

THE BACON SHAKESPEARE CONTROVERSY

THE YOUNG MAN

FROM STRATFORD

BY H. SAINT-GEORGE

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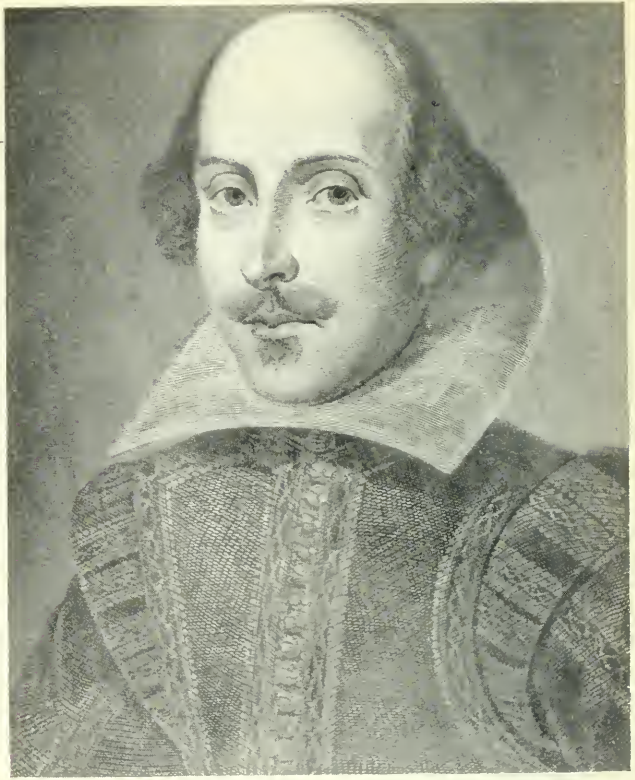


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William Shakespeare

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

THE YOUNG MAN FROM STRATFORD

A Juryman's View of the
Bacon-Shakespeare Controversy

BY

HENRY SAINT-GEORGE



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TO THE INCENTOR.

How oft have you in dispute deep exclaimed
"Would it were true the author of this store
Of poesy was really Shakespeare named,
Then had we one great Englishman the more."

It is to lift this veil of darkness dread
That blots the greatness of yourself, good friend,
And not to justify the poet lying dead,
(For he is justified from start to end)

That I have made this book of argument,
Hoping to kill the shallow doubts that mar
The brightness of your mind. These I resent,
Knowing, but for them, how great you are.

For till you're purged of such foul doubts that press
England is one great Englishman the less.

PREFACE.

LONG years ago the Pilgrim Fathers settled themselves in the New World and heard a strange wild-fowl sing its curiously prophetic note. "Whip-poor-Will, Whip-poor-Will," it cried, and to-day many denizens of that land are whipping poor Will Shakespeare soundly and roundly. And, not content with this battery of his memory, they would filch from him his fame in order to hand it over to one Francis Bacon, who is already sufficiently endowed in that respect.

Verily 'tis a queer world, my masters. If this singular craze had been confined to the land of its birth, if Baconianism had never passed beyond the precincts of Chicago—Porkopolis, its most appropriate birthplace—there would be no need to give it a second thought. But this intellectual trychinosiſ has been imported into England, and the poison spreads, hence it behoves us to beware and waking to combat its further advance.

This poison works by argument, and the safest precaution against infection is to know exactly what argument really is. To change the simile, argument may be called a Court of Law wherein the witnesses are Facts, the lawyers are Inference, Deduction and Analogy, the judge is Analysis, and the jury Mankind. In this little book that I have ventured to write I hope to have shown that for Shakespeare there are a few lawyers and a few witnesses, while for Bacon there are many lawyers and no witnesses.

Inference, K.C., can work up many damaging-looking things arising out of various simple, and to average minds, ordinary and easily understandable circumstances, but he is not allowed to give his opinion on the facts that the Circe of the West who first brewed this "lep'rous distilment" bore the significant name of Delia Bacon. We need not speak of her sad end.

It must be conceded that a loophole is provided for these attacks by the bulk of the devout Shakespeareans, for, instead of boldly looking into the matter and endeavouring to form some reasonable idea as to what manner of man he was, they are content to imagine a William Shakespeare as they would dearly like him to be. This insubstantial wraith can be easily blown away, and the airy victory thus achieved treated as ample proof that

the more forceful attacks are equally successful. Hence it is that we find the serried ranks of verbal parallels marshalled with their tin swords flashing fiercely in the sun, the pop-gun artillery of historical parallel ready to discharge its parched-pea missiles, and the harmless mines of inference which are expected to blast poor Will's reputation as a man of knowledge and observation for ever.

The verbal parallels I have treated fully in this booklet. The historical parallels are demolished by the axiom "History repeats itself." Histories of men and women, whether in fact or fiction, are an endless chain of repetitions. The world's history is concrete mathematics, and we are wisely denied the formulæ of its arithmetical elements, for accurate foreknowledge would rob us of our energies.

Bacon and Shakespeare—Shakespeare and Bacon. How these two names stand out to the student of genius! Just as there is no trace of similarity in their writings, so is it impossible to compare the men, save that presumably each had the usual complement of limbs and organs. What would Shakespeare have been had he possessed Bacon's learning? What, indeed, yet is it not thinkable that his volatile fancy might have been crushed beneath the weight of so colossal a scholarship? And take the opposite case. What would Bacon have been

without his learning? Did his mind possess that radium-like property, that internal energy, that could maintain the brilliant fusillade without recuperation from external sources, or was he not rather an intellectual mill grinding patiently what grain was brought him in his studies, and so making him amanuensis to the thought of his time?

In Bacon we have that genius which is the "capacity for taking infinite pains," in Shakespeare we find a form of genius which has not yet been classified, and which still defies analysis.

And now—a grain of comfort for Shakespeareans who are fearful of these onslaughts. Bacon is not the only claimant. Some there are who are convinced that the Earl of Rutland wrote the plays. Others are equally positive that one William Shapleigh wrote them, and again others maintain stoutly that Henry Wriothesly, Earl of Southampton, was the real author of these immortal works. Let them fight it out amongst themselves, and, in their mutual demolition, leave William Shakespeare where he stands, untouched, unapproachable, supreme.

INTRODUCTION.

FELLOW JURYMEN—

We have the responsibility of arriving at a definite conclusion in a case of the gravest importance and the most immediate necessity: for the authenticity of the personality of our National Bard is a question that should now be set surely at rest, if, indeed, it be ever possible to attain that desirable end.

First, let me explain the form in which I now address you, and the circumstances that have led to that address.

I, in common with a large number of people, had been what I would call a Negative Shakespearean. That is to say, I, from force of habit merely, attributed the "Shakespeare Plays" to their traditional author. I was certainly dimly aware that there existed somewhere a Baconian cult, but without going into the question took the more popular side,

and treated all who would dethrone the Swan of Avon with the contemptuous indifference I felt was their only desert. Then it fell out that a Great Friend revealed to me the fearsome fact that he was a staunch Baconian, and furthermore contended that Francis Bacon's authorship of the plays attributed to Shakespeare was a matter that had been "proved up to the hilt," as though anything in this world could claim such certitude!

My fast-cooling regard for him was fanned again into a semblance of its former warmth when I discovered that, while upholding the Baconian faction to the fullest, he had as much contempt for the section that toyed with ciphers—bi-literal, or otherwise—as could any victim of "Shakespearolatry." I then perceived that there could be Baconians and Baconians, and that the nobler-minded of them might be worthy of attention. My Great Friend thereupon lent me certain books written by lawyers in which was alleged to be proved "beyond the shadow of a doubt" that the Baconians were in the right.

These books, three in number, were "The Mystery of William Shakespeare," by His Honour Judge Webb, "The Bacon-Shakespeare Controversy," by Lord Penzance and "The Problem of the Shakespeare Plays," by G. C. Bompas, K.C. These three

powerful advocates of Baconianism have made me a Positive Shakespearean, and in the following pages I propose to show you how.

The first of these interesting examples of the power of ratiocination is sub-titled "A Summary of Evidence." The second purports to be in the form of a judge's summing up in addressing a jury, and the book by Bompas, while not professing such, is practically a speech for the prosecution.

And now, dear readers, you know why I address you as fellow jurymen.

There are further justifications for taking upon myself the quality of jurymen in this case. I must frankly state at the outset in self-protection that I am writing on a subject I know very little about. It seems a quaint idea, but its quaintness lies in the acknowledgment only: the practice is common enough in all conscience. And if I lack special knowledge in the way of independent study or research, I must also plead my deficiency in the matter of *skill* in argument. But what is the customary procedure in grave cases? On whom rests the onus of the ultimate verdict? On the lawyers—on the judge, himself? Of course not. A certain number of "good men and true," who have known absolutely nothing of the matter in hand before, and who are entirely without legal training, are set

above all these as the fairest deciders. You and I, dear readers, are of their number. Therefore chide me not that I plunge into this dispute with my puny pen, but accept it as the natural outcome of Lord Penzance's "Gentlemen of the Jury!"

What are a juryman's qualifications?

- (1). He must be between the ages of twenty-one and sixty.
- (2). He must not be deaf, dumb, or blind.
- (3). He must not be more noticeably imbecile than the rest of mankind.
- (4). He must, to serve in some courts, have paid his taxes.

Barring some slight irregularities in the last particular, I fulfil all these conditions. You will observe that there is no obligation of intimate knowledge laid down: no obligation of ratiocinatory dexterity. It is merely assumed that a man fulfilling the elementary conditions of health and maturity scheduled above is possessed of that quality of common sense which is ever "the Englishman's proud boast."

What, after all, is argument? It is but a weapon, and to leave the issue of grave disputes to hang solely on the result of an argumentive ordeal by battle is but to revive the principles of the *duello*.

Whether the weapons be swords, pistols, fists or tongues, the superficial victory lies naturally with the more skilful combatant, quite irrespective of the

inherent rights of the question. Hence the need for you and I, my fellow jurymen, who, unbiassed as we are by conventional rules of logic, can, as the proverbial lookers-on, see most of the game, and so be looked to by the litigants, their technically expert and honourably biassed spokesmen, and even the judge, for an intelligent and trustworthy view of the matter in dispute.

Now, fellow jurymen, more particularly those who are familiar with the three books I have enumerated, we are in the position of having listened to that number of speeches for the prosecution. For, though both Lord Penzance and His Honour Judge Webb, profess to give unbiassed summaries of evidence, leaving the ultimate decision in the reader's hands, I must contend that my description of their writings is more accurate, for they, with consummate skill—skill that has afforded me the greatest entertainment—always at the moment of professed impartiality throw their whole weight against the “young man who came up from Stratford” as Webb contemptuously speaks of the poor defendant.

As I have already confessed, I can bring few fresh arguments to bear on the matter, but it is my intention or (were it safer to say?) desire to so dissect and expose the various fallacies, absurdities, and, I will go so far as to say, specious methods of

argument displayed by this trio, as to destroy their structures, and by this demolition of powerful antagonism do more for the cause of Shakespeareanism than any amount of further word-twisting and logic-chopping could do.

Of the literature on Shakespeare's side I know little beyond what I have seen quoted in the three Baconian works I propose to handle. But, assuming these quotations to be fairly rendered, I quite sympathise with the Baconians in their denunciations. For here we find a striking example of how excessive zeal and ill-considered advocacy will do more to damage a cause than the most intelligent opposition.

On the whole there are many details in this discussion over which I feel disposed to echo the famous summing up of the late Mr. Commissioner Kerr—"If you believe the plaintiff, you will find for the plaintiff: if you believe the defendant, you will find for the defendant. But if you think as I do you won't believe either of them." And yet in the trial which provoked that utterance no doubt there was much ingenious arguing on both sides.

In the mighty discussion concerning the rival claims of Bacon and Shakespeare there appears to be on both sides an attempt to cram palpable supposition down our throats in the guise of evidence.

It is no more necessary to say that Shakespeare was a lawyer, a student and a model of all the virtues, than it is to declare him no better than an ostler, an illiterate boor and a particularly objectionable kind of scamp. When extreme points are made, and forced with excessive asseveration by their respective partisans, the redundant zeal is an obstacle to credence, and I am irresistibly reminded of a saying of my grandfather's—"If he says 'tis true: I believe him. But if he call the Almighty to witness its truth, then I know it to be a lie!"

CHAPTER I.

I BELIEVE it is the accepted principle of medical experts in mental disease never to accuse patients of their condition. For that reason, if for none other, I will not adopt the usual course of Shakespeare's adherents by saying all Baconians should be safely housed at Hanwell and similar beneficent institutions. If I did take up this attitude I should have to divide them into two sections: the harmless and the dangerous: the cipherists and the evidence-mongers.

Truly the cipherists are harmless enough, and the class of mind they are likely to influence need not be taken into serious consideration. On the other hand, the evidence-mongers and argument-twisters are a distinct danger, and, if the purblind Shakespeareans' estimate *should* be justifiable, which I do not believe, then we should have to adopt a Lombrosian view, for they are most astonishingly clever! In fact, I can well under-

stand the average man, after having the washy sentimentality and childish chatter of the average type of Shakespearean exposed, being dazzled by the brilliancy of argument and ingenious blending of fact and fancy as shown in the several books under notice, until they unconsciously accept quibbling for reasoning, and argument for proof.

The only way I can conceive of treating the matter is to boldly face the fact that to a large extent it is insusceptible of actual proof, and that a large percentage of the facts available will ever remain inscrutable mysteries, notwithstanding the enchanting edifices of supposition for which they may serve as bases.

Supposition is in the main worthless, yet it is all my trio of legal authorities can fall back upon, even as Sydney Lee and his following. In these circumstances the only course left for the intelligent and enlightened juryman is to entertain that supposition which is in agreement with tradition, always providing it is not too palpably of the fairy-tale order. And all personality must be left entirely out of the question. To call Shakespeare a dissolute rogue does not in the least help to prove that Bacon wrote the plays under discussion, nor does calling him a noble-souled student contribute any support to tradition. There are enough authentic

cases on record to show that impure practice can exist in the same person with noble precept. Therefore to say, as these Baconian worthies do, that the only authentic anecdotes of William Shakespeare show him to have been a drinker, and of irregular habits, and consequently incapable of writing such lines as condemn these things in gloriously inspired diction, is but a paltry method of begging the question. Of the orators it is my pleasure to hear occasionally, there is one who eloquently holds forth in support of temperance, and makes his most convincing exhortations when in that condition described by seamen as "half seas over." Old Plymothians may recall the eccentric and dissolute divine who frankly told his congregations not to do as he did, but as he told them to do. Thus we find no necessity to assume that precept and practice must agree in individuals. Besides, the argument, if it be one at all, cuts both ways. If the libertine could not write exalted sentiment, then, surely, the noble-minded student would have been incapable of descending to those miry depths of diction that have to be excluded from the modern acting editions.

In calling Bacon noble-minded I am taking him at the appraisement of the writers I am analysing. I *have* heard some slight whispering as to his

probity and general conduct, but, as they are not treated of by Lord Penzance, His Honour Judge Webb, or Mr. Bompas, I ignore them. What seems the most striking feature of these writer's views is the quaint hibernianism that is so constantly displayed. We are to believe, for instance, that Bacon, having written his "De Augmentis," "Novum Organum," etc., must needs re-write them in dramatic form. We are also to believe, forsooth, that Bacon, whilst writing the plays, was so fearful of his authorship being discovered that he filled them with countless unmistakable clues to that damning fact.*

His Honour Judge Webb tries to show that the publication of the Folio of 1623, in Shakespeare's name, with his portrait, and laudatory verses by Ben Jonson, is in itself irrefragible proof that Bacon was the author.

This, even, is not so bad as the curious fragmentary quotation, divorced from its context, which His Honour uses as a voluntary confession that the name Shakespeare was merely a *nom de plume*. Here is shown what danger lies in mechanically trained minds: in making an end of means. It

* One cannot help thinking of Mr. Winkle before the duel: "Snodgrass, do *not* let me be baulked in this matter, do *not* give information to the local authorities," etc.

amply illustrates the theses set forth in Bacon's "Idola Fori" as to the mal-influence of mere words. For we find that the possibility of constructing an ingenious chain of arguments—pure word-twisting—is treated as sufficient excuse for tilting at long-established and deeply cherished tradition.

No, my fellow jurymen, we must have the matter approached in a different spirit. There must be more genuine effort to get at the truth, and not so much anxiety to prove a point, however clever that point may be. There is tradition and supposition, and there is argument: all good in their varying degrees, but high over all comes analysis, which is the truer reasoning, and this is our work, jurymen.

It is by the analysis of the extremely clever arguments and suppositions of Penzance, Webb and Bompas, that I hope to show that possible which they deny. These gentlemen contend that Shakespeare, being illiterate and boorish (pure supposition, by the way), could have had no education, no law, no Latin. If, as I believe I can, I succeed in showing how he could have had all these and more by the destructive criticism of their own statements, I shall, out of the debris of their so demolished fortress, be able to supply for once some really solid material to strengthen the foundations of the Shakespeare edifice.

CHAPTER II.

SUNDRY writers have at various times produced with much diligence, works purporting to give an accurate record of Shakespeare's life. When we know that all that is with certainty known about this living enigma can be summed up in a paragraph, it is obvious that any book of dimensions styled a "Life of William Shakespeare" must of necessity consist almost wholly of supposition, if not of downright fabrication. I can see, therefore, that such works, well-meaning though they may be in intent, are a distinct incentive of opposition.

I have before me as I write a little pamphlet by George Stronach in which he shows, and with much moderation, the vast amount of conjectural padding that goes to make up the "Life" by Sydney Lee.*

* It must not be forgotten that Lee's book is called "A Life of William Shakespeare." The indefinite article shows it is offered as conjecture, and largely disarms criticism.

