with incessant care*
> To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade,
> And *strictly meditate* the thankless Muse?

In these phrases that I have emphasized conscious, concentrated effort is implied.

But in *Paradise Lost*, some thirty years later, all is changed, and changed in a most unexpected way. We might not be surprised if a poet should grow less spontaneous, more strictly meditative, with the 'years that bring the philosophic mind'; but it is just this gift of spontaneity, this easy flow, disavowed in his early years, that he claims now. He will

> feed on thoughts that *voluntary* move
> Harmonious numbers.

But beyond this claim to spontaneity, and still more to our present purpose, he claims passivity. He is the recipient, not the originator. He is to obtain an 'answerable style' from his

> celestial patroness who deigns
> Her nightly visitation unimplored,
> And *dictates to me slumbering*, or inspires
> Easy my *unpremeditated verse.*

We notice the contrast with his earlier accounts of the matter. The contradiction is even verbal; possibly intentionally so. *His* are the 'easy numbers' now: he no longer 'strictly meditates' the Muse; the verse is now 'unpremeditated.' He is passive: the verse is dictated to him by Urania

> Visiting his slumbers[4] nightly, or when morn
> Purples the east.

[4] A clear distinction is to be drawn between slumbering and sleeping. *The Century Dictionary* quotes Ben Jonson—

> 'Does he sleep well?
> No wink, Sir, all this night,
> Nor yesterday: but slumbers.'

And Byron— 'My slumbers, if I slumber, are not sleep,
But a continuance of my waking thoughts.'

Also we have—Behold He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep—Ecce Qui custodit Israel nec dormiet nec dormitabit. Dormito is not *to sleep*, but *to be sleepy*, to drowse.

No syllable of Milton's is ever to be disregarded, and we note the disjunctive '*or* inspires Easy my unpremeditated verse.' So that even here two states are indicated or rather two degrees of the same passive, receptive state. The one he can describe as slumbering. In the other he is waking, but still passively recipient. 'Unpremeditated' implies that he has no prevision of the verse not yet dictated. He is not composing with conscious purpose and forethought.

But Milton varies from others in that he produced supreme poetry both in the state of conscious intellectual concentration, in which as a young man he wrote *Comus* and *Lycidas*; and also in the state in which he tells us that he wrote *Paradise Lost*. We also note in his case the regularity of the procedure. In both passages quoted we have the word 'nightly'; *i.e.* night after night. And we know from other sources that his practice was to dictate to his daughters when he first rose in the morning. This third state of consciousness that we have been supposing is probably a habit that can be cultivated, and Milton cultivated it.

There would seem, then, to be good evidence for a state bordering on trance under the influence of which some, at any rate, of our greatest poets have composed. What might not be the effect of such a state on the brain of Shakespeare?

Proleptic dreams. This occurred to myself. I dreamt that I was shooting, and the farmer whose land we were shooting over was walking at my side. Birds got up and flew over the fence, before I could get a shot. The farmer exclaimed, 'That lot bounded away!' I said, 'Bounded?' 'Yes,' he said, 'the fence is our boundary and they flew out of bounds.' Now here is a case where the dreamer puts into the mouth of another something he himself does not understand; and it has to be explained to him. Many years ago I was talking about proleptic dreams with

the Rector of my college, Mark Pattison. He thought I might have been led to it by that surprising line of Milton

> With one slight bound he overleaped all bound
> Of hill or highest wall

running in my head—which hardly seems to explain it.

Of composition in sleep. In a dream I was repeating to myself Keats' 'Ever let the Fancy roam.' When I got to the lines

> Thou shalt see the field-mouse creep
> Meagre from his celléd sleep;
> And the snake, all winter-thin,
> Cast on sunny bank his skin—

I went on like this, as though it was part of the poem:

> Thou shalt hold thee still and watch
> The stone-wren and the thistle-hatch;
> These shall mould at spring's behest
> Each his clay-cup of a nest:
> The same as ere the thistle knew
> That undesired his glories grew;
> Or men had left the woods, and won
> To scoop the cave and flake the stone.

