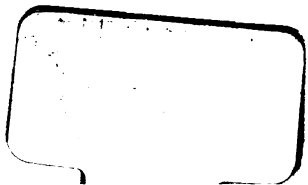

Bacon and Shakespeare.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE:

HIS POSITION
AS REGARDS THE
PLAYS, ETC.

BY
WILLIAM HENRY SMITH,
AUTHOR OF
"Bacon and Shakespeare," an Inquiry touching Players, Playhouses, and Play-Writers in the days of Elizabeth.

LONDON:
SKEFFINGTON & SON,
163, PICCADILLY.
1884.

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M.DCCC.LXXXIV.

TO THE READER,

Most of the facts, or seeming facts, in the following pages, reached me after my publication in 1857.

I present them, "naked and unarmed, not seeking to preoccupate the liberty of men's judgments by confutations."

THE AUTHOR.

London,
June, 1884.

BACON & SHAKESPEARE.

" One of these men is *genius* to the other,
And so of these, which is the natural man,
And which the spirit ? who decyphers them ?"
—*Comedy of Errors.*

WHEN in 1856, in a "Letter to Lord Ellesmere," the late President of the Shakespeare Society, "printed for private circulation," we suggested that Francis Bacon might have been the author of the Plays attributed to Shakespeare, we expected to have received from the persons to whom that pamphlet was sent prompt replies containing statements of facts and argument irrefragable, sufficient to have immediately convinced us that our supposition was erroneous and untenable.

Instead of this, though some adopted the safer course of saying nothing—or simply contented themselves by vilifying and abusing the person who had the audacity to broach so unpardonable a heresy—other some—in combating our statements exhibited so little know-

ledge of the Plays and Writings attributed to Shakespeare, and so much less of those which are and always have been acknowledged as Bacon's—that the impression which had been made upon us by reading the authors themselves was confirmed and strengthened by reading the arguments of those who resisted the conclusion towards which we felt ourselves so greatly, though unwillingly, impelled.

Under these circumstances, although in our "Letter" we had stated that "we should abstain from any attempt to compare the writings of the two authors, not merely because it was a labour too vast to enter upon" then, but "more particularly because it is essentially the province of the literary student," which we do not pretend to be—yet as we—to use an expression of Bacon's, "had taken upon us to ring a bell, to call other wits together, which is the meanest office," and as, like unready servants, they had stared at the bell instead of answering it, we were compelled to do our own errand, and reluctantly made some further entrance into the matter, by publishing our little book, entitled "An Inquiry touching Players, Play-houses, and Play-writers, in the days of Elizabeth." London: J. R. Smith, 1857.

The late Lord Campbell wrote a book upon "Shakespeare's Legal Attainments," published in 1859, which has brought that portion of Shakespeare's writings which have considerable bearing upon the subject under discussion, rather prominently before the public. It is a superficial work, hardly worthy of the high legal functionary from whom it emanated.

Mr. William Lowes Rushton has some reason to complain that Lord Campbell's work has obtained so much notice whilst his very able little pamphlet on the same subject, published fully a year before Lord Campbell's book, has met with comparatively little attention in this country, though highly appreciated in Germany, into the language of which country it has been translated. We have no hesitation in saying that Mr. William Lowes Rushton's pamphlets, "Shakespeare a Lawyer," published in 1858, "Shakespeare's Legal Maxims," published in 1859, "Shakespeare Illustrated," by old authors, parts 1 and 2 published in 1867—68, and "Shakespeare's Testamentary Language," published in 1869, are amongst the most erudite and valuable works that have been contributed to Shakespearian literature. They convincingly prove that the writer of the plays had profoundly studied the principles, and was

well acquainted with the practice of the law in all its departments, a knowledge which could not be acquired by the greatest possible genius, even if he had spent years in an attorney's office.

When Mr. Nathaniel Holmes entered the field of this discussion we felt that providence had provided exactly the champion the cause required, and as we were not fit to fight in the fore-rank at his side, we thought it better to retire to the rear of this unexpected American contingent, and endeavour to make ourselves useful in the commissariat department.

But now that the triumph seems so near at hand, we cannot resist coming to the front to congratulate those that have fought the battle upon their success, and we candidly own to show ourselves as a veteran who has survived the campaign, and is ready to give an honest account of the stores which still remain on his hands.

They may seem matters of small importance —yet in totting up the column of evidence— the sum of them—like the outermost row of pence and farthings in a large account—may be found to have some weight and value, and be essential in order to make up the full tale.

The first statement that we have to make is,

that since our last publication a stigma which has made Francis Bacon infamous in the eyes of a large portion of the religious public has happily been removed.

A tract, entitled "The Characters of a Believing Christian in Paradoxes, or Seeming Contradictions," was published in a volume known as the "Remains," a book "to which nobody stands sponser," in 1648, twenty-two years after Bacon's death.

These "Paradoxes" have since that time been included in collected editions of Bacon's Works, and have almost universally been considered as having been written by Bacon, and being misunderstood, he has suffered much obloquy in consequence.

In his "Lives of the Lord Chancellors," Lord Campbell writes, respecting "The Character of a Christian in Paradoxes or seeming Contradictions," "Notwithstonding the stout denial that he (Bacon) was the author of the Paradoxes, I cannot doubt that the publication is from his pen, and I cannot characterize it otherwise than as a profane attempt to ridicule the Christian faith."