I heartily agree with almost every stricture of Mr. Stronach's, but when it is proved that Shakespeare has some fulsomely imaginative partisans, we are no nearer the question of the authorship. And if in such a work it be successfully shown that it is even ninety-nine per cent invention, that showing cannot shake the immovable and immutable one per cent of truth. At the same time I can readily understand a superficial thinker—a man who thinks by rule and not by nature—refusing to look for the odd one per cent as a negligible quantity. But the truth is indestructible nevertheless, even though it be not superficially evident.

Let us now examine the Baconian estimate of the young man from Stratford. What does Lord Penzance say? On page 50 of his "Judicial Summary"—which he acknowledges to be after all a speech for the prosecution—we find the assumption, possibly a logical one, that: "It has been made plain and cannot be disputed that William Shakespeare was in truth, when he left home for London, an almost uneducated man."

It might have been the case, and I will admit it as a possibility in spite of the undenied record of his attendance at the Stratford Grammar School.

On the other hand, His Honour Judge Webb lays it down that "the world is not made up of might-

have-beens, and we cannot accept possibilities as facts." And in his giving out this sententious dictum we find another example showing the contrast between practice and precept in an individual spoken of in the preceding chapter.

Returning to Penzance, his lordship says on that same page 50 that there is nothing to lead one to suppose that Shakespeare had any taste for literature or learning. But, I contend, neither is there anything to lead one to suppose the reverse. As a plain matter of fact, the road of Shakespeare's life at this period is devoid of milestone or sign-post, and thus it is small wonder that he who would traverse it afresh finds himself oftener in the ditch than on the highway. And, again, I would remind those who have allowed the great learning and eminence of the lawyer to obscure their perceptions of the real issues that we jurymen do not wish to be led to suppose anything. We want something that will induce belief.

Intelligent supposition is worthy of tolerance, tradition is worthy of respect, and circumstantial evidence is worthy of scrutiny. Nothing but direct evidence is worthy of the fullest credence.

When Lord Penzance attempts to give an idea of the personal characteristics of Shakespeare as a young man, he gives us something really intelli-

gible. We can all follow the assumption that "he seems to have led the life of a jovial, active-spirited youth bent on enjoying himself mainly in outdoor pursuits (not always indulged within the bounds of the law), and to have been of a merry, convivial nature, with a decided turn for theatricals." This is entirely satisfactory as a sketch of the youth who later developed such brilliant talents.

Now we come to the question of Shakespeare's education. All that we have any record of is that he attended the Stratford Grammar School for an indefinite period: Bompas says "some years," others are more exact in their statements, if not in their facts, when they say "three years." However, the latter seems to be most generally accepted. But the main point is that his having attended the school is not denied or disputed by the three writers I am criticising.

He who would enquire whether the youth was what is called in stage-land a "quick study," or whether he was but a dullard is met with blank nothingness. And the over-kind historian who tells us that he learnt Latin and modern languages, equally with the disputant who asserts that he learnt nothing, is providing such information from out the depths of his fertile imagination.

A clever point made by the Baconians deals with

the question of genius. Were the plays solely composed of brilliant and inspired poesy, they say they would cease from cavilling at the belief in Shakespeare's authorship. But, they argue, we find them filled with accurate knowledge of facts, and therefore they must be the work of a ripe scholar. The Shakespeareans fall, rabbit-like, into the trap, and try by all sorts of romantic shifts and redundant subterfuges to show that William Shakespeare, some time of Stratford-on-Avon, was a student, had travelled, and so forth.

Dealing with the difference between simple genius and accurate knowledge, Penzance gives an ingenious hypothetical case. "There are a certain number of towns or rivers, let us say in France or Russia. Could a perfectly ignorant man, a man who had read nothing, had been taught nothing, had learnt nothing from his fellow-men, tell the names of these towns or rivers by possessing any amount of mental power or genius?"

What a syllogism!—absolutely unanswerable—for those who do not wish it answered. Small wonder that the average reader is posed by such ingenious misuse of logic. But, despite the cleverness of the argument, a moment's examination shows that the premises are obviously unsound: I fail to see by what right his lordship takes it for granted

that he has proved Shakespeare to have been a "perfectly ignorant man, a man who had read nothing, had been taught nothing," and, above all, "had learnt nothing from his fellow-men"! This is wanton chop-logic, and reminds one at once of the evergreen horse-chestnut—chestnut-horse quip.

Observe the characteristic method of taking as proved that which had previously only been assumed, and so dropping in the insidious poison in exquisitely graduated doses. For instance—"the incapacity of William Shakespeare to have written the plays in the *state of ignorance* in which he arrived in London having once been established," and again, "starting from a condition of what I must call *almost complete ignorance*." The italics are mine in each case: they help to draw attention to the slow transformation of speculation into the appearance of established fact. And I shall presently show you that Lord Penzance is not the only Baconian who throws such impalpable, but blinding dust in the eyes of his jury.

He contends, as do most Baconians, and they make their case plausible enough, that such knowledge, apart from poetic fantasy, is only to be obtained by "years of patient and indefatigable study." "All this is the work of the *student*," and Lord Penzance doubts whether four or five years'

study would be sufficient for a young man to attain the mental culture displayed by the author of the Shakespeare plays.

Continuing in the belief that schooling is the sole foundation of literary ability, he says that Shakespeareans must assume that their idol voluntarily went in for a rigorous course of hard study, and pertinently observes "why in the name of all that is probable or, I might almost say, credible, should this young man, *utterly untutored and illiterate as he was*, have attempted any such thing?" Again I have italicised the persistence in taking Shakespeare's alleged ignorance for ascertained fact.

But if we look at the matter dispassionately there is no reason to assume that Shakespeare must have done anything of the kind. I, for one, must confess that I utterly fail to conceive any playwright having in his early days deliberately gone in for a preliminary course of hard study in order that he might be able some day to write dramatic masterpieces. The idea is too absurd. In fact, it is almost as absurd as his lordship's thinking the Shakespeareans must perforce take up that untenable position if they wish to eschew Baconianism.

Webb and Bompas are with Penzance on this question of forcing the conclusion that William Shakespeare was an ignorant boor, and that the

author of the plays was a scholar and a bookworm. Webb is very rightly most scathing in his denunciations of the fanciful and romantic hero-worship that invests Shakespeare with the halo of studenthood, but I wish he had not been a lawyer. He may be perfectly convinced of his own sincerity, but, like Penzance and Bompas, he speaks from his brief, and tries to make out his case for the Baconians at all hazard. And this in a book called a "summary of evidence"! Here is a fatuous argument that conclusively demonstrates a belief that jurors lack intelligence. We are told of certain of Shakespeare's townsmen who were amongst his schoolmates, and were themselves very ignorant. One of these, Sturley, by name, wrote to Shakespeare; the letter is extant, and contains an erroneous Latin quotation. Now, follow the reasoning: Sturley was twice as long as Shakespeare at Stratford Grammar School, consequently as six years is to three, so is Sturley's knowledge to Shakespeare's. If this is to be the type of argument that they think is to destroy a long-established tradition, then I must deplore their failing to take into consideration the fact that there are people with commonsense in the world.

I will show you presently how the young man from Stratford could have got his education; and that by simple inference from the few facts that are

known, and that are not disputed by the Baconians. These people talk about Shakespeare living in a bookless world, and tell us what books were in common use in his day, and what not, as translations, cheap editions, etc. They say he must have had an extensive library in many tongues, and so they prate of books, books, forever books! A plague on your books! Is the printer the sole disseminator of knowledge? Is there not *the* great book of nature everlastingly open for all who have the inward understanding to read, and are not our fellowmen its most enlightening pages?

CHAPTER III.

BUT, after all, do we not possess absolutely indisputable direct proof that the young man from Stratford *did* study books, and that to some purpose, too? What sort of books, do you say? Why, play-books. Nay, strangle that smile in its birth; this is no hasty conjecture, no artifice of pretended logic, no supposition in substance, although it may by many be thought so in its alleged effect at first glance.

Let me lead up to my point by easy stages. The Baconians admit that in his youth Shakespeare evinced a "decided turn for theatricals," and that when apprenticed to a butcher he never slaughtered a calf but he accompanied the action with "tragicall speeches."* From that period we get but one or two isolated glimpses of him, not all of proved authenticity. But from 1592 onwards we find him

* Did Bacon write them?

a rising, successful actor, actor-manager and part proprietor of two London theatres. And by 1594 he is so far advanced in his art that he performs before the Queen. All this according to Baconian admission.

Now, just a parenthetical query, is it probable that a "perfectly ignorant man, a man who had read nothing, had been taught nothing, and had learnt nothing from his fellowmen," a man who was illiterate, boorish and provincial in manners (as alleged) could possibly have risen to such a position in so short a time? Yet these legal lights admit the one in the same breath that they allege the other.

Now, as to the condition of the dramatic world in Shakespeare's day: I have no knowledge of it myself, nor is it necessary that, as a jurymen, I should have, but Webb repeats the statement, thereby endorsing it, that in those days more plays were produced per month in England than now in all England and America in a year.

Then we must look into an allied question: what manner of plays were they? I think no one will be under the impression that there was much of the "What Happened to Make Jones Leave Home" style of thing. The greater part were learned, even at times, pedantic productions. Even the poorer specimens will have made some show of scholarship.

Think, then, of the numbers he was familiar with on the boards and add to them the no doubt still greater numbers of dramatic efforts written by broken-down scholars, lawyers and other aspirants to theatrical honours, that were read in the managerial sanctum, pigeon-holed, and—left there. Just think what a liberal education this would be to a man of observation and perception, a man who, however he might forget his duty to himself by indulging in questionable practices, was still capable of appreciating and expressing refinement and noble sentiment. Does not Ben Jonson tell us this very fact when he says that Shakespeare redeemed his vices with his virtues?

The theory of Shakespeare's boorishness is mere conjecture, and extremely illogical conjecture at that, for much that the Baconians are forced to admit about him proves the reverse. To-day we might conceive the possibility of an illiterate provincial achieving some distinction in one of the many branches now open for rightly called "low" comedy. But just think of the conditions an actor had to work under in the days of good Queen Bess. Remember that there was no scenic effect to help him, no differentiation of costume to aid in the portrayal of character—in short, none of these adventitious aids that can best be summed up in

the word "limelight." All he had to rely on was his own high elocutionary power to make live in the minds of his audiences the events and emotions he had to render. Acting was high art then, and this was one channel of education that I contend is a proved matter of fact. If you tell me that as it only began in 1592 it commenced too late, I can only answer by conjecture. But if in certain matters the Baconians are to be allowed the use of conjecture unacknowledged, surely I sin not if I confess my weakness. Here is a point of great difficulty and mystery: what of the gaps of five or seven years, or even more that face us prior to 1592? Where was he? Travelling on the Continent, visiting universities, studying medicine or practising law in an attorney's office as some of the perfervid Shakespeareans would have us believe? Well, it is barely possible, but I cannot think it even barely probable. In these periods he may have been many things by turn and nothing long. But what happens in nine out of a dozen cases of "merry, convivial youths with a decided turn for theatricals"? What do you expect when they disappear from sight? My own idea is that some of them enlist, but that the majority join companies of strolling players. Pure supposition, mind, to suggest that the blanks in Shakespeare's record are thus to be filled up,

but, until the Baconians can give me a more probable supposition, I will adhere to this one. I will, however, admit certain other possibilities. Thus he may have been in jail some part of the time: not at all unlikely. Also he may have been glad to pick up a more or less honest penny by holding horses or other menial service. He may have been all these as circumstances willed, but those who say he was wholly unconnected with that great educator, the stage, I will no more entertain than I will those who say he was engaged in improving his mind with a view to becoming a great dramatist.

True enough, we are, if anything, but little nearer the question of the authorship of the plays. We have only got a reasonable supposition that this form of education began at a period prior to 1592. And we have established the fact that the young man from Stratford who afterwards became so proficient in the delicate art of elocution, and was part owner and manager of the Globe and Blackfriars Theatres, was a remarkably able man, and could by no stretch of imagination be considered a perfectly ignorant man, who had read nothing, had been taught nothing, and had been of such dull perception as to have learnt nothing from his fellowmen.

We must not forget that we have heredity to give

us a clue to his superior mental attainments. What of that questionable intrigue with the wife of mine host of the "Crown" inn? The Baconians gleefully recount, as showing what a scamp the reputed author was, how he could easily have been made co-respondent in divorce had mine host been minded to take the trouble. Shakespeare is known to have used the house in his travels, and they tell us the woman was witty above expectation, and of exceeding beauty. There comes a witty customer with perhaps more than a dash of the Lothario, the husband is tolerant, and the inevitable happens. I say the husband is tolerant, for such must have been the case, seeing that with much merriment, apparently, the author of his cuckoldom took the office of godfather to the bastard. Now this easy-going innkeeper had two sons, honestly come by, who to all appearance were of average dullness. Their base-born half-brother, however, had inherited some finer mettle, and was so far superior to the others as to rise to distinction as Sir William d'Avenant, poet laureate. The sons of the innkeeper were boors. Why not the son of the equally boorish player? Let us hear no more of this pro-boor theory, the crabbed contention falls to the ground in the light of known conditions and events.

The meagre array of undenied facts prove that

William Shakespeare, of Stratford-on-Avon, must have had sufficient learning to enable him to study a part, sufficient keenness of perception to enable him to render the part, and sufficient initiative to make him in his sphere a ruler of men.

CHAPTER IV.

SUPERFICIAL essays at reasoning, as well as downright misuse of logical methods, will prompt an objection to the suggestion in my last chapter. The persistent critic, far more ready to assert that Shakespeare did not write the plays than that Bacon did, will come along with his nose two inches above his book, the highest he ever gets, and will argue, nay, grumble, that an extensive and intimate acquaintance with Elizabethan plays might, perhaps, develop latent literary style and assist in the growth of florid utterance. But, he will say, with his mind full of books and their dust, that the man who wrote those plays was familiar with this, that and the other Greek and Latin author, and that these particular works had so far not been translated into English. There is a distinct "facer" for you! It shows how cleverly or ignorantly, as may be thought, these self-appointed scrutineers of history will omit vital

facts. A four-legged stool is a good thing, failing that one with three legs is found satisfactory. But remove one leg from the latter, and great is the fall of him who would be supported thereon. And that is exactly the case with this argument as to the knowledge of classic authors in their original tongues. Their ricketty, two-legged perch is thus constructed: certain Greek and Latin works were not translated: some of the plays show knowledge of these works, or, rather, express ideas that in many cases must have been drawn from those sources by some direct or roundabout manner. All this as it stands sounds very plausible, but I will now draw attention to a third fact which all these disputants persistently ignore. They never tell us, well as their own "book-larnin'" must make them familiar with the fact, that classical allusion, reference and quotation was the cant of the day. Writers of every shade and colour were so imbued with classicism and so soaked in the Hellenic and Roman mythologies that, in season and out, they could no more refrain from filling their productions with tags of Latin and tropes of Greek than Mr. Dick could keep Charles the First's head out of the historic memorial. And they had not the same desire to do so: it was considered the hall-mark of style. So widespread and persistent was this a

feature of the times that it would not surprise me were it shown that the very gutter snipes prated of Venus, Mars and the rest of the Jovian brood. Indeed, they were so saturated with classic lore, and so free in its employment, that some of the most ludicrous incongruities have been perpetrated in consequence.

What think you of Quarles's "Emblems"? Here we have a book of religious poems for devout Christians, published, roughly speaking, in the same epoch as the Shakespeare plays. I will quote here a portion of the fifth Emblem, which is supposed to be inspired by I Corinthians, vii, 21 :

Gone are those golden days, wherein
 Pale conscience started not at ugly sin :
 When good old *Saturn's* peaceful throne
 Was unsurped by his beardless son :
 When jealous *Ops* ne'er fear'd th' abuse
 Of her chaste bed, or breach of nuptial truce :
 When just *Astrea* poised her scales
 In mortal hearts, whose absence earth bewails :
 When froth-born *Venus* and her brat,
 With all the spurious brood young *Jove* begat,
 In horrid shapes were yet unknown ;
 Those Halcyon days, that golden age is gone.
 There was no client then to wait
 The leisure of this long-tailed advocate ;
 The talion law was in request,
 And Chanc'ry Courts were kept in every breast :
 Abused statutes had no tenters
 And men could deal secure without indentures.

And so it glibly runs on for another twenty-six lines in which we hear of Cupid, Erreny, Juno and Jove and Astrea again.

Now, if a writer of religious verse could be so unconscious of the oil-and-water like mixture he was perpetrating, we have therein proof that such things were the habitual modes of expression common to the period, and if they can come so markedly forward in such "emblems" of Christianity, what are we to expect from stage plays? And how much of this cant of the day would a retentive, trained memory retain and assimilate?

If I have not *proved* that Shakespeare got his classical lore from plays of the period, the Baconians certainly have not proved that the only possible means of acquiring enough for the plays was painstaking research, and delving in Latin authors.

They do not seem to be very complimentary to the man they would see installed as the national poet, for they are more insistent on the evidences of midnight oil than the spontaneity of production displayed in the plays. The only lamp oil I can smell proceeds from the footlights rather than the student's reading lamp.

The man who would uphold research as one of the factors at work in the creation of these

masterpieces decries the genius of their author, whomsoever he believes that author to be.

In the little quotation from Quarles will be noticed a curious piece of legal imagery. It is possible that in a pedantic age such things were common, but certainly not sufficiently so to assume Shakespeare's legal lore was culled in the same manner I have done with regard to his classicism.