Stone-wren is evidently suggested by stone-chat and thistle-hatch by nut-hatch. I told Prof. Macneile Dixon about it at the time, and he sent the lines to the Journal of Psychical Research, where they appeared. The fifth and sixth lines seem a curiously recondite expression for the pre-agricultural age. Principles and laws may be seen in small things as well as in great. The simplest of us may have something in common with Shakespeare, something that may even throw a light on Shakespeare. I expect the new psychology will have something to say of these phenomena and their laws. Perhaps it has said something already.

HAMLET'S MADNESS

THE old problem of Hamlet's madness, the problem how much of it was assumed, how much real, seems to have ceased to interest the critics. The more modern, including Dr. Bradley, never raise the question of real madness. That writer can see nothing beyond morbid melancholy, with perhaps a dread of real madness as its accompaniment. He seems satisfied that the symptoms of madness in the play are all simulated; nothing more than the 'antick disposition' that Hamlet announced he might put on, as occasion arose. There would seem to be some reason for thinking that the old question cannot be set aside so easily. We look to a soliloquy to give us the clue to the real state of the matter. With the vanishing of the Ghost, Hamlet soliloquises; at first in such language of agitation as accords with the appalling revelation he has just received—

> O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?
> And shall I couple hell? . . . Remember thee!
> Yea, from the table of my memory
> I'll wipe away all trivial fond records . . .
> And thy commandment all alone shall live
> Within the book and volume of my brain
> Unmixed with baser matter.

Then without warning we have this amazing transition—

> Yes: by heaven,
> O most pernicious woman!
> O villain, villain, smiling damnéd villain!
> My tables,—meet it is I set it down
> That one may smile and smile, and be a villain;

And he ends with this curiously conversational remark,

in strange contrast to the intense passion of the earlier utterance—

> At least, I'm sure it may be so in Denmark.

He takes out his note-book, writes it down, contemplates it like a picture, and ends with—'So, uncle, there you are.' Dr. Bradley can see nothing in this but 'wild irony,' proceeding, presumably, from a perfectly sane mind. But surely this cannot be all that Shakspeare intended: surely there is something here beyond the irony of sanity at its wildest. In the rest of the scene, with Horatio and Marcellus, he makes merry with the Ghost himself. 'Old truepenny,' he calls him; 'this fellow in the cellarage'; 'well said, old mole; canst work in the earth so fast?' It is a strange outlet for intense excitement.

But the crucial test is the scene reported by Ophelia. Hamlet has rushed into her room with

> his doublet all unbraced,
> No hat upon his head; his stockings fouled,
> Ungartered and down-gyved to his ankle,
> Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other—

Dr. Bradley's view here is surprising. It is that Hamlet has got himself up in 'the conventionally recognised garb of the distracted lover' designedly and of malice prepense, with the main object of convincing others, through Ophelia, that his insanity was due to no cause more mysterious than the very common accident of disappointed love. He thus asks us to discard all our conceptions of Hamlet as gained from all other manifestations of him in the play. In every other scene in which Hamlet appears he deports himself with perfect self-respect. However much he may 'put an antick disposition on,' he preserves his personal dignity. He requires and always receives submissive respect from others. He gives one the idea that he would be a very dangerous person to take a liberty with. He is a prince; and he

never allows himself or others to forget it. Though he casts around him a mist of farce and mockery, he is always essentially dignified. Such behaviour as Ophelia reports of him is foreign to his conduct in any of the scenes in which he assumes madness. In none of these scenes, whatever may be the relation between his assumed and his possibly real madness, does he ever lose the most perfect command of himself. He will turn, at a moment's notice, from talking the most incomparable nonsense to Polonius to discoursing the most perfect and acute sense in instructions to the players. But this scene with Ophelia is on different ground altogether. Either he is, as Dr. Bradley thinks, but as seems incredible, demeaning himself in this outrageous way, deliberately plastering his stockings with mud and dust, carefully pushing them down about his heels, with a deathlike pallor that we must suppose artificially induced, consciously knocking his knees together, and generally behaving in a manner impossible to our idea of Hamlet in his senses; or—he was not in his senses. Which is the easier to conceive, Hamlet in some kind of ecstacy, or Hamlet, the Hamlet we think we know, deliberately, and in cold blood, behaving like the most vulgar mummer? Surely the choice is simple. We are forced to the conclusion that Hamlet *was* subject to some form of ecstacy, and that Shakespeare has introduced this scene—reported, because he would not expose his Hamlet to public gaze in such a pitiable condition—with the sole object of telling us so. Evidently it was necessary to tell us, and poor Ophelia is detailed for the duty.