We did not venture an opinion as to the authorship of the Paradoxes, but we made the charitable suggestion that Lord Campbell had

never read them, writing thus—"We have never met with a person who, having read 'The Character of a Believing Christian, in Paradoxes, or Seeming Contradictions,' has concurred in the judgment pronounced by the Lord Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench."

The Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Sumner) wrote to us—"We may be assured that Lord Bacon, in writing his Essay on Christian Paradoxes, intended nothing but what was honourable to Christianity. But the Essay is in many respects extravagant; ingenious, rather than edifying, and might easily furnish occasion of mockery to ill-informed or profane persons. I have therefore no hesitation in expressing an opinion that no benefit would be gained to the cause of religion by bringing the Essay into particular notice by detaching it from the works of the great author for the purpose of separate publication."

The Religious Tract Society seem to have differed from the Archbishop, for the Rev. Alexander B. Grosart informs us in his book which we shall presently refer to, "So recently as a couple of months ago (Aug., 1864), in a very admirable volume of 'Selections from the Works of Bacon,' in the 'Wisdom of our Fathers,' having the imprint of the Religious

Tract Society," the Paradoxes are given in full, and prefixed is this note, "The authenticity of this Tract has been called in question, but without sufficient reason. The internal evidence on its behalf is strong, and parallel passages may be found in his acknowledged works, which appear to be either the germs or developed forms of many of these striking antithesis."

In the year 1864 the Rev. Alexander B. Grosart issued an interesting little book, "Lord Bacon not the author of the Christian Paradoxes. Printed for private circulation," in which he proves not only that they were neither written by Lord Bacon, nor intended "to ridicule the Christian faith," but that they were written by Master Herbert Palmer, B.D., an eminently pious Puritan Divine, born in the year 1601, at Wingham, in East Kent. He was of good family, Vicar of Ashwell, Herts, Master of Queen's College, Cambridge, and ultimately Minister of S. Margaret's, Westminster.

"A full and loving Memoir of Master Herbert Palmer" is in Samuel Clarke's "General Martyrologie," and its appendix volume of the "Lives of 32 Divines," 1677. 3d. edition.

The fact that a work written by Master Herbert Palmer has been attributed to Francis

Bacon for more than two hundred years, may serve to convince some of the *possibility* that works written by Francis Bacon may have been attributed to William Shakespeare for a like period.

Further, of these Paradoxes it is said that Archbishop Sancroft "revised and gave them a careful review," and later on the learned Dr. Parr wrote, "After frequent and attentive perusal, I am convinced that these fragments were written by Bacon, and intended only for a trial of his skill in putting together propositions which appear irreconcileable." The editor quotes the foregoing "To show how little value 'internal evidence' of 'style' and the like has, even in the hands of such an undoubted scholar as Dr. Parr."

Mr. Nathaniel Holmes, in his able and exhaustive book ("The Authorship of Shakespeare," New York, 1866), has well nigh settled this question. His critical analysis and comparison of the Plays of Shakespeare and the Works of Bacon drives the reader into the dilemma of deciding either—that England, at the same period, within the circle of its Metropolis, held two men—authors—whose minds, culture and acquirements were absolutely identical, or, that the Plays, Poems, Essays,

Philosophical, Historical and other writings—all emanated from one and the self-same intellect. If argument is ever to outweigh preconception and prejudice the preponderance can only be in one direction.

The late Mr. James Spedding considered the life-time of one man scarcely sufficient for the works and labours of Shakespeare—scarcely sufficient for the works and labours of Bacon. That the works and labours of both should be comprehended in the life-time of one he considered to be utterly impossible.

> True—O Sage—that mortal man
> No more does than that he can;
> But what can by man be done
> *Is a limit known to none.*

In Mr. Disraeli's—the late Lord Beaconsfield's—novel, "Venetia," published in 1837, Book 6, c. 8, Cadurcis is made to say: "And who is Shakespeare? We know as much of him as we do of Homer. Did he write half the plays attributed to him? Did he write a single whole play? *I doubt it.* He appears to me to have been an inspired adapter for the theatres, which were then not as good as barns. I take him to have been a botcher up of old plays. *His popularity is of modern date,* and may not last; it would have surprised him

marvellously. Heaven knows, at present, all that bears his name is alike admired; and a regular Shakesperian falls into exstacies with trash that deserves a niche in the Duneiad. For my part, I abhor your irregular geniuses, and I love to listen to the little nightingale of Twickenham."

The late Mr. Spedding writes ("Reviews and Discussions," London, 1879, p. 369), To ask me to believe that the man who *was accepted by all the people of his own time*, to many of whom he was *personally* known, as the *undoubted author* of the best plays then going was *not* the author of them, is like asking me to believe that Charles Dickens was not the author of "Pickwick." This statement appears not to have been well inquired into and considered.

Francis Bacon observes ("Adv. of Learning," Book 2, p. 110), "Kalenders of doubts, I commend as excellent things, so that there be this caution used, that when they be thoroughly sifted and brought to resolution, they be from thenceforth omitted, discarded, and not continued to cherish men in doubting."

Being neither of adequate ability, nor devoted to literary pursuits and investigation, we have not ventured upon the subject of "internal evidence, style and the like," which is the more

immediate province of the literary student or man of letters, and which has been so ably handled by other parties; bnt have confined ourselves to the humbler occupation of inquiring into and illustrating the personal history of William Shakespeare and his surroundings, and recording the inferences they seem to suggest.