Though I do not yet propose to handle the vexed question of parallelisms, I may draw attention to an inept objection made by Bompas. He claims that a scene in which a lover prays for a kiss in the quaint metaphor of a "grant of pasturage on her lips": and the lady, in the same playful strain answers that "they are no common, though several they be," could only have been written by a lawyer owing to the punning use of the terms common, pasture and severalty. But are lawyers the only men who know things, pray? Have their clients, for instance, absolutely no acquaintance with any legal terminology whatever? Why, fellow jurymen, the instance quoted deals with pasturage law terms that might even be known to any intelligent butcher's apprentice in that slough of ignorance, Stratford-on-Avon.

But if we have evidence, direct evidence, of his capacity for refinement, and, as I have shown out

of the Cerberus-like Baconian jaws to which I am trying to act as dentist, that he was a man of ability, and if I have succeeded in pointing to a highly probable means whereby he may have broadened his mind, developed his powers and acquired the knack of classic allusion, I think I can, from that same source, open a door to your intelligence through which you may be able to discern a means whereby such a man could gain sufficient knowledge of legal terms and phrases as would serve his purpose for poetic simile and metaphor. For, be it remembered, it is a necessary characteristic of a great author's mind that everything seen or heard is automatically scheduled for possible future use.

These three Baconians, in their frantic haste to show how mean and contemptible this alleged writer of tender love scenes, noble thoughts and exalted admonition could be, give the game away at once when they tell us what a frequent litigant he was. Think of the consultations with lawyers, the waiting in court while other cases were being argued, the talking over clever quibbles, heard when, as we can only reasonably infer in a man of his temperament, he adjourned to "have a glass."

No, my friends, it is as fatuous to say he could by no possibility have known anything of the law,

as it is to say that he probably was employed in an attorney's office. And mark again how the Baconians cut the ground from under their own feet when they tell us first that the author of the plays employs terms common to usury, and then point out the fact that Shakespeare was in the habit of lending money. I would add conjecture to that and say that there is nothing wildly improbable in the thought that in some part of his career he may have borrowed money.

Now we come to the question of medical knowledge, which, while not being displayed to the same extent as classical and legal familiarity, still finds a prominent place in the Shakespeare plays. This is a point on which I must throw up the sponge. I have my views, but in the absence of any data whatever I prefer to keep groundless supposition out of these pages. We know of nothing that could have helped him to acquire such knowledge, we don't know if he hob-nobbed with any convivial medico whom he was able to employ as reviser of medicinal metaphor, we know nothing of his health, on which his mode of life cannot have had a very beneficial influence, so we can assume no clue in that direction. Nor can we say there is any clue in the person of Dr. Hall, the highly-respected physician who was the husband of Shakespeare's daughter

Susannah. Were I an orthodox Shakespearean I might cajole my intelligence into believing that he at one time contemplated entering the medical profession. But we know nothing, absolutely nothing, and so must not allow ourselves to be deceived by such fancies. And at the same time we must guard ourselves against being similarly deceived by the equally wild statements that he could by no possibility have known anything of the subject that are insisted on by the Baconians, who know no more about him, and have no more grounds for their assumption than I, should I be unwary enough to make one. Suffice it to say that of the four questions of personal capability, classic lore, legal acquaintance and medicine, all of which the Baconians scout, I have shown how three of them *may* be accounted for on solid grounds of deduction and analysis. The fourth must be placed with one or two others that, as I said in my introduction, must forever remain inscrutable mysteries.

CHAPTER V.

ONE of the biggest rocks that overloaded and leaky ship Baconia splits upon, is that submerged and very jagged one of style. There are few things that seem so definite, and few that are so elusive when one tries to grasp and analyse it. We have, too, to take into consideration that there is such a thing as the style of a period as well as the thought of a period. The man whose mind is cramped within the four margins of the printed page will tell us—and that from his genuine belief, that the thought of the period is the result of its literature, for he, poor soul, cannot think without the stimulus of a book. A little reflection will call to mind the fact that there have been cases where men in different countries have independently, but simultaneously, given to the world almost identical ideas. Hence we can only assume that the thought of a period generates its literature.

Apart from any such coincidences it is obvious that, as thought must undoubtedly precede literary effort in the single instance, the same must be the case with literature in general. And the "Elizabethan style" is one that we hear spoken of almost more than any other.

Granted, then, that we have a style belonging to a certain period of literary production, and that that style is the outcome of the thought-tendencies of the age, we have either to assume that only one man at a time is capable of giving full expression to those thought-tendencies in their infinite variety, or that two men, working in different departments of literary effort can give expression to those ideas then "in the air," each in the manner appropriate to his own walk in life. Thus the philosopher would produce learned treatises in which the science and philosophy of the age would be handled in a more or less didactic manner, while the theatrical man would write plays in which those elements would be utilised in analogy, simile and metaphor. And when each treated of emotion in the same thought-cycle, there would be no possibility of any great divergence in matter or manner, for the whole gamut of human passion seems to play about those two tones, love and hate, with that insidious semitone lying between and belonging to both, jealousy.

In the identification of one unit out of a literary epoch by style alone, seeing that the unity of style makes the epoch, we are at a great loss if we take in the general aspect only. We must have knowledge of the birth-marks of each. Here is an analogy. In India, if any of the natives has a grievance against a white soldier, as, alas, happens occasionally, the authorities, anxious to let the native see that he can have fair play, will draw up a whole regiment for the offender to be identified and brought to justice. This consummation is, however, but rarely realised. The bewildered native is inclined to look upon this identification-parade as a farce, for, as he will observe to his own people, "how is it possible to pick out one man from a row of white faces that are all alike?" If he does venture on a selection, he is just as likely to be wrong as right. We are in just such a plight when examining the literature of a period, and the fact that we are shown two figures of exceptional stature, and with possibly a similarity of physiognomy is not sufficient to justify us in saying they are one and the same person.

However, this is all based on the assumption that a similarity of style actually exists in the writings of Bacon and Shakespeare, and therefore appears more of an apology than an argument. It is in the main of no effect for my contention on this particular

point is that a wider dissimilarity of style between contemporaries could hardly be imagined. The few points of resemblance belong to the period and not to the persons. Otherwise, we must assume that almost the whole of Elizabethan literature proceeded from the pen of Francis Bacon. Which is absurd. Q.F.D.*

It might be just possible that a short-sighted person could mistake Shakespeare for Bacon "in the dark with the light behind him," but I propose to throw the light full on, and show you the birth-marks. Then we shall have, I hope, an end of this sad case of mistaken identity.

What is the distinguishing feature of Shakespeare's plays? The knowledge, the skill, the poesy? All three certainly, but high above them is the torrential exuberance, the breathless rapidity of utterance, that marvellous way that thought crowds on thought, image on image. The comet-like brilliance and unexpectedness of orbit which impelled that more

* Visits to the meetings of the Bacon Society since the above was written show that this very position is largely taken up by its members, many of whom believe that Bacon was not only Shakespeare, but Beaumont and Fletcher, Marlowe, Spencer, Barnfield and others including Montaigne. Some, even, maintain that he was Cervantes and John Milton! Thus we see what little of similarity does exist is merely the style of the period.

orderly planet, rare Ben Jonson, to exclaim, "would he had blotted a thousand" lines. It is this volcanic manifestation of Shakespeare's fire which is the chief birth-mark by which we can certainly identify him from any other who may bear a superficial resemblance to him. And this feature is one that could not be assumed, and neither could it be held in check. In the philosophic writings that the Baconians contend proceeded from the same pen we do not find this tumultuous riot of language; everything bears to the impress of care, preparation and revision. It is the outcome of the studious rumination characteristic of a finely tempered mind of trained thought-habit. The placid, even flow of tutored diction, however deeply it arrests the interest, never leaves the mind panting in the effort to keep pace. And I contend, fully believing the majority of my co-jurors will agree, that it would be as impossible for the philosopher to assume the dazzling rapidity of utterance, as it would for the poet to hold his native irresistible velocity in check whilst penning reflective and instructive treatises. Whichever manner was native to the man, the other was foreign, and impossible of assumption for any considerable space.

The Baconians seek to show their idol's ability for florid utterance by one or two blemishes of

redundant verbiage that have as much overflow of poesy as the catalogue of a summer sale.

Then there is another birth-mark of Shakespeare's that finds no counterpart in Bacon, and that is humour. And when I speak of humour I am not thinking particularly of the criss-cross quips and quiddities of *Touchstone*, the bloated farce of *Falstaff*, or the dainty whimsicalities of *Rosalind* and *Beatrice*, though all have a bearing on the point, but I have in mind that grim, sardonic humour that we find in some of the more tragic moments. What of the drunken porter with his "knock, knock, knock," just when the murder of *Duncan* has wrought emotion to the snapping point? And look at the terrible humour in some of *Othello's* speeches, and the horrible humour in those of *Richard III*. Here we have *Mephisto in excelsis*. Surely the books would exhibit some of these elements of spontaneity that are such an ever-present feature of the plays were both from the one mind.

That the quality of humour was not totally absent from Bacon's composition no one can deny. His collection of apophthegms, jokes of the funereal, laboured style of the classic period, elaborate repartee, etc., shows that he was capable of appreciating certain kinds of humour in others, but the cases where humour peeps out in his own writings

are so scattered, that, compared with the unceasing sparkle of wit—wit as modern as anything the latter-day humorists have turned out—which pervades the plays, we may well ignore it altogether.*

I have heard it urged, and with some justice, that a knowledge of Latin is essential if one is to thoroughly understand the meanings of many passages in the plays, as the words derived from that monumental language are invariably employed by Shakespeare in their Latin sense. This is perfectly correct, but it by no means proves that the man so using them was a deep Latin scholar. So early in the history of English the derived words would not have drifted far away from their original significance. We well know that the gradual change in the meanings of words is one of the most interesting and peculiar features of language. It is only necessary to cite such words as “presently,” and “decently” to bring this fact forcibly to mind. And this last word reminds me of yet another of Shakespeare’s distinguishing characteristics. And

* Allied somewhat to this question of humour is the curious, half-punning jingle of words that Shakespeare delights in, although he does not seem to have utilised it for humorous purposes. The grim cardinal’s despairing “abject object,” and the string of puns in Hamlet’s grave-side talk are striking cases in point.

that is the ever-present dainty indelicacy that almost invests obscenity with the attributes of poesy. Whether grave or gay, tragic or comic, impropriety winks at us in a way that is neither charming nor shocking, but simply Shakespearean. Bacon's muse is a discreeter lady, and does not indulge in the arch display of ankle and *lingerie*. I have not yet found such things in Bacon, and, like the lady who complimented Dr. Johnson on omitting the bad words from his dictionary, I cannot deny having looked for them. In the plays there is no need to look.

Then we are told that both Bacon and Shakespeare have employed certain words for the first time. But this does not by any means prove these words to be coinages of either. Many words are in common use long before they are admitted to literature. The new dictionaries of to-day contain many words that were tabooed in our fathers' time.

Thus we see how a fairly conducted examination of the abstract question of style *per se*, deprives that element of the great importance attached to it by the Baconians as a support for their theories.

CHAPTER VI.

WE have seen how slender a foundation the Baconians have for their low estimate of Shakespeare's mental capacity, their denial of the possibility of his gaining any sort of culture, and for their insistence on the alleged identity of style in the works known to be by Bacon and those generally ascribed to Shakespeare. Allied to this latter is the curious question of parallelism which seems to be the backbone of their misdirected faith, and—if the bull is permissible—it is the most invertebrate of their contentions.

For this reason I will handle the subject more in detail than hitherto, notwithstanding the fact that I am all along presuming on the reader's acquaintance with the books by Penzance, Webb and Bompas that I am attacking. Being desirous of maintaining compactness I have been chary of quotation from these works. And I have so often seen what mischief an incomplete quotation—that

half truth which is the greater lie—can do, that I prefer to confine my address to those who know the uncurtailed statements of these leaders of Baconian thought.

I will begin with the triads. Being a musician it is only natural that I should first deal with those verbal “chords” said to be “common” to the two sets of writings. Bompas gives three pairs of examples which I here quote :

SHAKESPEARE: Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.

BACON: Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some to be chewed and digested.

SHAKESPEARE: It would be argument for a week, laughter for a month, and a good jest for ever.

BACON: Crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them.

SHAKESPEARE: One draught above heat makes him a fool, a second mads him, and third drowns him.

BACON: Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man.

Now it is contended that such employment of the triple antithesis is specially characteristic of the two sets of writings. But do they mean to add, “and ’of these two sets only”? The triad is a very common element of literary composition wherever conciseness of diction is aimed at. In addition we can learn something bearing on the point at issue from the above paired quotations. Mark the striking

difference there is between them. How much more judgment is displayed by Bacon, what care he has exercised in the avoidance of the repeated "some" in the first. Note the superior balance of the second, and the more complete and rounded form of the third. The deliberation of the student is seen in Bacon's phrases, whereas, notwithstanding the power and pertinence of the language, we find a certain crudeness—possibly adding force to the sentences—in those from Shakespeare, which would have seemed to Bacon a blemish, or at least an inelegance.

And we find another, and still stronger point in the comparisons. Bompas and his friends say the triad was a characteristic mode of expression in the plays and the treatises, and that similar ideas are presented. How is it, then, that none of the quoted triads contains a parallel of thought?

Here they show us a parallel of manner with none of thought. When they show us an alleged parallel of thought the manner differs. Surely, if thought and manner were so uniform they would be able to find better examples than those given.

Webb devotes some space to this branch, but gets no nearer, and Penzance gives us some twenty pages of alleged parallelisms, selected from Ignatius Donnelly's preposterous concoction, the "Great

Cryptogram,"* in not one of which the matter and manner agrees simultaneously. And I doubt whether more than half-a-dozen of the examples given can rightly be termed real parallels after all. Yet his lordship, with apparent faith in the accuracy of Carlyle's definition of mankind, introduces this absurd conglomeration of Donnelly's oddments to his jury in the following words:

And now, gentlemen, I come to what is in my own opinion the most important matter bearing on the probability that these plays came in truth from the hand of Francis Bacon.

Make a close scrutiny of this "most important matter" and it vanishes into thin air, "leaving not a rack behind." The appearance of these disjointed scraps reminds one forcibly of the manipulation of the Will in Swift's "Tale of a Tub." If Donnelly cannot find what he wants he is ready to manufacture it by mutilation and distortion. So much for Donnelly's parallels as extolled by Penzance.

Let us see further what His Honour Judge Webb has to say in the question of parallelism. If the Yankee iconoclast was contemptible, we can at least respect the dignified and scholarly way the learned judge handles this particular section. Webb draws

* Lord Penzance himself says that Donnelly has failed to demonstrate the existence of a cryptogram.

most of the coincidences which he calls parallelisms from Bacon's "Natural History." His Honour tells us that the work contains "as scientific truths a number of errors which had been all but exploded. At the same time, what is equally extraordinary, it anticipates some of the most profound conceptions of modern science."

This last is a point on which we may pause for a moment to look into the question of coincidence in general. Bacon anticipates modern science. We know also that Spencer gave a fairly close description of the Crystal Palace, that Chaucer, in the lines commencing "soun is naught but air y-broken" epitomised the later theories of acoustics. And yet again: Swift gave a remarkably accurate description of the satellites of Mars long before that ruddy planet was thought to have attendants. And if a little-read man-in-the-street like myself, an ordinary, everyday man, such as one finds in jury boxes, can think up these few examples of the "long arm of coincidence" without search, there can be no doubt that a student would be able to extend the list considerably.

In these examples we know them to be pure coincidence. Bacon had no knowledge of the "most profound conceptions of modern science," Spencer was unacquainted with the *chef d'œuvre* of Sir

Joseph Paxton, Chaucer had never read Helmholtz, and in Swift's day no telescope had revealed the Martian satellites. And as I write, there comes to mind another, and a more pertinent coincidence in Swift. Again I refer to the "Tale of a Tub" in the second section of which we find the whole of Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus" rendered in a paragraph. Some may say Carlyle borrowed and elaborated the idea from Swift, but I think not. At any rate the existence of coincidental anticipation is amply proved. The thought which then follows is—how if an author had so *anticipated* from contemporaries with whose works he was unfamiliar? If the one is proved the other is not impossible.

This thought, however, is only in passing. I know well that it savours too much of the Baconian method to be conclusive. Still, if it is no argument, it is certainly a side-light on possibilities.

I will now get to work on the destructive criticism of the parallelisms Webb finds in the "Plays" and the "Sylva Sylvarum." I should wish my fellow jurymen to refer particularly to Webb on page 174 of the "Mystery of William Shakespeare," as I must necessarily be brief in my quotations. He tells us of Bacon's "Theory of Spirits" and going through a catalogue of these elements or "pneumatics," comes to the phrase "spirit of wine," which Bacon describes

as "hot in operation." Then he proceeds to quote the passage in "Othello" where Cassius exclaims :

O thou invisible spirit of Wine, if thou hast
No name to be known by, let me call thee Devil !

Does His Honour wish us to believe that the term, "spirit of wine," was hitherto unknown to mankind, or that its heating effect had never been alluded to by poet before? Also can such a learned man fail to perceive the totally different sense in which the phrase is employed? The poet invests wine with a personality, a malevolent animus or spirit; the scientist merely employs a technicality. The rest of the quotations dealing with spirits collapse under similar scrutiny.

The story of the Egyptian soothsayer is only spoken of by Webb as "related" by Bacon, not invented, so that there is nothing in that parallel to point even to plagiarism. Then we come to the theory of spontaneous generation and Hamlet's "if the sun breeds maggots in a dead dog." The scientist speaks of the "creatures bred of putrefaction," and the poet makes use of this loathsome fact in nature that will have been a matter of everyday observation to him in the Stratford slaughter house. Nothing here suggests in the faintest way anything like identity of authorship. So with the theory of flame and the words of Proteus

in the "Two Gentlemen of Verona," "one heat another heat expels." Here no exclusive knowledge is to be inferred. In many country houses it is still the house-wife's anxiety that the sun shall not put the fire out; a matter of common observation again. But after all this particular example is not worth the space I have given it for itself. It is merely useful to me as showing the wild straining after parallels the Baconians indulge in. Here are the two extracts together :

BACON: Flame doth not mingle with flame, but only remaineth *contiguous*.