There is another scene in which Hamlet's behaviour is in accordance with the estimate of his character formed by one and all of his critics, only on the supposition that he was subject at times to real mental derangement. It is the scene with Laertes, that 'noble youth' as Hamlet calls him, just before the fencing match. Hamlet says he is 'punished

with a sore distraction,' but his speech must be quoted to give the full effect:—

> What I have done
> That might your nature, honour and exception
> Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.
> Was't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet.
> If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
> And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
> Then Hamlet does it not; Hamlet denies it;
> Hamlet is of the party that is wronged
> His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

What could be meaner, more hypocritical, more cowardly, and more generally despicable than such language if Hamlet was excusing himself on the ground of a madness that did not really exist; that he could assume from time to time, and throw off when it suited him? What could be more nauseating than that 'poor Hamlet' if such was the state of the case? And it must be remembered that he was addressing a social equal, a 'noble youth'; that he was a gentleman dealing with a gentleman; a man, too, whom, through a sister, he had grievously wronged. All the critics are in error as to Hamlet's courage and moral character if this speech is insincere. He plainly excuses himself on the ground that at times his mind is diseased and that then he is not master of himself; and we must either accept his words at their face-value, or revise our whole opinion of his character.

Hamlet's action through the play, then, whatever he may have said and, perhaps, thought, is to be referred to much assumed and some real madness. Not that this helps us to the understanding of Shakespeare's intention: rather it makes it more unintelligible. But even if recognition of the facts of the play makes the intention of the poet still more difficult to grasp, the facts must be faced; and the facts unmistakably point either to real derangement, or to a conception of Hamlet's character that no critic has suggested—not even Dr. Bradley himself;

through whose eighty-five pages there is no reference to real madness as an explanation of Hamlet's action. But next best to understanding a thing is recognition of the fact that we do not understand it. And no critic, not even Goethe or Coleridge, has explained Hamlet for us in a way that will bear comparison with the text.

For over and above these points of detail, there remains the fundamental, but unanswered, question—why did Hamlet assume madness at all? The circumstances under which he announces his intention of doing so are perplexing in the extreme, and the more perplexing the more closely we examine the text. The Ghost has just disappeared; Hamlet soliloquises, and these are the last words of his soliloquy:—

> Now to my word;
> It is, 'Adieu, adieu! Remember me'
> I have sworn't.

He rejoins Horatio and Marcellus, and immediately proceeds to swear them to secrecy, with the Ghost (in the cellarage) for witness; and, still with the Ghost for witness, he makes them swear, the Ghost being insistent about this also, not to give him away if he 'hereafter shall think meet, To put an antick disposition on.' I think it is usually supposed that in this intention of assuming madness Hamlet was already contemplating delay, and making an excuse for it beforehand. But the insistence of the Ghost at this point, as in the matter of the general secrecy of the witnesses, makes this impossible. We are driven to the conclusion that what Hamlet intended, and the Ghost expected and approved, was that he should 'sweep to his revenge,' and *after*, as occasion might require, simulate madness. But this, though the only possible reading of the text, is absurd in itself; besides, what really happens is that the madness is simulated while he is weakly delaying the revenge he is sworn to—the last thing the Ghost would have approved.