D'Israeli has registered his Doubt, and Spedding has avowed his Creed. The creed of the latter we shall show is founded upon the sand of tradition rather than the rock of truth. The doubt of the former we shall "sift" and bring to "resolution."

In our book (Bacon and Shakespeare) we pointed out at page 97, that Sir Tobias Matthews, who was born at Oxford in 1587, matriculated there in 1598, and died in 1655, knew nothing of William Shakespeare. His biographer says "Although politics were his pursuit, he affected the reputation of universal genius, and certainly possessed many accomplishments." He was, in fact, a man who must have known William Shakespeare, if he was at that time as famous as modern historians have represented him to have been.

In 1839, Dr. Charles Severn, Registrar of the Medical Society of London, published a diary of the Rev. John Ward, A.M., who was Vicar

of Stratford-upon-Avon from 1662 until he died there in 1681. His diary fills 17 duodecimo volumes, and extends from 1648 to 1679.

The most important passage which Dr. Severn has extracted relating to Shakespeare, is this: "Mr. Ward in one of his notes, queries, 'Whether Dr. Heylin does well to omit Shakespeare, in reckoning up the dramatic poets which have been famous in England.'" This sentence is repeated twice, at page 41, and at page 184.

Now Dr. Heylin was born Nov. 29, 1600, during the life-time of William Shakespeare, and died in 1662. Therefore, he was alive, and had arrived at years of discretion, at the very time when modern commentators would have us believe that Shakespeare's celebrity was at its very highest, and when, as we all know, the famous folio of plays was published. Yet he seems never to have heard of him, though he was intimate with Ben Jonson.

The passage referred to by the Rev. John Ward is to be found in the "Cosmographia," a folio volume published in 1637, and occurs at page 303. I have extracted it.

"And finally for Poetry:—

1. Gower.
2. Lidgate, a monke of Burie.
3. The famous Geoffrey Chawser—Brother-

in-law of the great Duke of Lancaster, of which last Sir Philip Sidney used to say, that he marvelled how in those mistie times he could see so cleerly and others in so cleer times go so blindly after him.

4. Sir Philip Sidney himself, of whom and his Arcadia, more when we come to Greece.
5. The renowned Spencer of whom and his farie Queen, in another place.
6. Sam Daniel the Lucien.
7. Michael Drayton, the Ovid of the English nation.
8. Beaumont.
9. Fletcher, not inferior to Terence or Plantus.

And 10. My friend Ben Jonson, equal to any of the antients for the exactness of his pen, and the decorum which he kept in the dramatic Poems never before observed on the English Stage.

Others there are as eminent both for Arts and Arms as those here specified of whom as being stil alive I forbear to speak, according to the caution of the historian saying—Vivorum ut magna admiratio ita Censura est difficilis."

Certainly, neither Dr. Heylin nor Sir Tobias Matthews knew William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon.

The correspondence of the days of Elizabeth, which has come down to us is most copious—amongst it all there is not one line written by Shakespeare—nor one letter addressed to him —nor any in which his name is familiarly mentioned by any of his contemporaries, as if he was personally known to them. His modern biographers must have drawn very largely upon their imaginations for facts to support the fame of their favorite.

So far as history informs us, he was utterly unknown except to the clique connected with the Theatre, what their knowledge and opinion of him was, we shall presently see.

I write this deliberately after having carefully considered all the "Passages supposed to allude to Shakespeare, extracted from contemporary writings," a knowledge of which is now so easily acquired by a reference to Mr. Fleay's ingenious and exhaustive little book, in which he teaches us with great precision that Arithmetic, Mathematics and Mensuration are the Sciences, —most necessary—indeed, indispensable to the right understanding and appreciation of Dramatic Poetry.

Thomas Betterton (though he had a low voice, small eyes and an ungainly figure), is renowned as the most eminent player that

England has produced — and his private character was as estimable as his public performances.

His biographer narrates that "he made a journey or rather pilgrimage into Warwickshire to visit Shakespeare's tomb, and collect whatever particulars relating to his history tradition had preserved."

This must have been about the year 1670.

Betterton certainly communicated the result of his visit to Rowe, who embodied the information thus obtained in "The Life of Shakespeare" appended to his edition of the Plays. It contains the earliest account we have of the personal history of the man William Shakespeare.

Recent research has added many—more or less—interesting particulars to this record, but nothing tending to refute the statements made by Rowe, nor in any way calculated to more closely identify the man with the poet.

Shakespeare's fame, or at least his popularity was created by Betterton's performance of some of the characters in the Plays, and cannot be traced back to a remoter period than the restoration of King Charles 2nd, and his personal history was not inquired into until after that time.

We think that the documentary evidence we

have produced is weightier, and forms a firmer foundation for our faith, than the vague traditions upon which the late Mr. James Spedding and many others have built their creed—that William Shakespeare "was accepted by all the people of his own time, to many of whom he was personally known, as the undoubted author of the best plays then going."

Whilst writing our little book in 1856, the thought struck us—Would it not be strange, though by no means wonderful, considering the state of education in England at that period, if it should be found that this mighty genius we all worship, could neither read nor write, and we had *an intuitive idea* that this was the case.