SHAKESPEARE: One heat another heat *expels*,
One fire *burns out* another's burning.

Anything less like a parallel could hardly be imagined.

Now what has Webb to say about the theory of celestial bodies (page 180)? He draws fine conclusions from the circumstance that in Bacon and Shakespeare the same astronomical theories are held, notwithstanding that they were already exploded. The only real curiosity in this is that the learned Bacon should have adhered to exploded theories—for one expects the student to modify his views before the romancer. The only comment on the fact is that the two writers held antiquated views on astronomy, a thing that may happen in any age.

CHAPTER VII.

WE now come to Bacon's "Theories of Horticulture," and can deal with them *en masse*, for they all bear a like interpretation. They do not in one single instance display anything like exclusive knowledge possessed by the writer of the "Sylva Sylvarum" and the writer of the plays. Take the first example that Webb gives, which is from Iago's speech on virtue :

'Tis in our selves that we are thus and thus; our bodies are our gardens to the which our wills are gardeners, so that if we plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness or manured with industry, why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills.

This is considered a parallel with a passage in Bacon's "Essay of Gardens" where he says: "Put parsley seed amongst onion seed, or lettuce seed among parsley seed, or basil seed among thyme seed, and see the change of taste, or otherwise." So conclusive does Webb think it that he has the

courage to say that anyone reading the former would think it an extract from Bacon's "Natural History" were his attention drawn to the latter. The short-sightedness of this is beyond belief. Could not the learned judge perceive the vast gulf that separates these two extracts? Could he not see that Bacon's was a mere dictating or chronicling of horticultural experiment and that Iago's speech is a poetic metaphor illustrating our own responsibility as to how we shall dispose ourselves? The words "lettuce" and "thyme" occurring in each are surely not presumptive evidence that the same hand penned both.

The rest of the horticultural parallels yields to analysis in the same way. Shakespeare, in "Troilus and Cressida" makes an analogy of knots in pine trees: Bacon records how knots are produced. Shakespeare in "Richard II" has a gardener who speaks of lopping branches and making incisions in trees, etc., as an analogue of government: Bacon tells us that lopping and cutting are good for trees and plants. Shakespeare in "Henry V" has a simile based on manuring: Bacon tells us of the advantages of this process. And so we find the scientist carefully recording various facts in his "Natural History," while the playwright uses the same facts in metaphor. And what do we glean from that? Is it suggested that Bacon himself

invented the details of gardening so employed, and that he, alone, grew lettuce and thyme in a secret back garden? If such can be proved to have been the case, then there may be something in these parallels worthy of consideration. From page 181 to page 189 in Webb's "Mystery of William Shakespeare," we find a number of horticultural parallels. I am content to quote only the few above, referring the reader to the remainder, for the same objection applies to all save the reference to the apostrophe to Proserpina, to which all Webb has to say is an inconsequent remark as to Kempe, the morris dancer, "having no notion of such a thing."

Leaving the gardening aspect, Webb seeks to show the scientific by quotation from Bacon's pedantic statements on the Transmutation of Bodies, coupled with Ariel's song, "Full Fathom Five thy Father Lies." Webb's quotations here disprove that which he sought to establish, for he first shows us how Bacon describes coral as a "submarine plant," and then quotes the verse in which coral is said to be made of bones!

The opening lines of the "Tempest" provide His Honour with a further inane objection. These lines contain accurate nautical terms and he states that Shakespeare never was at sea. On the other hand Bacon was an authority on nautical matters, and

tells us how to manage a vessel in a storm in his "Historia Ventorum."

As to whether Shakespeare ever was at sea, or came in contact with seafaring folk in course of his wanderings, is a point on which any definite statement on either side must be disallowed. We simply are faced with the regrettable fact that we do not know. But if Shakespeare never was at sea, Judge Webb certainly is over the parallels he produces. And, with regard to these nautical terms of alleged accuracy—does no dramatist or book-writer ever consult with experts in special subjects when the conception of his story demands their details to be introduced?

The objection I moved to the alleged horticultural parallels holds equally good with those on pages 191-2, for again we find the historian chronicling facts that were by no means his own exclusive knowledge, while the poet employs such matters of common knowledge in metaphor. In his "Historia Vitæ et Mortis," Bacon gives some of the well-known symptoms of approaching death. In "Henry V" similar symptoms are described by Dame Quickly in recounting Falstaff's decease. Webb calls the latter a "translation" of Bacon's passage, but, though my own Latinity is a negligible quantity, I cannot accept "babbling of green fields" as a trans-

lation of "memoria confusa." His Honour would have been a much appreciated dominie!

So much for the different employment of similar facts called "parallels." Now for some of these parallels which have absolutely "no connection with the firm next door." Thus Bacon, speaking of the technicalities of musical composition, says "the falling from a discord to a concord makes the sweetest strain." This is accurate enough, and all textbooks of harmony give the rule that discords descend. Webb maintains, thinking the descent of a discord was due to Bacon's own imagination, that Shakespeare "reproduces the thought and the very words" in the opening lines of "Twelfth Night."

Now let us look up these lines:

DUKE: If music be the food of love, play on,
 Give me excess of it; that surfeiting,
 The appetite may sicken and so die,
 That strain again: it had a dying fall.

What a delightful description of delicate melody, falling away in dying breaths of sweetness! Here is true poesy, owing nothing to the textbooks of the theorist. I may in passing say that my own native prejudice is such that, where I find a man in error on a subject I have full knowledge of, I am apt, unreasonably it may seem, to look askance at

his other statements, thinking it possible that experts in those matters might discern similar weaknesses.

I turn now to another non-parallel. Unfortunately it does not deal with such a poetic matter as the last. Bacon, we are told, held the theory that "hair and nails are excrements." Webb goes on to say that "the Queen in 'Hamlet' *adopts the extraordinary phrase*" when she exclaims:

Your bedded hair, like life in excrements
Starts up and stands on end.

Here we see but another image borrowed from the cow-shed experiences of Shakespeare's youth. The heaving of matted, or "bedded hair" reminded him of the like movements due to maggoty generation in the neglected excrements the absence of sanitary authorities made possible. And in this line there is absolutely no suggestion that hair is an excrement, so that to say the Queen adopts Bacon's phrase in which that *is* asserted, is to say the least, rather a strange statement to come from a judge, from whom one would expect absolute fairness of presentment. The pages of Webb are filled with such forced and untenable conclusions. Read page 195, in which we are expected to believe that Bacon alone of his time knew of the legendary attributes of toads, basilisks and salamanders. Bompas follows Webb in almost the same foot-

steps, so it is not needful for me to quote from him. So far the argument of parallelisms crumbles to dust. The poet speaks of flowers and natural forces in metaphoric analogy. The precise chronicler of small details in natural history sets down these facts in a totally different spirit. If these Baconians had produced a few examples of Bacon's using the same phenomena in identical relationship to other matter, if, in short, it could be shown by parallels that identical metaphor was employed, then there might be some excuse for their contentions, but all the parallels given show such an opposite use of the material, and in certain cases, such divergent views, that the analyst is forced to the conclusion that they emanated from totally different pens. And in three cases, as the "grant of pasture," the effect of the sun on carrion and excrements, the butcher's apprentice peeps out very strongly.

It is curious how these Baconians give their case away at times. We are to imagine that Bacon alone was master of the facts in his various treatises on natural history, and then Webb quotes Bacon's admission that the experiments were vulgar and trivial. Take, again, this last parallel from "Troilus and Cressida":

Brother, you have a vice of mercy in you,
Which better fits a lion than a man.

Webb asks "what is this mercy of the lion?" And then adds, "Bacon tells us. 'Of lions' he says 'it is a received belief that their fury ceaseth towards anything that yieldeth.'"

It must have been through an oversight that Webb included the words "a received belief" in his quotation, for that robs the example of any value for his side of the dispute.

In concluding this chapter I must beg of my fellow jurymen to examine all the parallels given in Penzance, Webb and Bompas, when they will see how those space has compelled me to exclude are destroyed by the same analysis that has demolished those I have selected.*

* Since the above chapter was written I have read Edwin Reed's book of Bacon-Shakespeare parallels. The only conclusion I arrive at is that, considering they were contemporaries, it is remarkable how little of similarity exists.

CHAPTER VIII.

HAVING shown the fallacious character of the various Baconian arguments dealing with the questions of personality, education, style, classicism and parallelisms, I now propose to attack those subtler forms of inferential arguments that seem so conclusive to the Baconians.

It must be observed in starting that inferential argument is closely allied to circumstantial evidence, and circumstantial evidence has hanged many an innocent man. Therefore this mode of reasoning needs to be very carefully analysed. No matter how skilfully certain effects may be argued to arise from certain causes, so long as more than one explanation is possible, none of such explanations can be called conclusive. All we can do in such cases is to endeavour by minute analysis to discover which of these theories is more conclusive than the rest. My analysis of the inferential arguments will occupy several chapters, as I must go more into

detail than was absolutely necessary in the case of the other matters enumerated above, for with those questions I was able to extract something in the nature of direct evidence from the known facts, the Baconian admissions and the characteristic conditions of the Elizabethan period.

In the case of the inferences that is not so possible, and therefore all I can hope to do is to demonstrate the laboured nature of the Baconian suppositions and to endeavour to show how a series of more natural theories can be erected on the same facts which, without descending to the sentimentality of so many of the Shakespearean writers, shall yet support their main tenet that the plays in dispute were undoubtedly the work of their traditional author.

I will begin with the inferences Bompas tells us are to be drawn from Bacon's "Promus." This work, if such it can be called, was an elaborate notebook which Bacon kept for a number of years, its full title being "Promus of Formularies and Elegancies." It is said to contain some 1,600 memoranda of useful words, phrases and proverbs from the literature of all ages and in many languages. I can find no suggestion that any of the entries are Bacon's own original thoughts, although I am not disposed to assume that none are. The book appears to have been kept for the purpose of jotting

down any striking word or phrase he may have read, heard or thought of. Without wishing in the least to convey the impression that I hold the belief, it looks very much like a preparatory collection towards a new section of the "Sylva Sylvarum" dealing with the subject of diction.

Now here we come to the question of parallels again, for a few of these curiosities are to be found in the "Promus." I have chosen this separate section to deal with them for the reason that, while they distinctly yield to criticism, it is not in the same way that the others did, for these are actually real parallels! And one set is sufficiently startling if merely glanced over. I give here the famous set of six which the Baconians believe proves their case conclusively.

PROMUS :

Rome.
 Good morrow.
 Sweet for speech in the
 morning.
 Lodged next.
 Golden sleep.
 Uprouse.

ROMEO AND JULIET :

Romeo.
 Good morrow.
 What early tongue so sweet
 saluteth me.
 Where care lodges sleep will
 never lie.
 Golden sleep.
 Thou art uproused by some
 distemperature.

This is exactly the way they are compared by Bompas. At a preliminary examination I strike out the first and fourth, as I find nothing that can

be called a parallel between the name of a character in a play and that of Italy's capital beyond the jingle of sound. And "lodged next" has absolutely no bearing on the phrase against which it is put. Furthermore I look askance at the third example for the same reason that but little real parallel of thought is to be found in it.

Proceeding further with our investigation of these paired phrases, we are faced with a very singular fact. Those extracted from the "Promus" are found very close together, as are also those quoted from "Romeo and Juliet." Of the latter Bompas says with all the vehemence of italics that they occur in "eleven consecutive lines." This is, however, an absurd statement, for stage directions are not "lines." But the fact remains that they are sufficiently close together to be worthy of serious consideration. My own contention, after much thought, is that, whichever side you take, it is a mere coincidence. Let us see how it works out from the Baconian point of view. We are asked to believe that a man is able to use six unmeaning memoranda from his book of oddments in the same order and similarly close proximity in a poetic dialogue.

Assuming each to be the work of the same hand it is still obviously pure coincidence, and proves nothing for either side. Especially when we remember

that no similar case occurs throughout the whole of the rest of the "Promus." True there are a few isolated cases of similar ideas, but of the nine selected by Bompas, and it is only natural to assume that he has chosen the most effective, eight of Bacon's are proverbs merely, and the similar thoughts scattered through as many as eight different plays are derived from the same source that Bacon derived his notes. In brief, it is not good logic to say that the thoughts in the plays are due to the "Promus" while we know the latter to be merely a string of quotations with little, if any original thought in it. And, when we consider the nature, purpose and method of the "Promus," which was nothing less than systematised plagiarism, there is nothing wildly improbable that in the case of the six (or less) coincidences quoted above, the play *may* have been their source. In fact, if a hypothetical case is for the moment permissible, were there *no* doubts as to Shakespeare's authorship, these memoranda would be taken as evidence of the interesting fact that Bacon had witnessed a performance of "Romeo and Juliet," and deliberately intended to "crib" certain flowers of speech.

Now let us look into another of the Baconian "conclusive proofs." Certain of the Shakespeare plays deal with Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VI and

Henry VIII. Bacon's literary remains contain a treatise on Henry VII.* Here we have an excellent inference in a shivering minority of one. Our friends think that fact alone settles the matter. Well, let us see. The question that arises to the mind of one really seeking after the truth is: why, if Bacon wrote plays on the fourth, fifth, sixth and eighth Henries, how comes it that his handling of the seventh is not likewise in dramatic form? It is of no use to say that this difference of treatment is due to the fact that the history of Henry VII is more suited to the literary than the dramatic method, for, although that is certainly a colourable explanation, it does not by any means dispose of the theory that the playwright chose the dramatic subjects and the historian the literary.†

Thus again there is no "proof" for the Baconian idea, but it is seen that without gush, drivel, or sentimentality, the identical facts provide upon

* This was written at the suggestion of James I who was so interested in the work he, with his own august hands, corrected the proofs.

† It must not be forgotten that Bacon commenced a treatise on Henry VIII, and that in the fragment left us he remarks on there having been no powerful subject rising to rivalry with that monarch. The terrible figure of Wolsey in the play does not show much similarity of thought on this point.

analysis arguments of at least equal weight for the Shakespearean.

Another Baconian stronghold is to be found in the grave-digger's scene in "Hamlet." They make a great deal out of this clown's travesty of argument, and help dig the grave of their own cause quite as clownishly in the process. This is our old friend the parallelism in a new form. And, strange to relate, it is absolutely and indisputably a real parallel. So far it is almost the sole specimen of its class that has been produced, the only unfortunate thing about it being that it has no connection with Bacon whatever.

It appears that in Plowden's reports, which were published in 1598, is found the judicial finding in the matter of Hales v. Petit. Sir James Hales having committed suicide by drowning, the question arose as to the legal felony of the act, and on that hung the disposal of certain property in dispute. The quaint, quibbling judgment of the Court was as follows :

Sir James Hales is dead. How did he come to his death? By drowning. And who drowned him? Sir James Hales. And when did he drown him? In his lifetime; and the act of the living man was the death of the dead man, for Sir James Hales being alive caused Sir James Hales to die.

Of course everyone will recognise at once the

parallel in the grave-digger's scene in "Hamlet," where the argument is travestied thus:

FIRST CLOWN: Is she to be buried in a Christian burial, that wilfully seeks her own salvation?

SECOND CLOWN: The crowner has sat upon her, and he finds it Christian burial.

FIRST CLOWN: How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

SECOND CLOWN: Why, 'tis found so.

FIRST CLOWN: It must be *se offendendo*, it cannot be else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act, and an act hath three branches; it is, to act, to do, and to perform: argal, she drowned herself wittingly. Here lies the water; good: here stands the man; good: if the man go to this water, and drown himself, it is, will he, nil, he, he goes; mark you that: but if the water comes to him, and drowns him, he drowns not himself: argal, he that is not guilty of his own death, shortens not his own life.

SECOND CLOWN: But is this law?

FIRST CLOWN: Ay, marry, is't crowner's quest law.

The fact that in the play Ophelia has drowned herself may slightly minimise the force of the parallel, which may after all be a mere coincidence. In fact Bompas alludes to this circumstance, not so much as a parallel, but as demonstrating Shakespeare's knowledge of the law relating to suicides, thereby divesting the Hales case of the singularity some attach to it, and suggesting that cases of suicide were habitually argued in this way at that period. Webb makes no reference to the case what-

ever. The main point, however, is that certain Baconians urge that the grave-digger's scene could not have been written without an intimate knowledge of the Hales v. Petit judgment. They then follow up this contention with another to the effect that William Shakespeare could by no possibility have known of it. Well, if it were the customary kind of decision in such cases, as Bompas seems to imply, he might have known the argument from some other and less noted case. If it were a singular case, of a striking nature, then he would stand every chance of hearing it from legal acquaintances. It is absurd to imply that Bacon was the only man who knew of it. I am not dealing with the mysterious nature of the various publications yet, but the fact that the clown's scene is not in the quarto of 1603, but is found in that of 1604 points to its having been "gagged" into the play as a result of hearing either the Hales judgment, or one to which that had served as a precedent. As Plowden's report had been in print already for some five-and-twenty years, Bacon, the omniscient lawyer, would have known of it before 1603.