There are signs of even more than Shakespeare's usual uncritical carelessness in *Hamlet*. On one page Horatio speaks as though he had seen King Hamlet only once; on the next, as though he had often seen him, mentioning two occasions. On one page Hamlet puts the army of Fortinbras at two thousand; on the next at twenty. Did this forgetfulness even extend to Hamlet and his acts and temperament? The doubt is unwelcome and almost disloyal; but can it be excluded? If it is as Dr. Bradley and others believe, that this play was not merely revised after an interval, but was under the hands of the dramatist for years, the fact of the inconsistencies may be explained; but, till someone succeeds in reconciling them, it seems certain that unreconciled inconsistencies exist. One thing is plain and unmistakable —Hamlet's character. Of meanness, cowardice, vulgarity, he was incapable.

Note.—Dr. Bradley would seem to be mistaken in concluding from the words of the Ghost that the Queen was an adulteress; that when the Ghost speaks of Claudius having wooed her with gifts, it is meant that this was his course *before* the murder; and that Hamlet so understood him. I think Dr. Bradley has overlooked the dumb-show (devised by Hamlet) in the play played before the King. There the order of proceedings is this—the Poisoner enters and pours the Poison: 'the dead body is carried away'; and it is *after* this that 'the poisoner woos the Queen with gifts.' I was led to look into the point because I felt that the attitude both of the Ghost, and that of Hamlet himself, towards the Queen seemed inconsistent with knowledge of her adultery.

BACON AND SHAKESPEARE

Parallel Passages

From Shakespeare.	From Bacon's Works.
There is a tide in the affairs of men, Which taken at the flood leads on to fortune. And we must take the current when it serves Or lose our ventures. *J.C.*	In the third place I set down reputation, because of the peremptory tides and currents it hath, which, if they be not taken at their due time, are seldom recovered. *A. of L.*
Before the days of change still is it so. By a divine instinct men's minds mistrust Ensuing danger; as by proof we see The water swell before a boisterous storm. *R. III.*	As there are secret swellings of seas before a tempest, so there are of States. *Essay Of Sedition.*
Who having unto truth, by telling of it, Made such a sinner of his memory, To credit his own lie. *Tempest.*	With long and continual counterfeiting and with oft telling a lie, he has turned by habit almost into the thing he seemed to be; and from a liar to a believer. *History of Henry VII.*
Or I shall show the cinders of my spirits Through the ashes of my chance. *A. & C.*	The sparks of my affection shall ever rest quick under the ashes of my fortune. *To Falkland.*
Nothing almost sees miracles, But misery. *Lear.*	Certainly if miracles be the control over nature they appear most in adversity. *Essay of Adversity.*

From Shakespeare.

When we our betters see bearing our woes
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.

Lear.

From Bacon's Works.

If our betters have sustained the like events, we have the less cause to be grieved.

To Bishop Andrews.

I am never weary when I hear sweet music.
The reason is your spirits are attentive.

M. of V.

Some noises help sleep, as soft singing; the cause is they move in the spirit a gentle attention.

Nat. Hist.

Advantage is a better soldier than rashness.

H. V.

If time give advantage, what need precipitation?

H. VII.

To be wise and love exceeds man's might.

T. & C.

It is impossible to love and be wise.

Essay of Love.

The cankers of a calm world and a long peace.

1 *H. IV.*

States corrupted through wealth and too great length of peace.

To Earl of Rutland.

Which when they fall, as being slippery standers . . .
Die in the fall.

T. & C.

The rising to honour is laborious,
The standing slippery, the fall headlong.

Antitheses.

I saw him run after a gilded butterfly; and, when he caught it, he let it go again; and after it again.

Cor.

To be like a child following a bird, which, when he is nearest, flyeth away and 'lighteth a little before; and then the child after it again.

Letter to Greville.

From Shakespeare.

One fire drives out one fire, one nail one nail.

Cor.

From Bacon's Promus.

To drive out a nail with a nail.

Losers will have leave to ease their stomachs with their bitter tongues.

T.A.

Always let losers have their words.