The work we were then upon was tentative, we were feeling the pulse of the public, and we had nothing to assure us that it was in so robust a state of health as to be able to digest so hard a fact.

Shakespeare's Will may have been seen, and examined, and reported upon by previous writers, but the earliest notice of it that we have met with occurs in "Boswell's Life of Johnson," Chap. 33. anno 1775. "Dr. Johnson observed that there had been great disputes about the spelling of Shakespeare's name; at last it was thought that it would be settled by

looking at the original copy of the Will, but upon examining it, he was found to have written it himself no less than three different ways.

Our intuitive idea respecting Shakespeare's writing was strengthened by the following article which was sent to "Notes and Queries" on Dec. 18th, 1858, by Mr. William James Smith, late Librarian to the Duke of Buckingham, at Stowe :—

SHAKESPEARE'S WILL.

Among the historical and literary curiosities of manuscripts and printed books now so admirably arranged and exhibited to the public in the libraries of the British Museum, there are few which attract more attention than the recently-acquired autograph of Shakespeare. It suggested to my recollection the Original Will of Shakespeare, and inspired the wish that so invaluable a relic could be rescued from its present concealment in that dingy den called the Prerogative Office in Doctors' Commons, and its custody transferred to the officers of the British Museum, by whom it would be carefully and properly exhibited, and, instead of being almost unknown and unseen, it would become an object of the greatest interest, I might almost say of veneration, to thousands.

What may be its present condition I know not: it had suffered much from frequent manipulation when last I saw it, thirty years ago. It was then kept, folded, in a small box, with the will and codicils of the Emperor Napoleon, and a few other similar curiosities which were occasionally shown to visitors.

It would be very desirable that a *facsimile* copy of the entire document should be made, either by means of photography or by the lithographic skill of Mr. Netherclift.

In the year 1828 I obtained permission from the late Sir Herbert Jenner-Fust to copy the whole or any part of the will, and for that purpose it was entrusted to my possession for several hours on three successive days, under the surveillance of the clerks in the Prerogative Office, and I took the greatest pains, by tracing and drawing, to produce as perfect a copy of the signatures as eye and hand could make. These signatures were immediately afterwards engraved with equal accuracy, and published in the collection now known as Nichols' *Autographs of Royal, Noble, and Illustrious Persons*, fol. 1829; and I may here mention that all the autographs in that collection were selected, traced, and copied in *facsimile* by myself from the originals in the

British Museum and one or two other collections.

Besides the signatures I made tracings of the several interlineations which occur in the body of the will, because I had once a notion that they might possibly be in the handwriting of Shakespeare, but I have since changed my opinion in that respect.

It is a very singular fact that no other handwriting of Shakespeare is known to be extant, except the three signatures attached to his will, two signatures on the title and mortgage-deeds respectively in the possession of the City of London Library and of the British Museum, and another signature in a copy of Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essays*, also in the British Museum. I believe all these signatures to be unquestionably genuine; they all sufficiently resemble each other, and they are all written in a scrawling, weak, and uncertain hand, *like that of a man who scarcely knew how to spell his own name;* and I think there may be very reasonable doubts whether Shakespeare's proficiency in the art of penmanship extended beyond the capability of writing his own name.

We are told by his "fellows," Hemynge and Condell, who published the first folio edition of the plays, *seven years after the death of Shakespeare*,

that "his mind and hand went together: and what he thought, he *uttered* with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers."

That Shakespeare's transcendent genius would have enabled him to dictate to an amanuensis with fluency and correctness cannot be doubted, and thus the manuscripts may have been written or transcribed in a very fair and legible hand, with "scarce a blot in his papers."

If any writing of Shakespeare were to be obtained during his life, or after his death, so ardent and industrious a collector as Sir Robert Cotton would surely not have neglected to preserve it among the autographs of so many others of his illustrious and literary contemporaries which are still to be found in the volumes of the Cottonian Library.

WILLIAM JAMES SMITH.

Conservative Club.

"I can set to my name," said Sancho, "for when I was constable of our town, I learnt to make certain letters such as are set to mark trusses of stuff, which they said spelt my name."

The lawyer who prepared Shakespeare's will does not seem to have known that he could "set to his name," for in the attestation clause

the word "seal" was originally written, and run through, and the word "hand" written above it.

That a man in the full possession of his senses, who had not been able to master the mechanism of penmanship, might have dictated such words of profound wisdom and lofty poetry as are ascribed to Shakespeare to an amanuensis is a suggestion too preposterous to be for a moment entertained—we shall not therefore attempt to combat it.

We think, therefore, that until some proof is proffered that William Shakespeare could do more than sign his name, the presumptive evidence we have produced ought to convince any reasonable man—even if he did not approach the subject with an intuitive idea of the truth—that William Shakespeare's penmanship did not extend beyond the ability to sign his name—and that not very intelligibly.

It is admitted that upon his arrival in London William Shakespeare connected himself with the Play-house, where he filled some humble station—that his early prosperity provoked the envy and jealousy of his contemporaries, who appear not only to have thought that he assumed a personal consequence, and arrogated qualities to which he had no just

title, but, not content with the legitimate profit he derived from the purchase of the productions of their brains, he was (as it appeared to them) anxious to claim for himself the merit of being the original producer. This stirred the wrath of Nash, Chettle, Greene, and others who vented it in approbrious language, calling him a "Joannes Factotum," "Shakscene," and "upstart crow, beautified in our feathers."