But, after all, the scene may not be so much a parody of any particular legal argument as a faithful picture of the bucolic style which, even in these days of board-schools and compulsory education,

provides us from time to time with amusing examples of the mis-use of terminologies like the three parts of an act in the same way. At the same time, the Baconian digestion must be of abnormal hardihood if they can swallow in comfort the suggestion that Shakespeare could not have known of this case of *Hales v. Petit*. A haunter of Fleet Street and its purlieus, a frequenter of law-courts during some of his own paltry litigations not hear of such a piece of forensic quibbling! Out on you! Having first denied him refinement and schooling, will you now call the vulgar young man from 'Stratford an anchorite wholly innocent of pot-house small-talk? For pity's sake stop arguing awhile, and think!

CHAPTER IX.

I WILL now deal *seriatim* with sundry of the smaller inferences, not that they are of themselves worthy of much attention, but that none shall be able to say I have shirked this or that question. Also as showing how the trusty lance of analysis pierces the ill-jointed armour of Baconianism at every turn.

Here is a characteristic specimen of the pettifogging spirit in which the matter is approached. Basing an argument on the question of spelling we are seriously told that, if Bacon did not write the plays, then the William *Shakespeare* who did was not the William *Shakspere* of Stratford-on-Avon. If there be anything in this mode of thought—it is not reasoning—I should really like to know who was Mr. William Shak., and who were Shaxberd and Shagspere.

Then our worthy Baconians draw our attention to the alleged fact that Burbage never mentions

Shakespeare as a playwriter. I must confess that I do not see the finality of this argument. Herodotus never mentions the Sphinx when writing of the Pyramids, yet we well know that it was there in all its mystery. At the same time it raises a very curious question, for, if Burbage was led to believe that Shakespeare was a playwriter, why did he not mention him in that capacity? Or will our opponents have us believe that Burbage was a party to the fraud, and was in Bacon's confidence? Such an idea will not hold water for a single moment. The Baconians corner themselves beautifully every time, for if we are to accept the bulk of their statements there is nothing for it but to believe—even as a little child—that William Shakespeare, the Burbages, Nash, Hemming, Condell, Sir Tobie Matthew and Ben Jonson at least were deep in the swindle, and had full knowledge of Bacon's authorship of the plays being passed off as the productions of the ignorant provincial from Stratford. Imagine hot-headed Ben conniving at a scheme that should elevate an ignoramus above himself!

If such were indeed the case, and I fail to see how the Baconians are to extricate themselves from the quagmire of that belief, then it is obvious that we should not have had to wait nearly three centuries for the first question of tradition and the

first hint at what the Baconians would call the truth. I mean the doubts would at an earlier date have resolved themselves into certainties, and instead of having to bolster up a cause with elaborate "interpretations" of scanty facts, we should have had some really direct and unequivocal evidence emanating from some of these conspirators.

If, for political reasons, the writing of these plays jeopardised the Lord Keeper's cervical vertebræ, it stands to reason that he dare not let the secret out of his own keeping. He was too past a master of intrigue not to be able to guage men's weaknesses, and, to have let sundry players and men working as literary hacks—tavern-wits in their leisure moments—hold his life in their hands would never have been Bacon's policy. For *he* would have known, if Webb, Penzance and the rest cannot perceive it, that the first tap-room dispute would infallibly have brought the axe to his neck.

But, in their eager haste to enthrone the lawyer in place of the poet, they bring in another accomplice over the Northumberland House papers. Verily the famous lion, now over Zion House, might wave his caudal appendage in mirth at the strained interpretation that was to be put on some of the lumber contained in the former stately mansion. It appears that in the year 1867 an old box of papers

was found in Northumberland House, London. Amongst these papers was a bound volume of MSS., including, according to the title page, several works known to be by Bacon, two plays attributed to Shakespeare, a fragment of a play by Nash, and some other drafts of letters and speeches for sundry nobles that may have been composed by Bacon. So far, so good. It is unfortunate for the Baconians that this volume is not in Bacon's handwriting—at least what remains of it. The two Shakespeare plays had been abstracted at some time prior to the discovery of the box.

Now I have not seen the title page about which so much has been said, but had hoped for a reliable description of it from one of these eminent lawyers who think it proves their case so eloquently. Webb and Bompas both give descriptions of this title page, but they differ so that it is impossible to judge which, if either, is accurate. I will give the two accounts in the style of the Bacon-Shakespeare parallels.

WEBB :

The title page of the manuscript volume is literally *tattooed* with scribblings, among which there are to be found a quotation from the "Rape of Luerece": the anomalous word "honor-

BOMPAS :

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

ficabilitudino" which occurs in "Love's Labours Lost": the name of Bacon's brother, Anthony, with the words, "comfort and consorte," the word "baco" in close connection with "Asmund and Cornelia": and the words, "Shakespeare" and "William Shakespeare" and fragments of the name "Shakespeare" some eight or nine times repeated in immediate connection with the name of Bacon.

with two scraps from "Love's Labours Lost" and "Lucrece."

Now why in the name of equity cannot these lawyers speak plainly on a simple matter of fact? Either it is seven times or it is not. I have not troubled to verify either of them as it is of no importance to my point in the matter, but I cannot help distrusting the observations on debatable points made by men who deal with what can only be plain matter of fact in so slipshod a manner. One of the statements concerning the title page *may* be right, it is impossible for both to be. The Baconian theory based on the scribbled-over title page is that the names Bacon and Shakespeare were so written out for purposes of comparison, and as a prelude to the adoption of William Shakespeare as a *nom de plume*. But it is not in Bacon's handwriting! So here we have, as I said before, yet another person

“in the know” to share the secret which was thus no secret. Had the handwriting of the volume, or, even, the title page scrawlings been that of Bacon, the circumstance would have merited investigation. But, seeing that we have nothing whatever to indicate that this particular volume of MSS. ever was in Bacon’s sight, and that even from a Baconian point of view it would be absurd to think the pseudonym was tested and chosen by another person, we have nothing for it but to conclude the scrawlings to be some literary amateur’s preliminary trial of a fresh cut quill. The origin of the volume, and the abstraction of the two Shakespeare plays are things that are bound to remain mysteries, no matter how many superfluous theories may be woven around them.

Another parallel—a different variety this time—consists of the “*Midsummer Night’s Dream*” in its entirety. Failing an authentic date for the writing of this play, it is sought to fix it by parallels with court doings. Working on this line some theorists say it was written in celebration of Southampton’s marriage in 1598. However, the fact that Southampton’s marriage was clandestine, and so distasteful to Elizabeth that she caused the bridegroom to spend a solitary honeymoon in prison, discounts that view. Others think the play was written in celebration of the marriage of Essex in

1590. Others, again, are of opinion that Oberon's fairy revels that conclude that disjointed, but delightful play, are a topical allusion to Leicester's fête to Elizabeth at Kenilworth in 1575. Fellow jurymen! The fact is that nothing whatever justifies anyone in assuming that the "Midsummer Night's Dream" was written for any special occasion or contained topical references of any description. There would be just as much reason in suggesting that Essex or Southampton, or both, got married as a result of witnessing the ultimate felicity of the lovers in the play, and that Leicester's fête at Kenilworth was inspired by Oberon's vision.

In a similar manner Bompas attempts to strengthen his case by suggesting that the mad scenes in "Hamlet" and "Lear" are hints at the mental state of Bacon's reputed mother.* Little as I respect the memory of the corrupt Lord Keeper—apart from his supreme literary genius—I do not think he would have been capable of parading a parent's affliction in this way. Furthermore we may note that neither Ophelia nor Lear are mothers.

* It should be noted that the Bacon Society considers he was a son of Elizabeth by Leicester, and many members think of him as Francis I of England. The latest "discoveries" are said to show that Elizabeth was a man!

Another form of parallel, allied to the last, is the one elaborated by Bompas in which he says the dates of the plays (some of which are very uncertain, by the way) correspond with events in Bacon's life. That is to say, the comedies were produced when Bacon was in happy circumstances, and the tragedies when he was more or less "under a cloud." This *may* have been the case. But from what we know of legal methods, it is plain that had the exact reverse been the case it could have been employed to prove the same thing, and we would probably have been told that it was in his days of prosperity that Bacon wrote the great tragedies, and that he cheered his hours of adversity with devising comedies.

Just as there is no proof that a man is of noble habit because he can pen noble thoughts, so there is no proof that a man is happy when he writes comedies and miserable when he writes tragedies. If there were anything at all in such an argument we should be forced to conclude that Beethoven never composed that immortal Ninth Symphony, for this is a vast "Hymn to Joy" composed at a time when we know Beethoven to have been lonely, racked with dropsy and other diseases, and, worst of all, stone deaf.

Such specious arguments are unavailing in the eyes of an intelligent jury, no matter how their perpetrators hug themselves over the thought that their point is proved thereby. The only thing that is proved is the facility with which the methods of that exploded science, logic, can be diverted from their original purpose.

CHAPTER X.

A MARKED feature of the Baconians is the peculiar argumentative colour blindness that seems to obscure their perceptions. They are unable to appreciate red by reason of its complimentary tint so congesting the sensitive nerve of their mental optics. Thus it is that they continue in sublime unconsciousness of the way their theories so frequently cut both ways, and in the singular inability to see more than one interpretation of known facts.

As illustrating this sad ocular defect of Baconians generally, I will instance their contention that William Shakespeare, the actor-manager and part proprietor of two important London theatres, was far too busy a man to have been able to find the time to write the plays. Good; mark you that! as that prototype of Baconians, the first grave-digger, would say. But, my comrades of the jury-box, it does not appear that Francis Bacon was a man of

much leisure. What with political scheming, court intriguing, and such vast labours as included writing the "Essays" thirty times, and the "Instauration" twelve, as we are told by Rawley, he must have had his hands too full to be able to spare time to make excursions into a strange and dangerous province of literature. On the other hand, playwriting, provided the man was capable, would fit in with the life of even the busiest of theatrical men. And the loosely-strung scenes of so many of the Shakespeare plays give colour to the theory that they were as often as not hastily penned on emergency by a much occupied man of genius. The chief thing that strikes one with these works after their impromptu character is that they are essentially actor's plays. Every scene is perfect in itself: every entry is led up to, and every exit tells; yet in several instances—"Henry VIII," "Midsummer Night's Dream" and the "Tempest," for example—the plays as a whole lack continuity, and, like a badly-strung chaplet of gems, have an almost slipshod appearance. The second scene of the second act in "Henry V" is a complete play in miniature, yet the whole play is anything but perfect as regards plot and development.

Is this what we should expect to find from a man of learning, a man trained to mental system and

orderly methods of thought who had retired to his study to occupy himself with experiments in dramatic writing? Or is it what we should expect from a brilliant, though inadequately trained intellect that had assimilated a large amount of heterogeneous knowledge in his ups and downs of theatrical life, and in contact with the tavern-haunting boon companions of Fleet Street?

Surely, fellow jurymen, there can only be one reply, and that strongly in favour of the much-maligned defendant!

This question of Shakespeare's busy life leads naturally to the subject of his retirement. This mysterious withdrawal from theatrical activity at such a comparatively early age, is a very remarkable feature, perhaps the most remarkable feature of the whole case. The Baconians think it disproves his authorship, and set him down as retiring from business in the unpoetical manner of a successful grocer. But, leaving the plays out of the question altogether, and simply looking upon Shakespeare as a man of strong theatrical tendencies, which the known facts prove, is it not even then incomprehensible that he should have been able to suddenly throw off the fascination of the stage, to resist the manifold attractions of his convivial life, and bury himself in "bookless" Stratford to end his days in

the dullest of humdrum manners? Without entering upon the question of the authorship of the plays, this sudden change to such a violently contrasted mode of life seems at first sight inexplicable.

It would certainly be easy to construct an understandable theory on some such lines as the following:

The dramatic profession was held in disrepute. William Shakespeare had ambitions for gentility, and tried to get a coat-of-arms on the strength of some apocryphal ancestry. To this end he cut himself adrift from his disreputable theatrical associations, cast it from him as one would drown a mangy cat, and tried to pose as a country gentleman of birth and substance.

Although I do not hold that theory, I cannot see that it is incompatible with the admitted facts.

But I think a little commonsense in the way of analysis and analogy will give us a more reasonable theory, and may tend to reduce the apparent inexplicableness of this retirement, and, if there are any medical men empanelled with us in this great trial, they will be able to help us considerably in returning that verdict for the defendant which intimate and continued scrutiny of the plaintiff's arguments makes me feel is the only just one.

Let us see what the medicos will say to this. A

young country youth, of a merry, convivial nature, addicted to theatricals, knocks about the world in a variety of unknown ways till he gets to London. There he attains a high position in the theatrical world, and is in all probability overworked. In addition to this the few "personal" notes we have of him are of drinking and debauchery, so that we find him burning the candle at both ends with a vengeance. What does medical knowledge and experience teach us will be the inevitable result? What is nature's revenge for such abuse of her gifts? Add to all this, hypothetically if you will, that on top of the nervous strain of work, vexatious litigation and vicious living, his seething brain poured out a series of plays of dazzling brilliance, and I think every medical man in the kingdom will agree that the inevitable consequence would be stroke, paralysis, palsy or some such irretrievable mental and physical collapse. Thus we see that while the retirement has no bearing on the authorship, the latter has some slight bearing on the retirement.

And can we not figure him in Stratford just able to drag a stiffened leg or dangling arm to some convenient "parlour" where the doddering remnants of his wit prompted him to pen doggerel epitaphs? I contend that this theory covers all the facts, for it

explains the retirement, which in the Baconian hands remains as much a mystery as ever, and accounts for the inferior quality of the epitaphs that the Baconians again think disproves his powers to write grand plays.

It is a pathetic picture, but repeated analysis of the circumstances chronicled and admitted by all the Baconians forces me to accept it as the most probable solution. And this explanation of mine goes further, for it may have a bearing on that other mystery, the will. We do not know who drafted that document; the only piece of Shakespeare's handwriting on it is the signature, five times repeated, and in the absence of any data whatever relating to his home life at Stratford, or the domestic conditions there prevailing, that would tell us anything to explain the underlying reasons for certain of the bequests, we have perforce to take it as it stands and impotently wonder.

And as to his business transactions after the retirement. What proof have we that they were his own doings, and on his own initiative? Only presumptive evidence: strong enough, maybe, but not absolutely conclusive. And if the picture I have drawn of his condition at Stratford is well within the bounds of probability, and, as I maintain, only what was to be expected after the wear and

tear of his previous mode of life, then there is just as much presumptive evidence to support the theory that his actual share in these business dealings was limited to a more or less comprehending assent. It were futile to insist on this point, however. All I desire to do is to show the two theories. On the one hand that he was able to retire from the glamour of the stage an active man with full use of his intelligence: on the other, that he was worn out in mind and body by physical and intellectual excess. I would add this, merely by way of comment, that if you join the Baconians and accept the first point of view; then you are as far away as ever from understanding and accounting for the prime fact that he did so retire.

Before leaving this question of the retirement I would draw attention to a curious statement I read in a so-called biography of William Shakespeare prefixed to an edition of the plays. This was to the effect that in the diary of a certain clergyman of Stratford-on-Avon, was an entry setting forth the rumour that Shakespeare was during his retirement in receipt of one thousand pounds per annum in consideration of his writing two plays yearly for a London theatre. Of course, I refuse to accept such rumour for fact, and look upon the whole tale as so much irresponsible gossip, but it shows one thing

very clearly, that William Shakespeare returned to his native place with a considerable reputation as a dramatist, otherwise such a servant-girl's tale could hardly have got about.

Returning for a moment to the will. As is well known there are five signatures to this document; these being the only examples of Shakespeare's handwriting it contains. Now these signatures are said to be anything but perfect specimens of caligraphy, and thus they provide yet another straw for the drowning Baconian to clutch at.* One would hardly expect any reasoning being to apply a handwriting test to genius, yet the illegibility of these signatures is solemnly trotted out as strong evidence against their perpetrator being capable of the glorious diction and inspired poesy of the plays. In conversation with an ardent Baconian my support of tradition was actually met with the scornful rejoinder: "However can you talk such nonsense, when you must know the man could not sign his own name properly!"

* Anyone familiar with Elizabethan script must find evidence of good penmanship in this signature. The beauty of the "llm" alone proves this.

CHAPTER XI.

IN my introduction I had the temerity to accuse the great Baconian writers of not only perpetrating absurdities and fallacies, but of employing transparently fallacious methods in their desire to convince the general public of the truth of their theory.

I maintain that in certain of the pseudo-arguments they see fit to employ it is difficult to imagine that they could not perceive the quaint speciousness characterising so many of their contentions. I mean that even were they really in their own minds absolutely convinced of the truth of Baconianism, their own high intellectual capacity should not have blinded them to the falsity of certain quibbles they bring forward in its support. It is a pity so many Baconians are lawyers. I have a great admiration and respect for lawyers: admiration for their talents and respect for their

sincerity, and the more convinced I am of a lawyer's sincerity the more I distrust his pleadings. A lawyer is the greatest paradox that civilisation has yet produced, for to what is he sincere? To his case, quite irrespective of the merits of that case. He must plead his best for a client without troubling as to whether the client's cause is right or wrong. He must keep his mind in a non-committal state, and must forever deny himself the luxury of a private opinion. Not his to ask: What are the merits of this case? but, rather: how can I argue it? The success of his argument, therefore, is more to him than that of his client. It is a strange piece of topsy-turvydom, this ability to plead with absolute sincerity for a cause the pleader may know to be worthless.

Long years of seeking points on which to "argue a case" may induce such a habit of mind that the arguer becomes unconscious of the absurdities and fallacies he occasionally provides for the diversion of the jury-box. May we be pardoned for accepting this as an explanation for the fact that Judge Webb often parades the weakness of his case when endeavouring to strengthen it? Perhaps the most notable example is the strained, but ingenious, interpretation of the following fragment of one of the sonnets:

Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed,
Till every word doth almost tell my name
Showing their birth, and where they do proceed?