From Shakespeare.	From Bacon's Promus.
Happy man be his dole. *M. Wives.*	Happy man, happy dole.
Pardon is still the nurse of second woe. *M. for M.*	He that pardons his enemies the amner shall have his goods.
Of sufferance comes ease. *2 H. IV.*	Of sufferance cometh ease.
Call me not fool till heaven hath sent me fortune.	God sendeth fortune to fools.
Thou bearest thy heavy riches but a journey. *M. for M.*	Riches the baggage of virtue.
So the maid that stood in the way for my wish Shall show me the way to my will. *H. V.*	He would rather have his will than his wish.
Seldom cometh the better. *Rich. III.*	Seldom cometh the better.
The dissembler is a slave. *Per. I.* 1.	He who dissembles is not free.
A fool's bolt is soon shot. *H. V. iii.* 7.	A fool's bolt is soon shot.
Give sorrow leave awhile to tutor me. *R. II.*	Our sorrows are our school-masters.
For loan oft loses both itself and friend. *Hamlet.*	He who lends to a friend loses double.
Goodness growing to a pleurisy Dies in his own too much. *Hamlet.*	So good that he is good for nothing.
All's well that ends well.	All is well that ends well.
Love moderately: long love does so. *R. & J.*	Love me little, love me long.

From Shakespeare.	From Bacon's Promus.
Every Jack becomes a gentleman. *R. III.*	Every Jack would be a lord.
The latter end of a fray and the beginning of a feast. *1 Hen. IV.*	Better come to the ending of a feast than to the beginning of a fray.
Good wine needs no bush. *A.Y.L.*	Good wine needs no bush.
The inaudible and noiseless foot of time. *A.W.*	The gods have woollen feet.
The ripest mulberry. *Cor.*	Riper than a mulberry.
To hazard all our lives in one small boat. *1 H. VI.*	You are in the same ship.
Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth. *Hamlet.*	Tell a lie to know a truth.
The strings of life began to crack. *Lear.*	At length the string cracks.
While the grass grows—the proverb is somewhat musty. *Hamlet.*	While the grass grows, the horse starveth.
Out of heaven's benediction to the warm sun. *Lear*	Out of God's blessing into the warm sun.
The world on wheels. *Two Gent.*	The world runs on wheels.
Thought is free. *Tempest.*	Thought is free.
Fortune governed as the sea is by the moon. *1 H. IV.*	Fortune changes like the moon.

From Shakespeare.	From Bacon's Promus.
A giving hand, though foul, shall have fair praise. *L.L.L.*	Food is wholesome from a dirty hand.
As if increase of appetite had grown From what it fed on. *Hamlet.*	If you eat, appetite will come.
If the cat be after kind So be sure will Rosalind. *A.Y.L.*	It is the cat's nature and the wench's fault.
I am giddy . . . I do fear That I shall lose distinction in my joys. *T. & C.*	When one good follows another, a man loses his balance.
Make use of thy salt hours. *T. of A.*	Make use of thy salt hours.
Teach me to forget. *R. & J.*	The art of forgetting.
That is all one. *M.W.W.*	All is one.
Can so young a thorn begin to prick? *H. VI.*	A thorn is gentle when it is young.
Coal black is better than another hue In that it scorns to take another hue. *T.A.*	Black will take no other hue.
What early tongue so sweet saluteth me? *R. & J.*	Sweet, for speech in the morning.
There golden sleep doth reign. *R. & J.*	Golden sleep.
Every wise man's son doth know. *Twelfth Night.*	The sons of demy gods demy men.

It is not that the phrases in the Promus are supposed to be original with Bacon, but that he seems to have noted them down with the intention of using them—and we find them in the plays. For instance, the point that ' black will take no other hue ' was made by Marlowe—and we know that Shakespeare admired Marlowe. So with the use of proverbs.

MR. J. M. ROBERTSON AND SHAKESPEARE'S *RICHARD III*

SINCE the foregoing sections were in type, I have seen Mr. J. M. Robertson's elaborate and learned work, *The Shakespeare Canon*. It is not my purpose to review that work as a whole, but only to discuss certain portions, especially that part of his work in which he deals with Shakespeare's *Richard III*. There I find things tending to shake one's faith in the author as a critic of the Plays.