Those who thus abused him, when at a later period they found that he had no wish to rival them, or make any pretensions of a literary character, but was content to confine himself to the more profitable calling he had adopted, spoke very favourably of him — especially Greene, who left a writing to that effect.

The hostile feelings, harshly expressed by others, Ben Jonson embodied in the following Ode, Sonnet, or Epigram, which we have never seen quoted by anyone. It is to be found in Ben Jonson's Works, by Gifford, in 1 Vol. Moxon, London, 1846.

ON POET APE.

Poor Poet Ape, that would be thought our chief,
Whose works are e'en the frippery of wit,
From brokage, has become so bold a thief
That we, the robb'd, have rage and pity it.

At first he made low shifts, would pick and glean,
Buy the reversion of old Plays, now grown
To a little wealth and credit in the scene.
He takes up all—makes each man's wit his own,
And told of this, he slights it—Tut! such crimes
The sluggish gaping auditor devours;
He marks not whose 'twas first—and after times
May judge it to be his as well as ours.
Fool, as if half eyes will not know a fleece
From locks of wool, or shreds from the whole piece.

Ben Jonson made ample compensation for the malignity of the foregoing lines, by the enthusiastic manner in which, at a later period, he sounded the praises of William Shakespeare, if his "My Shakespeare" *was the same person* as he had previously vilified.

But we contend that he was not, and that the highest position William Shakespeare attained was that of Player, part Proprietor of a Play-house, and Purveyor of Properties, and probably of Plays, acting, as Dr. Dowden suggests, "as a kind of broker, who stood between players and authors, buying from the one, and selling, so as himself to profit by the transaction to the other."

We think that Mr. D'Israeli's doubt as to Shakespeare's ability to write the plays, and his surmise as to his occupation, "if they

be thoroughly sifted and brought to resolution," should not be "continued to cherish men in doubting," but be registered as truth.

The early records of the Stationers' Co., of London, have been transcribed by Edward Arber, F.S.A., and printed in four goodly folio volumes, which renders them pleasant, instead of the painful reading which the original records were, and are.

Besides which the Transcriber, in "The Introductions" to the different sections into which the work is divided, has inserted much amusing and very instructive matter.

From these we learn that, by the 1st of Elizabeth, chap. 1 and 8, "All hitherto independent jurisdiction was, from henceforth vested in the Crown—better known as the Court of Star Chamber—to visit, reform, correct, amend, etc., all heresies, contempts, enormities, etc., as can lawfully be reformed, ordered, corrected, etc., to the pleasure of Almighty God, the increase of virtue, and the conservation of the peace and unity of this realm."

The Primate of England was, of course, a principal person in the Court of Star Chamber, and the Transcriber observes, "The ecclesiastical pressure on the public mind—always

moderated by the lay element—varied much with the character of the Primate for the time being. Under Matthew Parker, 1559-1575, and Edmund Grindal, 1576-1583, it was upon the whole as mild as could reasonably be expected; but John Whitgift, 1583-1604, originated a supervision of printed works which his successors rendered rigid."

Under the last prelate—that is between 1583 and 1604—the mandates respecting printing "pamphlettes, plaies and ballots," were more severely enforced than heretofore.

The Transcriber observes, "The principal motive for recording, in these sub-ledgers of the Wardens' annual accounts, the titles of books, was to reckon for the *fees* which were charged for such entrances. Had there been no fees, there might have been no book entries," and again, "We must think these Printers and Publishers as caring chiefly for their crowns, half-shillings and silver pennies. They bore the yoke of licensing as best they could, but only as a means to protect themselves harmless from the political and ecclesiastical powers. Their business was to live and make money, and keen enough they were about it. Intense competition existed not only among the Publishers of London, but led to a fifty years' war

between the Stationers of London and the University of Cambridge.

The Court of Star Chamber had an absolute controul over the Stationers' Company.

The Stationers' Company submitted to it for the sake of their fees.

The Stationers' Company had a similar controul over the Printers and Publishers, they submitted to it from the exigencies of their trade, and both "bore this yoke of licensing as best they could, but only as a means to hold themselves harmless from the political and ecclesiastical powers."

On July 12, 1600. The Merchant of Venice,
Aug. 4, ,, As you like it,
,, 4, ,, Henry V.,
,, 14, ,, Much ado about nothing,
were stayed at the Register of the Stationers' Co. Up to that time Plays, etc., had been registered, although they were anonymous.

Shortly after the following entry appears in the Register of the Stationers Co., of London:

1600—23 Augusti.

Andrew Wise. William Apsley. Enter'd for their copies under the hands of the Wardens, two bookes, the one called "Muche a Doo about Nothinge;" th(e) other "The Second Parte of the History of King Henry IIII, with

the humours of Sir John Ffallstaff," written by Master William Shakespeire.

The Transcriber adds the note :—"This is the first time our great poet's name appears in these registers."

The historical plays of Richard 2 and 3 had been registered anonymously in 1597, and the Printers and Publishers had thereby incurred the whole responsibility of the publication, and rendered themselves liable to any pains and penalties which might result therefrom.

The imprisonment of Hayward in 1599 taught the Stationers' Co., the Printers, Publishers, and Booksellers, the welcome truth that they might escape from the despotism, or mitigate the penalties to which they had hitherto been subjected, by sacrificing the Author: the Court of Star Chamber being willing to make him the victim of their vengeance.