Webb's comment is: "Here the author certainly intimates that Shakespeare was not his name, and that he was fearful lest his real name should be discovered." A little later on he says: "Whatever was the real name of the author of the plays, he is only known by the 'noted weed' in which he kept invention."

Thus we see the same tactics that were employed by Penzance in the matter of Shakespeare's alleged ignorance. The assumption once made is thereafter treated as ascertained fact. For instance, on page 73: "In the same year Shakespeare's sonnets appeared, with the intimation that Shakespeare was not really the name of the author." On page 79: "If we accept the confession of the author of the sonnets that Shakespeare was not his real name." On page 125: "We cannot forget that the gentle Shakespeare himself informs us in the sonnets that Shakespeare was not his real name." Similarly on pages 218 and 264.

In dealing with verse one must never forget that the exigencies of metre and rhyme occasionally tend to obscure the thought. Often it is this very

fact that is the charm of great poems where the thoughts swim in a golden haze of poesy like the half-expressed details of a Turner landscape. Hence it is that we accept as a truism that many of the great poets would be astonished could they but know the meanings their commentators had read into their works. It is common knowledge that Browning occasionally forgot what he had intended to convey in certain enigmatic lines. At the same time, I fail to see how the lines of the sonnet in question can be so obscure in their meaning.

Mutilation has helped Judge Webb to a certain extent. I say mutilation for we know a sonnet to consist of fourteen lines expressing a single idea. Therefore, four lines from a sonnet can only be a fragment of an idea. Now read the whole idea :

Why is my verse so barren of new pride?
 So far from variation or quick change?
 Why, with the times, do I not glance aside
 To new-found methods and to compounds strange
 Why write I still all one, ever the same,
 And keep invention in a notèd weed,
 Till every word doth almost tell my name,
 Showing their birth, and where they do proceed?
 O know, sweet love, I always write of you
 And you and love are still my argument;
 So all my best is dressing old words new,
 Spending again what is already spent;
 For as the sun is daily new and old,
 So is my love still telling what is told.

(Sonnet LXXVI.)

Here we find no suggestion that the author is hinting at a concealed identity. He is merely railing at the impotence of verbal expression: his mind is filled with invention, it teems with gorgeous blossoms of thought, but the noted word is but a weed on paper, and he is unable to shake himself free from the trammels of his personality and verbal mannerisms. The subject of his writing is ever the same, and he can only tell the old, old story in the old, old words. The sentiment is almost identical with that in Sonnet CIII:

Alack, what poverty my Muse brings forth,
That having such a scope to show her pride,
The argument, all bare, is of more worth,
Than when it hath my added praise beside, *etc.*

The seventy-sixth sonnet carries its meaning so simply, and so openly that I feel justified in condemning as valueless Judge Webb's employment of the middle quatrain with the interpretation of "noted weed" as a pseudonym. So far as his argument is concerned this weed shares the fate of many others by ending in smoke. It is an interesting example of how a man may become hypnotised by the possibilities of a flexible language such as ours. Such methods are scarcely less reprehensible than the concoction of spurious cryptograms, and those who employ them put

themselves out of court in so doing. They damage their own cause thereby exactly as do some of the over-zealous Shakespeareans.

It would be unfair not to state that Webb makes a certain attempt to justify his peculiar interpretation of "weed" as meaning a disguise. To this end he says :

If anyone requires an explanation of the phrase "noted weed" it is supplied by Bacon, who, in his "Henry VII," tells us that "Perkin Warbeck took sanctuary his principal adviser, clad himself like a hermit, and in that *weed* wandered about the country."

Now let us look into the etymology of weed. It is the modern English representative of two Anglo-Saxon words. One is "weod," and had the meaning familiar to gardeners, and the most well-known meaning of to-day : the other is "waed," and meant a garment, usually a mourning dress, a sense that survives to-day in the phrase, "widow's weeds." If, then, we are to take the "weed" of the sonnet in the sense of waed, I fail to see that the Baconian theory is strengthened, for the meaning of that section of the sonnet would simply be regret at the humble dress of his noble thoughts of invention, for, be it observed, waed is guise, not disguise ! The reference in Bacon's "Henry VII" to Perkin Warbeck employs the word in that sense. A hermit's

mourning garb, or "weed" is not in itself a disguise. To render weed literally by another word one would say "and in that costume, garb, dress or garment." To say "and in that disguise" would not be literal, although the general sense of the statement might remain the same. Therefore it is an arbitrary proceeding to insist that "weed" in the sonnet is synonymous with disguise. To convey the latter idea it would be necessary to say :

And dress invention in a borrowed weed.

Furthermore, it is worthy of note that every time the word is used in the sonnets it is in the horticultural sense. Thus, in Sonnet XCIV : "Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds," and in Sonnet CXXXIV : "Weeds among weeds or flowers with flowers gathered."

Even if the Baconian theory should ultimately turn out to be the only truthful one, the seventy-sixth sonnet has no bearing on the case, a fact which should be patent to any lawyer, however much he may like to amuse himself with weeds, disguises and confessions.

These things are the very absurdities of logic, and they bear as much relationship to reasoning as do those verbal antics called puns to humour. There

is the same wrench of distortion—ingenious enough, maybe—but when you think it over the following day how empty it all is, and how ready one then is to understand the sage's dictum that the man who would make a pun would pick a pocket.

If we are to accept "noted weed" as the form in which the author of the sonnets not only intimated, warned and informed us, but "confessed" that Shakespeare was not his real name, then we have nothing for it but to believe, on still stronger evidence, that if Shakespeare did not write the plays, he was undoubtedly the author of the psalms hitherto attributed to David.

Of the various ways in which Shakespeare's name is spelt, those consisting of ten letters subdivide in this way: four vowels, six consonants. If we place these two numbers side by side in that order the result is forty-six. Now the forty-sixth psalm is remarkable in that by counting from the commencement the forty-sixth word is shake, and by counting from the end backwards the forty-sixth word is spear. One naturally omits the word "Selah" in such counting. Here we have something more than an inference, stronger than an interpretation. This is absolutely direct and conclusive. What an

admirable object lesson on the value of verbal, literal or numerical coincidences!*

Coincidences are such a tender fruit that any considerable number of them crush themselves by their own weight, like Robinson Crusoe's sack of grapes. The very multiplicity of coincidences given in Piazzì Smyth's work on the great pyramid were their own refutation, and all that such curiosities demonstrate is the universal interdependence of all things.

* Here is another curiosity of coincidence.

MacBeth.

Julius CaEsar.

Comedy of ErRors.

Merchant of VeNice.

Antony and CleopAtra.

Two Gentlemen of VeRona.

Merry Wives of WinDsor.

Troilus and CresSida.

Timon of AtHens.

CoriolAnnus.

All's Well that Ends Well.

The fourth letters from the end of each title are BERNARD SHAW!

CHAPTER XII.

I NOW enter on another phase of the inferential arguments of the Baconians. This deals with the mysteries—the undoubted mysteries—of the publication of the plays, both in quarto and in folio.

The quartos appeared at irregular intervals during Shakespeare's lifetime: sometimes with his name as author, sometimes without. Usually his name is given on the second edition of a play that had previously been issued anonymously.

Apropos of this it may be as well to quote Lord Penzance, who speaks as follows: "He (Shakespeare) never claimed the plays as his offspring during life, nor was he at any pains to have his name connected with them." To those who can accept this statement in the light of known facts I have nothing whatever to say, for all reasoning would be wasted. Even were William Shakespeare not the author, he must have connived at the lie on the later title pages,

which was most distinctly an effective way of claiming them as his offspring. And this rectification of the omission in subsequent editions of certain plays points to the pains of an indignant author to have his name connected with them. What his Lordship of Penzance is driving at is that point the Baconians consider so conclusive, the fact that Shakespeare's name does not occur in any of the copyrighting transactions. Some people have foolishly tried to assert that copyright did not exist in Shakespeare's day, but we know that such was not the case. Copyright by entry at Stationers' Hall was in full force, and was by no means a new or recent legal enactment. But, when we remember that such entry always had to be made by the proprietor (publisher?) and that, according to Lord Penzance, "sometimes the entry would state by whom the book was written, but this was as often omitted as not," we find nothing whatever in the absence of Shakespeare's name from these entries to help in the conclusion that he was not the author. Shakespeare was neither a printer nor a publisher, therefore the duty of entering at Stationers' Hall would devolve upon the printer or publisher to whom he had disposed of his works. We have, unfortunately, no deed of assignment testifying to such disposal of rights, but, unless the quartos were all

pirated productions, as some think possible, we know such disposal must have taken place. The absence of any documentary evidence on that point is nothing one way or the other, for to this day that world which I will call Fleet Street knows of many a compact sealed by a friendly glass that will never be found in the public Record Office.

Glancing aside from the plays to the two poems, "Lucrece" and "Venus and Adonis," which appeared in 1593-4, there is to be found much food for thought in the fact that they were both printed and published by a fellow-townsmen of William Shakespeare, the player, one Richard Field who had recently come from Stratford-on-Avon to London, where he set up in business as a printer. This fact rather discounts the idea that Shakespeare, the player, and Shakespeare, the author, were two separate individuals. Further evidence going to show the unity of the Shakespeare of the poems with the Shakespeare of the plays is to be found in the sonnet to "Honey-tongued Shakespeare" written by John Weever in 1595, in which the author of the two poems is eulogised in the fulsome manner of the time, and is further credited with "Romeo," "Richard," and other plays.

Some of the mysterious details connected with the quartos may well give rise to conflicting theories as

to the methods of their author, the legality of their publication, and so forth. But there is so far nothing in them that throws the faintest shadow of a doubt on their traditional authorship. And the same holds good of the Folio of 1623. About this there are many suspicious and peculiar features that may well engender a multiplicity of theories, or possible explanations. But the name of William Shakespeare as author is the one point that remains unshaken amidst the hopeless conflict that rages around his feet.

The circumstances under which the Folio of 1623 was issued are noteworthy, and suggest many problems which require the closest scrutiny. The fact that this, the first collected edition of his plays, did not appear until seven years after Shakespeare's decease is, however, not in itself of so much importance as the Baconians would have us believe, for this reason, that it is no uncommon thing for scattered works issued during life to be collected into one volume some time after their author's death. This is by no means a suspicious point, but falls into line with known procedure in many other cases. When we come to a consideration of the manner of its publication, on the other hand, distrust is immediately aroused: one feels at once that things "are not what they seem," there is the taint of some

shuffling, underhand business about the whole affair that gives one furiously to think! The men who introduced this selection to the public were two of William Shakespeare's fellow players named John Hemming and Henry Condell, supported by Ben Jonson. I call the Folio a "selection" advisedly because it contains thirty-six plays only, whereas some twenty more were commonly attributed to Shakespeare during his lifetime. What formed the basis of the selection, what principles guided the choice, whether these thirty-six represent the whole, less than the whole, or more than the whole of Shakespeare's dramatic works are points I do not propose to go into as I do not see how they can influence the question. It is quite conceivable that, in the case of a dramatist of such renown, there will have been a number of inferior plays foisted on an ignorant public as being the work of the idol of the hour.

It is impossible for us to judge of Hemming's and Condell's accuracy, for we do not know even how these worthies came into possession of the plays. And here is where the suspicious elements in the whole affair begin to show themselves. Prefixed to the plays in the Folio are a portrait of William Shakespeare and some introductory matter characteristic of the period in the form of Dedication and

Address signed by Hemming and Condell, and some laudatory verses by Ben Jonson. In the Dedication and Address, the two players profess to give some account of their part of the business, to explain how they came into possession of the MSS., and their main reasons for publishing. They are careful to state, according to the then fashion in Dedications, that personal gain to themselves had no part in their desires.

To anyone who carefully peruses the statements of Hemming and Condell it will be strongly apparent that they contain some "pretty considerable tall lying," as the transatlantic phrase goes. It is our place, as jurymen, to endeavour to find out the truth. People lie because they wish to conceal the truth: they lie to promote some ulterior motive. Let us try to examine and lay bare the motives that have been imputed, test them, and see if more probable motives can be found. According to the Baconians the prevarications of these ingenious players were intended to conceal the real name of the author. I contend that, since the contradictory phrases concern the acquirement of the MSS. solely, the lie was to conceal the doubtless fraudulent way Hemming and Condell had come into possession of them. Now let us look more closely into the matter. In the Dedication to the Earls of Pembroke and Mont-

gomery, Hemming and Condell declare they have no ambition of "selfe-profit, or fame," but in the Address to the great variety of readers you are urged to buy in the most tradesmanlike manner. "Do so (criticise) but buy it first." "But what euer you do, Buy." Such a contradiction is, however, merely amusing. The real prevarication is to be found in the "we haue but collected them, and done an office to the dead, to procure his Orphanes, Guardians," of the Dedication, and the conflicting statements in the Address wherein we are again told that Hemming and Condell have "collected them" with "care and pains," and, while regretting that the author is no longer alive to have "ouerseen his owne writings," have so published them as to give them "cur'd and perfect of their limbes," and "absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them." This implies careful revision and correction, since the former editions (the quartos) are condemned as "stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious impostors." Yet, a few lines further on we are told that "What he thought he uttered with that easinesse, that wee haue scarce received from him a blot in his papers"!

CHAPTER XIII.

THUS, you see, Hemming and Condell tell us that they have not only gathered and collected the plays, but have been at considerable care and pains to see that the new edition should be free from error, yet, in the same breath, they convey the idea that they received them from the author absolutely perfect, and with scarcely a blot. I repeat that there is obviously some untruth in these shuffling contradictions, but there is very little in them to help one to judge what the real truth behind it all is likely to be. The Baconians inconsequently say that since plainly something is concealed, that something can only be the real name of the author. This, however, does not appear to me to be so conclusive. In trying to penetrate the mists of a falsehood I endeavour to first ascertain to what that falsehood chiefly refers, and, though there is but little to help us, still there is that little. In the present case I find all the statements in the Dedic-

tion and Address relating to the author as William Shakespeare to be straightforward and harmonious. There is no hesitancy, no contradiction: William Shakespeare is credited with the authorship, he is eulogised, and his death is deplored. But when we come to the statement of their financial disinterestedness, and, what is of more importance, the details of acquisition, these two rascals betray at once that all is not as it should be. This brings us to a question suggested to me by the 1623 Folio, but not touched on by any of the Baconian writers I have studied. We know most of the quartos were copyrighted by their publishers or proprietors: How, then, did Hemming and Condell secure the right to republish those that had already appeared in print? This point is just as mysterious as the unchronicled transfer to them of the copyrights of those plays that had not yet been printed. Thus a close consideration of the copyright question involved, coupled with an examination of the *subject* of the prevarications in the Address, compels me to the theory that Hemming and Condell came by the MSS. through some more or less dishonest means, and consequently were obliged to wait until it was safe to publish them.

We can easily construct a theory out of the known facts, though it would be a difficult matter to sub-

stantiate it. Thus the burning of the Globe Theatre in 1613 may have been the opportunity that placed the MSS. in the hands of Hemming and Condell. And it seems to me very significant that they waited, not merely till after the death of Shakespeare in 1616, but till four years after the death of Burbage—who was most likely the owner of a number of the plays—which took place in 1619.

Bompas, always seeking for parallels in Bacon's life, tells us that as Bacon was in low water about 1623, he published the plays in the Folio as a means of getting in a little ready money. Webb, however, takes a higher standpoint, and attempts to show that the Folio with its laudatory verses by Ben Jonson, and with its engraving of the Young Man from Stratford as the author, is in itself an indisputable proof that the plays in general, and the Folio in particular were the sole work of Francis Bacon. As a supporting analogy, Webb cites the case of Burke, who was requested by the Whig lords to sign a paper declaring that he was not the author of the "Letters of Junius," and his honour goes on to surmise that Bacon may have been forced to do something of a like nature, the Folio of 1623 being in Judge Webb's mind that document. He calls it, in fact, "the Renunciation." He says, in speaking of the "Tempest":

Though the last of the marvels of the great Magician, it was printed in the forefront of the Folio, and it was so printed in order to attest a strange renunciation. In publishing the Folio the great Magician broke his magic staff, and doffed his magic robe, and deeper than plummet ever sounded, he thought to drown his book. The book, however, was not to be drowned. It could not sink. But when the book is opened the reader is startled by a strange and unexpected thing; for instead of the counterfeit presentment of the "large brow'd Verulam" he is confronted with the figure of the player.

This may be a pretty piece of literature, but it is not argument. It is sheer romance of the same order and value as the "sporting Attorney" and diligent student of some fantastic and imaginative writers on the Shakespeare side. Lord Penzance, while supporting the theory of Bacon's authorship, does not venture on any speculations relating to the reasons for publishing the Folio.

If we do not know how the two players became possessed of the plays, neither do we know what sort of copies they were that the Folio of 1623 was printed from. The plays, whoever wrote them, must have existed in two forms while in MS. Firstly, there will have been the more or less complete draft of the play as a whole, and secondly, there will have been the actor's parts extracted therefrom. There is no conjecture in saying that the latter were full of cuts, additions, emendations and improvements. A

play is such a plastic thing when produced under the supervision of the author that every time one of them was revived it could not help but be altered and revised in many points of diction. Here we find, if not an explanation for, at any rate a side-light on the discrepancies between the quartos and the Folio. There are those who say the Folio was carefully revised by the author in order to protect his reputation in the future. But if the Folio is a monument to its author's genius, it is also a monument to the carelessness and ignorance of its publishers. Typographical errors of an extremely irritating nature abound, the pagination has run mad, and the table of contents does not agree with the contents either in substance or sequence, yet we are expected to believe that this slovenly piece of work emanated from that master-precisian, Francis Bacon.