In the first place, quite wrongly to my mind, Mr. Robertson joins the throng of those who depreciate the great play. *Richard III*, though it is not of the calibre of *Macbeth* or *Othello*, seems to me, as I shall try to indicate, one of the great, though not one of the greatest, of the tragedies; and far beyond the power of any other dramatist.

One word of more general criticism. Mr. Robertson is a writer of such exceptional powers in many important directions, and must be so conscious of his superiority to the average critic in these respects, that he not unnaturally assumes superiority in certain others, in which it is possible that he is even somewhat deficient. In one respect, and that one of the first importance, I mean as a judge of poetry, this deficiency pretty clearly shows itself; being proved by his attitude towards Milton on the one hand, and Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* on the other; and now finally by his announced conviction that some one, not Shakespeare, wrote Antony's funeral speech in *Julius Caesar*.

Dealing with *Richard III*, and finding in it the tracks of various other authors, as Kyd and Heywood, Mr. Robertson finally decides that it is substantially

a Marlowe play. Apart from quality, *Richard III* being as it seems to me utterly beyond the powers of Marlowe, I think it can be demonstrated, so far as demonstration in such matters is possible, that, in the form in which we have it, Marlowe can have had extremely little to do with it. Of the quality I will venture a word later; at present I will deal with a detail; but a detail, it will be admitted, of crucial import. The argument is one that should appeal to Mr. Robertson, inasmuch as it treats of a feature that can be mechanically and arithmetically tested.

Now Marlowe's principal characters do not seem to have mastered what Tennyson tells us is the infant's first lesson: they do not seem to have 'learnt the use of I and me'; they consistently speak of themselves in the third person. One has long suffered from this inveterate trick of Marlowe's. Faustus says Faustus will do this; Tambourlaine tells us Tambourlaine will do that. Partly to impress the Arithmetical School, partly because the practice really does indicate a frame of mind, I have thought it worth while to count instances. In *Edward II* I found fifty-four; in Part I of *Tambourlaine*[1] thirty-five: in *Dido* forty-five: in *Richard III* ten. Now, used in moderation and in its proper place, the form is natural and unobjectionable: it has, even, its legitimate effect.[1] So that, in a long play like *Richard III*, ten is not a notable number. Besides, it is worth observing that of these ten, five are self-pitying phrases—'poor Anne,' 'wretched Margaret,' 'poor Clarence,'[2] in the

[1] In *Part II* of *Tambourlaine* I found only eighteen examples. But Tambourlaine has lost the assistance of Zenocrate, who in *Part I* contributed her full share. Also Tambourlaine is less on the stage in *Part II* and makes fewer speeches. Still, notwithstanding his handicap, he manages to speak of himself in the third person sixteen times (as against Richard's once or possibly twice).

[2] Was't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet;
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not: Hamlet denies it.
Who does it then? His madness. If't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged;
His madness is *poor Hamlet's* enemy.

mouths of Anne, Margaret, Clarence respectively, and in one of the two for which Richard himself is responsible he is quoting one of the ghosts. So that I think we may say advisedly that, knowing what we know of Marlowe's actual work, no play substantially his could be so free of this idiosyncracy as is *Richard III*. Not that anyone would deny that there are marks of Marlowe—'wedges of gold' is Marlowe: so also 'Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels' is his. But there is a quite satisfactory way of accounting for these without going the length of calling *Richard III* substantially a Marlowe play. Marlowe never wrote a play in the same sphere of art.