Henceforth, the name of the Author, or reputed Author, was to be appended to all printed books.

The Stationers' Co. and the Printers and Publishers were alike indifferent to *reasons of state*, they cared only for their pecuniary interests, and the protection of their persons and property.

The genuineness of the name of person pro-

posed was a matter of perfect indiffence to them, so long as he was "sufficient" and a known person, capable of being found when wanted, "to protect them from the political and ecclesiastical powers," and be fined, imprisoned, or pilloried in their stead, should such necessity arise.

When the "concealed poet" found that his Plays were stayed at the Register, and that he could not publish them anonymously as heretofore, what more natural than that he should apply to the recognised broker of Plays to afford him the use of his name—and that either for a consideration in the way of his business, or freely out of regard to his reconciled friend Ben Jonson, or from a knowledge of the rank and character of the real author—he should readily concede it.

The name William Shakespeare having been orally communicated, was written down in a form slightly varying from that indicated by the erratic marks of the real owner, and in that form it was always appended to the plays subsequently published.

Therefore, so far from William Shakespeare being at the height of his popularity in 1592, his name was not heard of until 1598, nor was there any record ot his having been in any way connected with literature until the year 1600,

and then, as it appears, only as the nom-de-plume of a great wit and poet.

We believe that the fact that Francis Bacon was the author of the plays, etc., was an open secret in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, known to his intimate friends and many besides, and the name Shakespeare was merely adopted to conceal Bacon from the general public, and prevent him from being openly spoken of as a writer of plays.

Coleridge observes that at that time "A degree of disgrace—Levior quœdam infamiæ macula—was attached to the publication of poetry, and even to have sported with the muse as a private relaxation was supposed to be a venial fault indeed, but something beneath the gravity of a wise man."

There have been since that time, and are at the present day, many men well known to be the owners of Works, not merely literary, but financial, mechanical, and trading, not publicly so reputed, their concealed vocation is occasionally quietly and covertly alluded to by their contemporaries, but not noised abroad, and will be entirely forgotten by the next generation.

It might well be known to Dr. Heylin and Sir Tobias Matthews that Bacon was the author of these plays, and they might speak of him as

"a most prodigious wit" without proclaiming or praising him as the author of Works which he regarded as "the plays and recreations of his imagination;" and did not pride himself upon, and was rather desirous not to have talked about.

We think that what we have written fairly accounts for the manner in which the name of Shakespeare came to be attached to the plays, and the reason why Bacon disassociated himself from them.

If any stigmatize this as mere surmise let him supply a better solution.

The manuscript containing speeches written by Mr. Francis Bacon, which was found in the possession of the Duke of Northumberland, in 1866, and edited by the late Mr. James Spedding in 1870, under the title of "A Conference of Pleasure," London, Longman and Co., 1870, affords some slight evidence in favour of the statement we have just made.

The fly-leaf or cover, which was of plain paper, was scribbled all over, and amongst the scribbling—"the idle penman"—as Mr. Spedding calls him—had written the name of William Shakespeare eight or nine, and that of Francis Bacon several times.

The late Mr. Bruce, when the manuscript

was found, remarked "upon the oddity of the recurrence and combination of the names of Bacon and Shakespeare." Mr. Spedding accounts for it by the scribbler having written down "the names and phrases that most ran in his head." "All I can say is," he adds, "that I find nothing either in these later scribblings, or in what remains of the book itself, to indicate a date later than the reign of Elizabeth."

If, therefore, the Masque to which these speeches relate was presented in 1592—and the scribbling must have been subsequent to that time—that which "ran in the head" of the scribbler might have been "the oddity of Bacon having assumed the name of Shakespeare"—an event which must have been almost contemporary with the scribbling upon the fly-leaf of the manuscript.

It is further observed that "the name William Shakespeare is spelt in every case as it was always *printed* in those days, and not as he himself, in any known case, ever wrote it."

Bacon says—"If a man perform that which has not been attempted before, or attempted and given over, or achieved, but not with so good circumstance, he shall purchase more honour than by effecting a greater difficulty or virtue, wherein he is but a follower."

If our letter to Lord Ellesmere was subsequent to Miss Bacon's article in Putnam's Magazine, all we can say is that we never heard of Miss Bacon or the article until long after the publication of the letter, we cannot therefore admit being a "follower" of her.

Miss Bacon took a much higher path and more extensive view of the subject than we have done,—so did Mr. Holmes in his able and comprehensive book.

Our humbler business has been by "virtue and industry" to gather some few recorded facts, having relation to the personal history of William Shakespeare, which seemed to us to have some bearing upon this subject.

"Whatever is done," says Bacon, "by virtue and industry, seems to be done by a kind of habit and art, and therefore open to be imitated and followed: but felicity is inimitable."

Modern commentators have regarded Shakespeare as a great genius, who, by "virtue and industry," acquired "the habit and art" of quickly producing and publishing plays, and thereby earning his living and making money.

Yet surely the very fact that they have been pronounced and hitherto found "inimitable," suggests that they are the offspring of felicity—the life-long labours or rather "play and recre-

ations" of the leisure of a highly cultivated and deeply observant and intelligent man, who, with his pen constantly in his hand, noted down every thought and object, and with consummate taste continually remodelled and arranged the exhibition and expression of them.