On the other hand we know William Shakespeare had no hand whatever in the production of the Folio, for, had he gone over the plays, shorn them of their redundancies, supplied their deficiencies, and trimmed their inelegancies in order to make them "worthy of himself and his future students," as Mr. Swinburne thinks, they would have appeared some time prior to Shakespeare's decease. If these discrepancies are to be called *revisions* then it cannot

be in the literary sense, but merely shows how the plays were moulded and re-moulded in performance. The only thing that is left for us to do is to wonder—unavailingly, it is true—but still to wonder whether those quartos that were not pirated were printed from the original script, and the Folio from the parts, or *vice versâ*. This way one can understand the matter by accepting the Shakespeare tradition, but the theory of careful revision fits in with neither Shakespeare nor Bacon.

It is by some thought that Bacon himself wrote, or dictated the terms of the Dedication and Address, a theory that is not very complimentary to him, for I think he would not have bungled over the lying in such a slipshod manner, or, if he had, it would most probably have shown itself in an over-anxiety to run the *name* of William Shakespeare down the reader's throat. There are others who think Jonson wrote them, and certain portions, notably the first half of the Address, are decidedly suggestive of "rare Ben." If he did it affords no argument either way for the whole world knows he openly was concerned with the publication of the Folio.

This question of the Folio is perhaps the most important of the whole series. Therefore, at the risk of perpetrating "damnable iteration" I must emphatically re-assert my conviction—a conviction

that is the result of a very close scrutiny of the facts *plus* the Baconian arguments—which is that: Since the palpable lies refer to the manner in which the MSS. were received, and not in the least to the author, I must again express my firm belief that Hemming and Condell had no honest right to the possession of the MSS. of the plays, and in so far from extolling them for disinterestedness I take a diametrically opposite view of them and their doings.

CHAPTER XIV.

IF there is one fact in connection with William Shakespeare that stands out with exceptional prominence it is that aggravating one—the extreme paucity of details concerning his life, character or work. Wherever we seek darkness hinders us, every door we open reveals an almost empty chamber, and what little of value the chamber may contain is usually smothered in the dust of time. Even that interesting and often valuable source of evidence, contemporary reference—whether of praise or blame—is, in the case of the young man from Stratford, exceptionally meagre. Still we have a certain number of “ana,” and some of these are not without significance. Almost a book could be written—and very amusing reading it would be—setting forth the peculiar methods of Baconian writers in dealing with the references to Shakespeare by his contemporaries. If an admirer penned a line that tended to support tradition, it is derided, and

we are told the writer did not know what he was talking about. If some jealous scribe subjected the Bard to undeserved abuse he did know what he was talking about, and meant that Bacon was the real author. Where they are forced to admit to themselves that neither of these positions can be taken up, then they again resort to the old "Tale of a Tub" game of shuffling and quibbling over the wording of the sentence.

Let us begin where the last chapter left off, and take the Folio of 1623. Herein, as has been already stated, are certain verses in praise of the author who is definitely named William Shakespeare, and is apostrophied as "sweet Swan of Avon," another link connecting the Stratford player with the London playwright. Judge Webb has found a line in these verses of Ben Jonson in which the word "for" is employed in the sense of "instead of," and seems to think that that is the sole meaning for the word known to Jonson. Therefore, when Jonson, in the sonnet on the engraved portrait says it was "for gentle Shakespeare cut," his honour contends that he meant "instead of gentle Shakespeare cut." But, gentle or ungentle, the portrait most undoubtedly is an indifferent one of the player, so cannot possibly be "instead of" Shakespeare. Webb declares the tone

of the sonnet to the figure of the player is one of veiled contempt. Read it :

This figure, that thou here seest put,
 It was for gentle Shakespeare cut,
 Wherein the Grauer had a strife
 With Nature to out-doo the Life :
 O, could he but haue drawn his wit
 As well in brasse, as he hath hit
 His face, the Print would then surpasse
 All, that was euer writ in brasse.
 But, since he cannot, Reader, looke
 Not on his Picture, but his booke.

Now mark their reasoning : the portrait is a poor specimen of the engraver's art, and is anything but flattering, *ergo*, Jonson's extravagant praise of it is taken to imply that, bad as it was, it was far better than the Stratford player merited.

The learned judge does not seem to perceive that the sonnet is just as much an advertisement as any of the beef-extract verses we are familiar with to-day. If Ben Jonson accepted a commission to write a poetic effusion on any person, book, or portrait, he could be depended on to do it well, and not spare the butter. What, do you suppose, was his private interest in Alfonzo Ferabosco, the violist? Probably less than nothing, yet, prefixed in the same way to Ferabosco's volume of "Lessons for One, Two or Three Viols" is a sonnet by Ben Jonson wherein that indifferent musician is held up as being far above

criticism. The commercial instinct was so strong in Ben Jonson that if we were to collect all these rhyming puffs of his, we might almost gauge the varying amounts of the fees they had brought him. Thus, following his own lines in the induction to "Bartholomew Fair," lines which certainly inspired the first half of the Address in the Folio, we might say "Here was his six-penn'orth, there his shillings-worth, and here his five-shillings or higher."

We have seen that arguments based on spelling are inept: let us now look into the mare's nest Judge Webb is led into when he turns his attention to punctuation. I do not think anyone will hold that punctuation was ever a strong point, or even a fixed quantity, in the English language, yet, when his honour comes to the memorial verses, he stumbles at the very threshold, and draws our attention to the heading, which is as follows:

To the Memory of my beloved,
The AVTHOR
Mr. William Shakespeare:
and
What he hath left vs.

Judge Webb says this suggests every Shakespearean question of importance. He asks who was the "beloved,"? who was "the avthor,"? who was "Mr. William Shakespeare,"? and what is it he "hath

left vs" ? So, you see, there are three of them now ! But, in that case, to which of them does "and what he hath left vs" refer ? Evidently to Mr. William Shakespeare, since that is the name it immediately follows. Thus we find that even Baconian quibbles bring us back to tradition. But, seriously examined, no man in his senses can surely read anything in that heading other than that Mr. William Shakespeare was the beloved author of the contents of the Folio. Let us look into the further wonderful deductions this earnest seeker after the truth extracts from the verses.

Taking the lines :

To draw no envy on thy name,
Am I thus ample to thy Book, and Fame !

His Honour proceeds to substitute, without adequate justification, the word "odium" for "envy," and then says that the publication of the plays could not possibly have brought odium on the dead player, but would have done so on a living noble. But the word is *envy*, not *odium*, and although odium is partially synonymous with envy, there is no justification for assuming that Jonson meant odium when he wrote envy, for he had considerable judgment in the shades of meaning in various words. If we seek for a contemporary use of the word envy we have

but to look into Bacon's Essays, where we find "A man that hath no virtue in himself, ever envieth virtue in others." But if the word envy in the verses does not mean the covetous desiring of another's merits, but is used in the sense of odium, then we must not forget that the original meaning of this word was more hatred or ill-will than disgrace.

Ben Jonson clearly states that he desires to excite admiration rather than envy by his praises. To this end he feels he must praise the book more than the author, though he would have preferred it the other way. He points out in explanation that "simple ignorance" or blind affection might do this,

Or crafty Malice might pretend this praise
And think to ruin where it seemed to raise.

This idea that to praise the author might be to slight the book is a distinct forerunner of Pope's "to damn with faint praise," but His Honour Judge Webb, still makes it a basis for quibbles about "some great personage whose social position would be ruined though his literary reputation might be raised by identifying him with the ignominies of the stage.'

When Jonson apostrophises Shakespeare as the "Soul of the Age" Webb says "this, certainly, was not the Shakespeare of the Players." Why not? It *may* be that the description is too high for him,

even at our present estimate of his genius, which is greater than obtained during his life. But this is the "puff poetical," and no doubt was one of Jonson's "five-shillings-worths or higher." Jonson's poetic references to Shakespeare's immortality—his still living in his book—are all taken by Webb as covert hints that the real author was not yet dead. When Jonson says that Shakespeare seems to "shake a Lance, as brandish't at the eyes of Ignorance," we find extravagant praise based on the play on the name—pictorially repeated on the frontispiece—and, though we may think these lines would be more applicable to the learned Bacon, there is not one jot nor tittle of assumption possible that they were not intended for the Stratford player.

The device on the title, showing Wit shaking a spear at Ignorance from behind a mask, exercises our friends considerably. They rejoice in the possibilities it presents for interpretation? Of course their contention is that Wit is Bacon behind the mask of Shakespeare. There might be something in this could it be shown that the use of a mask in connection with the drama was till then unknown. But it is well known that since the days of the Greek playwrights a mask has been the accepted symbol of the drama. Therefore the most obvious meaning of the device on the Folio is that ignorance is

attacked through the stage. The whole idea grows up by easily perceived stages out of the two syllables of Shakespeare's name.

Jonson, again, has a poetic flight of imagination in which he says :

Sweet Swan of Avon ! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames
That so did take Eliza and our James.

As an example of Judge Webb's method of critically handling anything of a poetic nature, I will give in full his comment on the above lines.

"If Shakespeare was ever regarded as the Swan of Avon, he was in his grave; and though the song of the dying swan is a favourite fancy with poets, no poet that ever lived would be mad enough to talk of a swan as *yet* appearing some seven or eight years after it was dead."

The only comment on this is to wonder whether His Honour ever attempted to parse the words "what a sight it were."

In these memorial verses Jonson appeals to the undying intellect of Shakespeare in the words :

Shine forth, thou Star of Poets, and with rage,
Or influence, chide or cheer the drooping stage
Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourned like night,
And despairs day, but for thy Volume's light.

You read there the idea that the "volume's light" is all that is left us, but Judge Webb is in such a hurry to prove his point that he bungles everywhere. This very verse he contends proves that Jonson considered Shakespeare (i.e., the author of the plays) as still living. What about "since thy flight from hence"?

One marvels at this purblind persistence, this picking out the clay rather than the crystals of truth it contains. One who drowns may be justified in clutching at straws, but it is not necessary to cry "scissors"!

CHAPTER XV.

THE idea that Ben Jonson obviously wrote the sonnet and memorial verses to order still leaves the main point at issue open. We can only observe that in these verses, unlike the Dedication and Address, no prevarication is to be found. Nothing is contradictory, but all is straightforward and in accordance with tradition. William Shakespeare is called the beloved author, he is eulogised, his death is mourned, and the only consolation offered us is the "light of his volume." This, alone, however, does not prove Jonson's sincerity. But after the latter's death, his Discoveries were published, and therein he speaks of Shakespeare the player as a writer, and tries to justify himself for having said "would he had blotted a thousand" lines. In this paragraph Jonson professes to have loved Shakespeare "this side idolatry as much as any," and speaks of his "excellent phantasie, brave notions, and gentle expressions wherein he flowed

with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stop't." There spoke the pedant! He goes on to quote an example of the absurdities that Shakespeare would occasionally blunder into, and concludes: "But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever in him more to be praised than to be pardoned."*

Now these words are taken from papers of Jonson's which we may well believe to be free from any taint of commercialism. They were not written to order, so may be taken as a true record of private opinion. But then we are brought in touch with another point that excites the Baconian's suspicions, and that is the palpable *volte-face* Ben Jonson executed with regard to his estimate of William Shakespeare. Jonson's first writings on that subject are in the form of a violent and abusive personal attack. The man whom he later loved almost to idolatry is a "poor poet-ape," and is accused of *theft*. This latter point I will deal with later, the question of contemporary abuse and condemnation must engage our attention for the present.

We must not forget that in Shakespeare's day, popular though his plays were, his genius was not

* What a great mind is discerned behind that word "pardoned"!

appraised at anything like the value we now put upon it. Therefore we must not be surprised if "the Burbages had no conception of his intellectual supremacy." In the bulk of cases men are either over-estimated or under-estimated during life, the latter being the fate of most exceptional geniuses. In addition to this inability to grasp the real worth of the new play-writer, we must not forget that jealousy was a passion as well known in the spacious times of Queen Elizabeth as at any other period of human history, and what more likely to rouse the fury of the "legitimate" literary men than the intrusion into their craft of a mere player. Such a thing was unprecedented, and it is small wonder that attempts were made on all hands to nip this forward venture in the bud. Hence such outbursts as Jonson's "Poet-ape," Greene's "Upstart crow," and so forth. With regard to Jonson's change of opinion the Baconians try to make some show of plausibility for their case by showing that the attacks were written before, and the eulogies after he (Ben Jonson) had become associated with Bacon in a secretarial capacity.

Very good, so far, but there is also the other coincidence that Shakespeare was dead when the extravagant eulogies were written. How old the saying "Die and get a good name" may be I know

not, but the feeling which dictated it is sufficiently old to serve our purpose. Not only was Shakespeare removed from active competition, but Jonson had been employed to write the verses to puff the wares of the Folio. The tone of the paragraph in the Discoveries suggests that he had been twitted with his change of opinion for he complains that his reply "would he had blotted a thousand" to those who lauded Shakespeare for never blotting a line once written, was held by some as a malicious speech. I have no doubt it was, for the attempt to justify it which follows in the paragraph is clumsy in the extreme. Then, again, the change of front might easily have been a genuine one. The upstart player who had presumed to raise himself to the rank of a writer had proved his powers, and his quondam enemies were forced to admit it. There is tradition, also, that Shakespeare, in his capacity of adviser and reader to Burbage, influenced the latter to produce Ben Jonson's play "Every Man in His Humour." This, of itself, would bring about just such a change of personal feeling, and accounts for the tribute to Shakespeare's honesty and open, free nature which we also find in the Discoveries. So that an intelligent examination into contemporary attitude and writings shows that we are not forced to Baconianism as the only solution of the puzzle.

In fact, the more we look into these things the less of a solution does Baconianism appear.

Adverse criticism of a successful man by his contemporaries proves nothing but the spite or limitations of those from whom it proceeds, and the following from Robert Greene's "Groatsworth of Wit" is a good case in point :

. . . . there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his "Tyger's heart, wrapped in a player's hide," supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you ; and being an absolute Johannes Factotum, is in his owne conceit the only Shake-scene in a countrie."

The travestied line from "Henry VI," the "Johannes Factotum," and the elementary attempt at a pun on the name show conclusively that Shakespeare was meant. That he was just such a Johannes Factotum to Burbage we know full well, and one seems to read between the lines of this attack that he had not been so kind to Greene as he had to Ben Jonson. The words "as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you" is a little puzzling. At first it would appear to mean the mouthing of lines upon the stage, but the passage is addressed to Greene's fellow writers, and not to any players, therefore to "bumbast" in that case seems to be used contemptuously in the sense of inventing or concocting. The "Groatsworth of Wit" was edited by Chettle, who later on in his

“Kind Heart’s Dream” tried to mollify the offence, and speaks of Shakespeare (as is commonly held) as civil in demeanour and “excellent in the quality he professes, besides divers of worship have reputed his uprightness of dealing which argues his honesty and his facetious grace in writing which approves his art.”

Thomas Nash’s Epistle prefixed to Greene’s Menaphon is by many supposed to be an attack on Shakespeare, or, rather, Bacon for having invaded the province of the playwright. This, however, is only based on the pun—almost as feeble as Greene’s “Shake-scene”—“he will afford you whole Hamlets, I should say whole handfuls of tragical speeches.” There is nothing to show that the pun existed for any purpose but its own. Also there seems much likelihood that there was more than one play dealing with the history of the melancholy Dane going about before Shakespeare’s version came on the scene.* And the idea seems to have taken the people very strongly if we take into consideration the frequent

* It is impossible to imagine Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” to have been written before his son Hamnet was christened. This curiously corrupt form points to an imperfectly remembered name of a character in some play witnessed in all probability on the groundfloor hall of the grammar school. It is very significant that he should have so christened his son. Of modern examples of the same spirit I might mention Siegfried Wagner.

use by various writers of "Hamlet, revenge," the ghost, and so forth, not all of which can have had reference to Shakespeare's play. I think we may safely take it that Nash was simply attacking the young lawyers who tried, as many do to-day, to earn a little at dramatic writing whilst waiting for clients, and that the pun on "Hamlet" was used as a sort of catchword of the day.

Perhaps the most valuable of the contemporary references to Shakespeare is to be found in Stowe's "Chronicles" which were published in 1615, a year before Shakespeare's death, wherein he is included, together with Francis Bacon, in a list of twenty-four of "our modern and present excellent poets which worthely flourish in their own works."

Few as are these references to Shakespeare by his contemporaries, they conclusively point to him as the author of the plays. Of course the Baconians will cry "that shows how much *they* knew about Shakespeare," but the men who penned such violent attacks on him, men with whom he came frequently in contact, and possibly conflict, were clever enough to have known whether he was the author or not, and had they made the discovery that he was not, do you not think these attacks would have taken a different and more definite form? But there, perhaps you do not think.

CHAPTER XVI.

I THINK that by this time we have seen how the identical facts provide arguments in support of tradition that are at least quite as sound as those they are made to provide for Baconianism. Our friends, however, adopt a curious attitude with regard to tradition. Every tale that is in any way discreditable to William Shakespeare is gleefully accorded full belief, but those of an opposite colour are scouted. For instance, no value is attached to the tradition that he was the author of the plays, notwithstanding that this tradition had its birth during his lifetime, but the verses on Sir Thomas Lucy are accepted readily enough although they were not heard of till a hundred years after Shakespeare's death. I am not disposed to dispute the authenticity of this effusion, but I wish to draw attention to the extremely slender foundation on which it rests as compared to the tradition of the authorship of the plays. In the

same way the Baconians will not allow the *facts* of his rapid rise to be taken as supporting any theories of his ability, but the *tradition* that he was a butcher's apprentice in youth is paraded as a powerful support to the theory that he was all his life an ignoramus.