In the earlier note I stated the terms of the very curious puzzle that is presented by the folio version of *Richard III*. I did not consider one possible solution, viz., that *Richard III* is not a Shakespeare play. To test this I re-read the play, preparing myself by first reading Marlowe's *Edward II*. Never have I been so impressed with the great play, or with its immeasurable superiority to Marlowe's. Shakespeare would seem now and again to set himself a psychological problem. In *Macbeth*, for instance, it is the problem of the deed rashly done; in *Hamlet* of the deed endlessly deferred; in *Othello* of the man of lower race in relation with the typical woman of the dominant stock, and so on. With *Richard III* he sets himself a problem of great complexity. He imagines a man, ambitious, unprincipled, of unbounded courage and will-power; and then imagines the effect on him of an isolating physical deformity. 'I am myself alone' Gloster proclaims—and the effect on him is drawn for us with a power and subtlety that only Shakespeare can command. Finding himself outside the human pale he will be bound by no human law; he will have 'neither pity, love nor fear.' Denied ordinary humanity, he will be inhuman. To complete the character, he is endowed with an exceptional gift—he is a consummate actor. We have thus

in Gloster Shakespeare's most complex villain. Compared with Gloster, Iago is simple and elementary. Nothing could be more powerful and subtle than the working-out of the problem. Adequate citation is, of course, out of the question. I will quote very briefly :—

Gloster has just had Clarence secretly murdered. The next scene (II, 1) opens with King Edward 'led in sick'; in fact, dying. Gathered round him are the royalties and nobles. Like many another dying man whose life has been full of regrettable incidents, he would make his peace with all the world, and make all the world at peace with itself. He knows the various enmities, and he exhorts the respective enemies to forgive and be friends. This they all do to satisfy the dying man; and he has just attained a happy frame in consequence when Gloster enters, fresh from the murder of Clarence. He is told of the blessed state of things, and then, waiting for his cue to blow the scene to atoms, he makes a longer and more unctuous speech than any—

> 'He does not know that Englishman alive
> With whom his soul is any jot at odds'

and

> 'He thanks his God for his humility.'

Then he gets his cue. Queen Elizabeth implores the King to take Clarence back into favour. Gloster turns on her with a sudden burst of assumed anger that he can act so perfectly,

> 'Why, Madam, have I offered love for this
> To be so flouted in this royal presence?
> Who knows not that the gentle duke is dead?'

and the wretched king says

> 'Who knows not he is dead? Who knows he is?'

Who indeed? Could anyone but Shakespeare have forged and exploded such a bomb as this? And what drama for the spectator, to listen to Gloster's pious speech knowing what was the last thing he did!

There is another inimitable touch when Tyrrel comes to tell him (now Richard III) that the murder of the princes is satisfactorily accomplished (IV, 3).

K. RICHARD. *Kind* Tyrrel, am I happy in thy news?
TYRREL. If to have done the thing you gave in charge
Beget you happiness, be happy then,
For it is done.
K. RICHARD. But did you see them dead?
TYRREL. I did, my lord.
K. RICHARD. *And buried, gentle Tyrrel?*

This is refinement of inhumanity—certainly not an example of the 'elementary psychology' that Mr. Robertson discovers in this play.

In other branches of literature I have great respect for Mr. Robertson's learning and judgment. I have often envied him his stores of knowledge. But in Shakespearian criticism he is not happy. He overrates the possibilities. I do not believe anyone can go through a Shakespeare play and say, with the assurance of Mr. Robertson, that this is Kyd, this Heywood, this Marlowe, and here we have a little bit of genuine Shakespeare. He does not even seem to be specially well-equipped for the task. Any man may make a slip; any man's memory may play him a trick; but it is a different matter when his ear is at fault. Now at p. 162 we find him saying, 'it cannot be supposed that Shakespeare wrote the line

"I that am rudely stamped and want love's majesty,"

which,' he says, 'is either a bad alexandrine or a highly hypermetrical pentameter, and is distinctly Marlovian.' This I found surprising: it seemed to me his ear ought to have told him that, 'highly hypermetrical' or not, it was familiar Shakespeare prosody: and I turned to that best of all Shakespeare commentaries, the *Shakespeare Concordance*. There I found thirteen instances at least of *majesty* used as a dissyllable:

Five of the type

'This man may help me to his majesty's ear'

(*All's Well*, V, 1).

Eight of the type

'And found no course of breath within your majesty'
(2 *Henry IV*, IV, 1).

like the line in question. It would seem to be rather a mark of Shakespeare than Marlowe.