The author of "Shakespeare not an Impostor" did us a great wrong in his scurrilous little book. We never spoke any ill of William Shakespeare. We consider him to have been an honest, industrious man, "whose only care was to increase his store," and in that he was eminently successful. He was not "born to greatness," did not "achieve greatness," but had "greatness thrust upon him," and as that was not done until many years after his death, he is not to be blamed for not having corrected or rectified the errors of his eulogists.

We conclude this "Comedy of Errors" as we commenced it.

"One of these men is *genius* to the other,
And so of these, which is the natural man,
And which the spirit? who decyphers them?"

Adding the words of Ægeon:—

"Oh, let me say no more!
Gather the Sequel by that went before."

Park, in his edition of "Walpole's Royal and Noble Authors," London, 1806, says of Bacon, "That his Lordship had ever deviated from the thorny tracts of Science, philosophy, and jurisprudence into the primrose paths of poetry, is not generally known; for it does not seem to be noticed by any of his biographers, except Aubrey."

Among the Royal Manuscripts in the British Museum (17 B. L.) is an original poem entitled—

VERSES MADE BY MR. FRANCIS BACON.

The Man of Life upright, whose guiltless heart is free
From all dishonest deeds and thoughts of vanitie;
The man whose silent daies in harmless joys are spent,
Whome hopes cannot delude, nor fortune discontent,
That man needs neither towers nor armor for defence,
Nor secret vaults to flie from thunder's violence;
He onelie can behold with unaffrighted eyes
The horrors of the deep and terrors of the skies.
Thus scorning all the care that fate or fortune brings,
He makes the heaven his booke, his wisdom heavenlie things;
Good thoughts his only friends, his life a well-spent age;
The earth a sober Inn—a quiet pilgrimage.

By FRA. BACON.

In "Reliquiæ Wottonianæ," 1685, there is a short Ode ascribed to FRA. LORD BACON, entitled—

THE WORLD.

The world's a bubble—and the life of man
Less than a span.
In his conception wretched, from the womb
So to the tomb.
Nurst from the cradle, and brought up to years
With cares and fears.
Who then to frail mortality shall trust,
But limns in water, and but writes in dust.
But whilst with sorrow here we live opprest,
What life is best?
Courts are but only superficial schools
To dandle fools.
The rural part is turned into a den
Of savage men.
And where's a city from foul vice so free
But may be termed—the worst of all the three?
Domestick care afflicts the husband's bed,
Or pains his head.
Those that live single take it for a curse,
Or do things worse.
These—would have children—those that have them—none,
Or wish them gone!

What is it then to have—or have no wife
But single thraldom—or a double strife,
Our own affections still at home to please
Is a disease.
To cross the seas to any foreign soil,
Labour and toil.
Wars with their noise affright us—when they cease
We're worse in peace.
What then remains, but that we still should cry
For being born—and being born—to die.

FRA. LORD BACON.

APPENDIX.

Mr. James Spedding to William Henry Smith.

Note.—The late Mr. James Spedding, whose knowledge of the capabilities of Francis Bacon was unequalled, admitted that he (Bacon) was fully competent to have written the Plays, &c., but that it was not natural to him—and he could not believe it possible for him to have found the *leisure*—I insert the whole of the letter, as it may stimulate inquiry respecting the lost manuscript diary of Sir Tobie Matthews.

What Mr. Spedding has to say about Shakespeare and Bacon comes at the end—in what he truly calls "a long sentence."

60. L. I. F.
12 Sep., 1856.

Dear Sir,

I am much obliged to you for the memoranda which you have sent me, and for the sight of Dr. Neligan's letter and pamphlet which I return. I should like very much to see the MS.; it would at any rate throw light upon some questions of date, which it would be of use to me to determine. I wonder if the Camden Society have had any communications with him about it. By the description it ought to make a a very good volume.* I enclose an extract from

* In a subsequent letter Mr. Spedding writes—"Mr. Bruce tells me he does not know what became of the MS. diary of Tobie Matthews, but if you can find out where it is, he should like to know; and he is sure that the Camden Society would view the question of publishing it with great favour."

"Osborne's advice to a Son," which I think you will find to be the only foundation for the statement which you quote. You will see that nothing is said about *dramatic* power, or power of personification. I think it would be worth your while (if you have not done it already) to examine carefully the Court Device, composed by Bacon, for one of the Earl of Essex's entertainments (in which, by the bye, Sir Tobie Matthews was an actor) you will find it in Montagu's edition, I forget in which volume. In the trade edition it is placed among the letters, Vol. 6, p. 22. It was written in 1595, and you will see how entirely it is composed in his own natural style, and dwells upon the subjects of his own study—how little it shows of dramatic tendency; being only himself speaking in different characters, pro. and con. I have just run my eye over the Putnam paper—which seems to me to be nothing more than a vague mystical speculation, with not a single fact to support it. I have no doubt it is Miss Bacon's—Raleigh and Bacon are evidently the people she points at.