The Baconians are prepared to give full credence to the tale of the drinking-bout between the youths of Stratford and those of Bidford, and cite it as showing how unlike a gentle and learned student such a debauch would be. The German university students of to-day, however, indulge in just such tipping-tourneys and so-called "Bier-reisen." The legend of Shakespeare's death from over-indulgence in the brew of the period* is also given as demonstrating the unlikeliness that such a man could pen lofty flights of poesy. And yet the contrary is proved in the character of Richard Greene as described by Judge Webb:

Unfortunately Greene was one of those *men of genius* who are so vividly described in "The Fortunes of Nigel"—men who alternately revelled in debauchery, and struggled with the meanest necessities of life. He was, in fact, the victim of that fatal banquet of Rhenish wine and pickled herrings, which is so frequently alluded to in the literature of the time.

* This is first chronicled some thirty years after Shakespeare's death, and is unsupported by any evidence.

The history of art and literature goes far to prove that there have been many men who have enriched the world with priceless and ennobling works—works of intellectual refinement, untainted by any grossness whatsoever, yet who were in their own persons anything but insusceptible to the temptations of earthly appetites.

The man who penned that most gloriously inspired work "The Messiah" was anything but an ascetic liver. In George Frederick Handel we find a remarkable parallel with William Shakespeare in the matter of the originality of his productions. What did Dr. Ebenezer Prout call Handel? "The Grand Old Robber," and there is much justification for the witty epithet, for research shows that an enormous amount of Handel's music was nothing but a glorified transcription of other works. Similarly with Shakespeare, more often than not it is the *lines* that are his, rather than the *plays*: his genius was an intellectual alchemy, and the lead and copper that he found became silver and gold at his touch. Thus were old plays and still older stories glorified by his "facetious grace." And do we not here see the basis of those splenetic attacks: "Upstart crow, beautified with our feathers"?

Poor Poet Ape that would be thought the chief,
Whose works are e'en the frippery of wit,
From brokerage has been so bold a thief
That we the robbed have rage and pity in't.

* * * * *

He takes up all, makes each man's wit his own.

. . . . But such crimes
The sluggish gaping auditors devoured,
He marks not whose 'twas first, and after times
May judge it to be his as well as ours.

One may well understand his contemporaries seeing only the "theft" and not perceiving the transformation things familiar had undergone. There is nothing discreditable to Shakespeare in this, for we know him to have been, not a literary man, but a veritable Johannes Factotum of the theatre. His evident business capacity made him of value to the Burbages, and, if not a great actor, he could be trusted to tread the boards without disgracing his management. This question of Shakespeare's powers as an actor is an interesting one. Contemporary reference only tells us that the ghost in "Hamlet" was the "top of his performance." It is a little difficult to be sure if this is praise or faint praise. To make the ghost effective without the modern illusions of the supernatural must have required some art, and the part otherwise gives some scope for elocutionary acting. Altogether one cannot say whether the "top of his per-

formance" means that an insignificant part was the best he could attempt, or that he achieved a striking success in his portrayal of a difficult character. That the author of the plays chafed at the conditions under which actors worked—that he realised how utterly dependent they were on their own powers to make any effect—is seen in the appeals of chorus in "Henry V":

"Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts."

"'Eke out our performance with your mind."

That he was a man of considerable dramatic insight and judgment is proved by the fact that Burbage trusted him to advise on the production of other's plays, and I will add, that he could on emergency be depended on to throw together a play based on some story told, or some indifferent play known, that would hold the attention of the audience by reason of its appeal to humanity, its "facetious grace" and its opportunities for histrionic "effect." There you have the Johannes Factotum at a glance.

As a small boy I delighted much in the conversation of an aged actor who, in his young days, had done much "Barn-storming," and I remember well many amusing tales he gave me from his own experiences, not the least entertaining being the frequent production of "entirely new and original"

plays. The *modus operandi* was in this wise: the company, having exhausted their repertoire in a village, and still lacking the wherewithal to pay up and depart to seek other audiences, the manager would call the company together on Sunday morning and a council of war would take place. If the vote went against the "paying-up" part of the programme, the Monday morning found a number of irate landladies comparing notes. If, on the other hand, the natives were not considered too bucolic to be drawn, a new play would be decided upon, and the work would be produced thus: the manager would tell or read out a story—generally the penny novelette of the period—he would then assign the characters to the suitable members of his troupe, and would tell them what to say, sometimes scribbling out anything of particular importance. They would rehearse it then and there, spend the afternoon in writing out big posters, stick them up at night, rehearse again on Monday morning, and on the evening of that day the first performance would be given. Now few will care to deny the proposition that the methods of the touring company have changed more in the last fifty years than they did for a century or two before, therefore I feel that there is nothing wild in the conjecture—if, indeed, conjecture be the right word—that some

few of Shakespeare's plays may have been of similar genesis, and if, as I have before shown, he was in all probability a strolling player before he came to London, then he might well have brought a Hamlet, if not in his pocket, certainly in his head.

But these are the probabilities the Baconians will have none of. They prefer to think it probable that a man who rose, as authentic history proves Shakespeare did, remained a loutish bumpkin all his days.

Another example of this arbitrary selection of evidence is to be found in that "noted weed" juggle I have before dealt with. Tradition is to be upset, forsooth, by an utterly untenable "interpretation" of a word in one sonnet, but not be supported by direct statements in five others, of which the following is perhaps the most striking :

If thy soul check thee that I come so near,
 Swear to thy blind soul that I was thy *Will*,
 And will, thy soul knows, is admitted there ;
 Thus far for love, my love-suit, sweet, fulfil.
Will will fulfil the treasure of thy love,
 Ay, fill it full with wills, and my will one,
 In things of great receipt with ease we prove ;
 Among a number one is reckoned none.
 Then in the number let me pass untold.
 Though in thy store's account I one must be ;
 For nothing hold me, so it please thee hold
 That nothing me, a something sweet to thee.
 Make but my name thy love, and that love still,
 And then thou lov'st me—for my name is *Will*.
 (Sonnet CXXXVI.)

In four other sonnets this pun is to be found, and always italicised as in the above quotation, but the Baconians do not seem to be aware of the fact.

The player's marvellous hotch-potch of knowledge is "paralleled" with the philosopher's deep learning [the only truth in these parallels being that they never meet], but we are not told that the one set of writings is to a great extent morbidly erotic, whilst the other, even when treating of the tender passion, is not. We are not to notice that the plays have to be prepared for the "young person" whilst the essays are clean; but we *are* told that both writings contain "triads," as though these forms did not grace all literature, from Holy Writ downwards. We are told that Shakespeare was permitted to "gag" into the acting editions of the plays various obscenities and ribald by-play, but we are not told how these unBaconian features found their way into the MSS. we are to believe the noble lord himself gave to Hemming and Condell to publish.

As an excuse for the absurdities and anachronisms occurring in some of the plays we are told that Bacon well knew that theatre-goers did not want education, only amusement. But then we are also told that Bacon says:

Dramatic poesy is as history made visible, for it represents actions as if they were present, whereas history represents

them as past. . . . The stage is capable of no small influence both of discipline and corruption. . . . Among the antients it (the stage) was used as a means of educating men's minds to virtue, nay, it has been regarded by learned men and great philosophers as a kind of musician's bow, by which men's minds may be played upon.

And again :

The art of acting should be made part of the education of youth.

Then we are contumeliously reminded that Shakespearean writers mar the force of their conjectures by the free use of such qualifications as "in all probability," "one can readily believe," "one can only reasonably assume," and so forth. But an examination into the writings on the other side shows that Baconians are not above introducing conjectural matter with these conventional apologetic curtseys.

Fellow jurors! Can we honestly allow ourselves to be hoodwinked by such clumsy attempts at inductive reasoning? It is enough to make the shade of Bacon groan again to think people, banded together in his name, should so travesty the science he founded. It is all topsy-turvy, and the only thing proved, and that most conclusively, is that Baconianism is the *cause* and not the result of the arguments set forth.

CHAPTER XVII.

FRANCIS BACON undoubtedly had strong dramatic tendencies: he approved of the stage, in which, as we have seen, he perceived a latent power for elevation and education, and he was continually taking part in the amateur theatricals that constituted such a prominent feature of the revels at Court, Gray's Inn, etc. Here we see that Bacon had a legitimate outlet for whatever theatrical tendencies he may have possessed. Without this one might imagine him indulging this taste in secret, but he was nearly always in request as Master of the Revels and devisor of Masques, so that we find thereby that Bacon is taken further away from the Shakespeare plays instead of being brought nearer to them.

We can certainly credit Bacon with some knowledge of stage-craft, and were the sole references to acting that are to be found in the plays in the character of Hamlet's directions to the players, one

might think a literary man capable of evolving them. But, as I have before insisted, the *actor* is seen very strongly in these plays, and I am inclined to think none but a man who had with difficulty worked his way upwards in the dramatic profession could have penned the first clown's scene in the "Midsummer Night's Dream." The satire on the actor-manager is exquisite, and not in the least out of date yet. These are the things that one does not expect from the philosopher.

On the other hand, we are told that the plays display intimate knowledge of the ways, manners and customs of lords, ladies, and gentlefolk generally, which could not possibly be familiar to an ignorant bumpkin. Now, let us see how a jury of intelligent men view this argument. The last ten years of Shakespeare's life prove that there was nothing of the ignorant bumpkin about him, and, as he died, so he lived, with "ideas above his station." Truly a provincial youth of to-day could not gain much knowledge of the habits of the "nobility and gentry," no matter to what heights his ideas tended, but we have to take into consideration a large number of co-relative circumstances and conditions if we are to get an intelligent understanding of such a point.

In this particular case, if we wish to formulate

any reliable theory to show how young Shakespeare could have gained a familiarity with the conduct of the Elizabethan "smart set," we must first examine the geographical position of Stratford-on-Avon. This town we find situated on a main road: it is nine miles from Warwick Castle, and some thirteen miles from Kenilworth. The main road connects these places with Coventry, Gloucester and other important towns. The next thing to examine is the method of travel common in Elizabeth's day. We know very well that at that time one could not travel unobserved by Pulman car. Then the progress of the *haute noblesse* from place to place almost amounted to pageantry, and halts had to be made at various hostelries *en route* for rest, refreshment and change of horses. Now, can we not see our young apprentice of the soaring brain neglecting his work, in all probability, to witness these sights: mingling with the servants, hearing their gossip, even seeing my lord hand my lady out of her coach and into the inn, and treasuring up in his memory every courtly phrase and gesture? And in the same way we can picture him, all eyes and ears, scampering off to Warwick or Kenilworth when festivities and revels were in progress, and returning home laden like a bee with sweet gleanings that, on maturing, would earn for him the epithet "honey-tongued."

Thus everywhere we find the Shakespeare cause strengthened and the Baconian weakened, for, while we can with ease point to a way for the Stratford player to acquire an insight into high life, it would be extremely difficult for any one to show how the noble Lord Keeper could have gained the still more intimate knowledge of low life and degraded manners displayed in so many of the scenes.

In all these examples of the arbitrary selection of evidence we recognise the peculiar mental twist—the intellectual distortion—of the lawyer spoken of before. Judge Rentoul, in a magnificent oration I once heard him deliver to the Antient Society of Coggers on the occasion of their one hundred and fiftieth anniversary celebration, spoke of the English jury-system, and said that no jury of lawyers could be depended upon to return such equitable verdicts as were to be obtained from juries of non-legal men of varied walks in life. Justice Bucknill, too, in the Court of King's Bench on May 14, 1906, said: "We lawyers are often inclined to split hairs, and take a narrow view of things; while juries take commonsense views, and are broadminded."

Therefore it is that we—my fellow-jurors and I—are called upon to hold the true-balanced scales of Justice in which the lawyer's light-weight is finally appraised.

Let us, then, carefully analyse what the prosecution says; see whether their theories are plausible, and if so, see whether they are the only plausible ones possible to construct on the same groundwork. Take notice that some arguments cut both ways, as the knowledge of high and low life. Notice, also, those that do not come mathematically true in the converse, as the question of education. Remember that, could it be demonstrated beyond the possibility of denial that William Shakespeare did have a complete and elaborate education, this would not by any means prove that he wrote the plays: it would barely prove that he *could* have written them. On the other hand, if we can underpin the foundations of tradition, and so bring the authorship home to him, then that fact by itself would prove indisputably that he did gain a large amount of knowledge in some way or other. It would then be easy of belief if still no less difficult of comprehension.

While we cannot help seeing that there certainly is an unfortunately large amount of Shakespearolatry on the one hand, we must not be blind to the excessive Baconiolatry on the other. If the one is glorified into an impossible kind of student, the other is certainly being almost canonised. We must not let our judgment be warped—we must remember

that they were both men. And of Shakespeare I would say that the features of his life are much like his sonnets. Some are gloriously inspired poesy, some are obscure, and of others it can be only said that when you have grasped their full significance you wish you had not! That is why I leave Southampton out of my survey.

A distinguished naturalist was once given a solitary bone of a prehistoric animal brought home by a traveller. From that bone he was able to reconstruct the entire animal, and to tell us its dimensions, what it lived on and how it acted. Can we not do something similar with William Shakespeare? If we have not a complete skeleton we have several bones, and, surely, our knowledge of human nature should enable us to do with the young man from Stratford what the naturalist did with the Saurian. It has certainly been attempted, but bias has prompted some to contend that a mole which others counted an eagle.

Fellow jurymen! there are four Shakespeares before you—which will you have? Here I set them out for comparison.* Firstly, the scattered bones of accurate record, secondly, the ghostly and unreal phantom raised by the Shakespeareans, thirdly, the

* *Vide* Tabulated Summary at end.

Baconian's man of straw, fit only for fifth of November celebrations, and lastly, what I contend to be the man of flesh and blood, Shakspere, who was born and buried in Stratford-on-Avon, Shagspere, who was married there, Shaxberd, the "poet that made the plaies" for court functions, all one with Shakespeare the "honey-tongued" who had such a "facetious grace in writing," such "brave notions" and "excellent fantasies," and in whom there was ever "more to be praised than to be pardoned."

It only remains for me to repeat my question—Which will you have? Will you be content to simply gaze on the first as in a museum, and pass by uttering no comment, will you accept blindly the fantastic wraith the Shakespeareans offer, or the equally fantastic bogey of the Baconians, or will you look into the matter closely, scrutinize it as jurymen, and see if I have not given you something which in the main is more credible? To accurately fill in the blanks in Shakespeare's life is too much to hope for, but I have at least evolved a theory that has no fantastic elements, that agrees with the facts as well as with the traditions, and that, furthermore, agrees with human nature.

To hope to re-convert a Baconian is beyond my aspirations, but I may be the means of checking

some on the brink of Baconianism. I have endeavoured to point to a *reason* for faith in tradition, and to strengthen those who would dearly love to believe were they not dazzled by forensic Baconianism.

The Shakespearians have builded them a shrine of gilded filagree, near by the Baconians have set up one of lath and plaster. It is my desire to see erected in place of both one of enduring marble pillared on fact, buttressed by evidence, and decorated with analogy that shall withstand the assaults of time, enmity and wantonness. In it all that is noblest of the player-poet shall be enshrined and

So will I pray that thou mayst have thy WILL.

TABULATED SUMMARY .
OF
FACTS AND SUPPOSITIONS.

SUPPOSITIONS

BY

| ASCERTAINED FACTS | | SHAKESPEAREANS | BACONIANS | THE PRESENT WRITER |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|---|
| 1564 | Baptised April 26. | Born April 23. Attended Stratford Grammar School, learnt Latin, etc. | Born about April 23. <i>May</i> have attended grammar school, but certainly learnt next to nothing. | Born April. As the school was free, almost certain to have attended, and learnt <i>something</i> , if only Latin. |
| 1577 (aged 13) | Apprenticed to father. | Apprenticed to father, who was partly a woolstapler and butcher. | Apprenticed to a butcher. | Apprenticed to father, in what exact capacity not known. |
| 1582 (aged 18) | Married. | Married under romantic circumstances. | Married under very questionable circumstances. | Married unhappily. |
| 1585-7 (aged about 22) | Disappeared from Stratford. | Left Stratford. Was part time school-master. Travelled abroad. Studied classics, languages, law, science, medicine, etc. | Came to London and became an ostler. | Most probably joined a company of strolling players. Acting developed latent talent. Drifted about in various ways, and ultimately arrived in London. |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| 1592 (aged 28) | Found hanging round Burbage's Theatre in London. Rose rapidly. Became part owner of two theatres, and was alleged to have written plays. | From poverty rose to fame as a great poet and dramatist. | Still a stable hand. Became an indifferent actor (super). A confirmed money-grubber. Sold his name to Bacon as a pseudonym. | No doubt penniless and glad to pick up a few pence while waiting to buttonhole Burbage. Rose as manager, actor, playwright and generally "Johannes Facetotum." Undoubtedly edited, concocted and wrote plays. |
| 1611 (aged 47) | Retired to Stratford. | Retired to native place to end days in peacefulness. | Retired from business like a successful huckster. | Mental and physical strain caused health to break down; hence withdrawal from active life. |
| 1613 1616 (aged 53) 1619 | Globe Theatre burnt. Shakespeare died. Burbage died. | | | { MSS. got into hands of Hemming and Condell. |
| 1623 | Folio published by Hemming and Condell. | Folio published by Hemming and Condell out of love for Shakespeare, and the disinterested desire to have his works rightly preserved. | Folio published by Fr. Bacon, Hemming and Condell being merely his agents, in order to prove he was not the author. | Folio published by Hemming and Condell as it was now safe for them to do so. |

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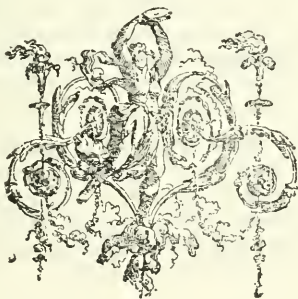
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