But there is something much more fundamental. When we went to school and learnt Euclid, we were taught that there was something wrong with a method of reasoning that led to an absurd result. Mr. Robertson has furnished us with a *reductio ad absurdum* of his own method. Guided by such symptoms as 'double-endings,' 'end-stopped' lines, and the rest, he has come to the absurd conclusion that the funeral oration in *Julius Caesar* is not Shakespeare! Even his disciple, Mr. Middleton Murry, deserts him here. Indeed, what can be said of a critic who can arrive at the conclusion that Antony's speech is not Shakespeare? Let the 'only scientific' school apply its scientific tests to the doubtful portions of the Shakespeare canon. To the student of *poetry* it really matters very little who wrote them. To be doubtful is to be inferior. But let it keep its hands off Antony's speech.

The only thing that really matters about Shakespeare's work is its quality—its power and beauty. And this also is the only *test* that matters. We *know* that Anthony's speech is Shakespeare because of its quality: because it thrills us more than any other speech ever written or spoken—in a word, because of its beauty and power. Mr. Robertson says it is too much 'end-stopped' to be Shakespeare. It is Mr. Robertson's method that is condemned, not the speech. Poetical quality is the test, not an end-stopped line. But who is to pronounce on poetical value? Clearly, anyone who has given proof of poetical capacity. I have not the advantage of knowing what is the Poet Laureate's view in this particular; but I would appeal with confidence from Mr. Robert-

son to the Poet Laureate. I am confident that no one who had any marked poetical sense could hesitate for a moment to attribute the greatest of speeches to the greatest of poets. It is indeed, by general consent hitherto, the supreme achievement of Shakespeare in the region of deliberate art—(for one does not conceive of Macbeth as conscious art: Macbeth is vision). But the method is a difficult one, and, in a degree, uncertain. At the limit, it is subject to a personal equation. In this respect it is in strong contrast with the method that counts and measures, the method of science. But that has the advantage of the scientific test—anyone can apply it; some better, some worse, no doubt: an accountant would do it best of all;—he might surpass Mr. Robertson himself, and carry Shakespeare criticism to the third place of decimals—but any intelligent youth could do it quite well: care and industry the only requirements. It is an attractive method to the critic whom the Gods have not made poetical.

The old conjecture, due I think to Fleay, was that Marlowe left behind him a play, unfinished and incomplete, on the subject of Richard III, and that Shakespeare worked on this, as, refusing to do the spade-work of drama, he worked on Plutarch, Holinshed, the *Gesta Romanorum*, &c. What more likely? Marlowe had died, at 29, what was in effect a sudden death, and the play that seems to have been his last dealt with English history.

In reading the *Shakespeare Canon* it had struck me that the critical use made of 'double-endings' and 'running-over' lines was far too absolute: and that possibly other influences beside stage of production had their effect, often a determining effect: I mean, such influences as subject-matter, circumstance, and the poet's or speaker's mood. With this idea it occurred to me to test the question by reference to the practice of another poet, and at pure haphazard I took Byron's *Manfred*. The result was curious. In the

dialogue between Manfred and the Hunters I found as many as six double-endings in nineteen lines; or, as Mr. Robertson would put it, 31.3 per cent. Soon after, Manfred is harangueing the Witch, with the result that we find only one double-ending in forty lines, or 2.5 per cent.; and we actually have a run of thirty-six lines without any double-ending at all: the reason being that the talk with the Hunters is conversational; whereas in addressing the Witch, Manfred is in a more rhetorical mood. The one is informal, the other formal: and, I imagine, it might be laid down generally that the more formal the utterance, the less we shall find of double-endings and running-on lines. This explains Antony's speech. It is a set oration to a multitude from whom mentally he is at an infinite distance. He is, consequently, formal, and the formality is marked by end-stopped lines and the absence of double-endings.

In conclusion, I would say that I do not under-rate the value of inferences drawn from double-endings and the like, so long as they are kept in their proper place and used for their proper purpose. It is only when they over-ride the more essential, though more difficult, test of quality that I enter a protest.

THE END.

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