Why is it more difficult to believe that a great genius was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, who, seeking his fortune in London, fell among players, and applied his powers to the business of his vocation, and produced a series of works of imagination with a rapidity which has been the wonder of the world, considering their variety, excellence and originality—than to believe that another great genius was born in the Strand in 1561, who went to Cambridge and conceived a great scheme for the reformation of the study of Natural Philosophy, and then went to France with an ambassador to study policy and statesmanship, and then betook himself for a livelihood to the study of the law; and went into Parliament when he was only

24, where he continued, soon after to take an active and prominent part, and then was for many years consulted by the Earl of Essex in all matters of public business, and when he was five-and-thirty, came to be employed continually by the Queen in the business of her law officer till the end of her reign—during the 17 years succeeding (except only the first) was in full employment as a Member of Parliament, a law officer, and adviser of the king, and afterwards as Privy Counsellor and Lord Chancellor, during which time he also wrote and published the "Advancement of Learning" (1605) and pursued the studies which issued in the Novum Organum (1620) and the body of philosophical works which have procured him a world-wide fame, and which fill 3 or 4 closely printed octavo volumes—and that the same man, while he was doing all this, found time *also* to write (and that so quietly and secretly, that nobody ever suspected such a thing) that very series of works of imagination, the production of which, in such rapid succession by one man, though that man did nothing else—has been esteemed a wonder of the world. This is a long sentence, but if you consider it well I think you will find it to the purpose.

The great amount of work Bacon must have got through was the constant burden of Mr. Spedding's objection to our theory.

To the objection that Bacon could not possibly have had leisure to have written these Plays, let Bacon himself reply.—Advancement of Learning, Book 1, p. 16.

The most active or busy man, that hath been or can be, hath, no question, many vacant times of leisure, while he expecteth the tides and returns of business (except he be either tedious and of no dispatch, or lightly and unworthily ambitious to meddle in things

that may be better done by others:) and then the question is but, how those spaces and times of leisure shall be filled or spent; whether in pleasure or in studies; as was well answered by Demosthenes to his adversary Œschines, that was a man given to pleasure, and told him, "that his orations did smell of the lamp." "Indeed," said Demosthenes, "there is a great difference between the things that you and I do by lamplight."

NATHANIEL HAWTHORN to WILLIAM HENRY SMITH.

Liverpool, June 5th, 1857.

SIR,

In response to your note of 2nd inst., I beg leave to say I entirely accept your statement as to the originality and early date of your own convictions regarding the authorship of the Shakespeare Plays, and likewise as to your ignorance of Miss Bacon's prior publication on the subject. Of course my imputation of unfairness or discourtesy on your part falls at once to the ground, and I regret that it was ever made. My mistake was perhaps a natural one, although unquestionably the treatment of the subject in your "letter to the Earl of Ellesmere," differs widely from that adopted by Miss Bacon. But as I knew that a rumour of her theory had been widely, though vaguely, circulated on both sides of the atlantic, and also that she had preceded you in publication, it really never occurred to me to doubt that at least some wandering seed had alighted in your mind and germinated into your pamphlet. Under urgent circumstances I had taken upon myself to write a few prefatory and explanatory words for my country-woman's book. It was impossible to avoid some allusion to your pamphlet,

and I made such reference as seemed due to an attempt to take an easy advantage of a discovery (allowing it to be such) on which Miss Bacon had staked the labour and happiness of her life, and to develope which she had elaborated a very remarkable work. I now see that I did you great injustice, and I trust that you will receive this acknowledgement as the only reparation in my power.

Respectfully, &c.,

Your obedient servant,

Signed, NATH. HAWTHORN.

Extract of Letter from NATHANIEL HOLMES, ESQ., To WILLIAM HENRY SMITH.

St. Louis, Feb. 10, 1868.

* * * *

From what appeared in Mr. Hawthorn's Preface, I had inferred that in all probability you had anticipated Miss Bacon, or at least, that your "Letter" was published without any knowledge of her lucrubrations, and so took care in my Preface to leave that question open, though in the body of my book I had spoken of her as the first discoverer of the fact of Bacon having had some hand in the authorship (which Mr. Hawthorn claims for her, and truly, as far as I then knew) my object being merely to disclaim all pretension to being the first discoverer myself.

The chief concern with me was (apart from my own philosophical theories) to collect and exhibit such matters as in their own nature amounted to logical proof and satisfactory evidence of the fact that Bacon was the author.

In this view the structure of the argument (as you have no doubt discovered) proceeded on this general plan—first, that the autorial circumstances in them-

selves, inconclusive of the main fact, however pregnant with suggestion, merely cleared the way for the admission of the more direct and conclusive evidence of that fact. And second, that this evidence (as it appeared to me (must consist mainly in the identity and similarity to be established by a critical comparison and a profound study of the writings, in respect of the whole thought, style and diction; everything that might characterise the individual writer, and that it must involve a wide, deep, and learned investigation.

It was this evidence (so far as I was capable of finding it) that finally convinced me of the truth of that fact beyond any further possibility of doubting.

Now, for myself, whatever party newspaper critics, or any superficial scholar or thinkers, or any half-learned student or careless reader, or any man of mere physical science, who admits no kind of proof but the senses and experimental demonstration, or any historian who may require authentical historical statements of positive facts—may be pleased to say, or think against it, can have no more effect than so much idle wind.

In writing to Mr. Spedding my desire was to ascertain whether he could state any fact or circumstance in the life of Bacon that could have a negative bearing on this theory, or could point out any error in my statements, and I was gratified to find that, with one exception, he had none to communicate, or rather none that I thought entitled to much weight.

I read his views with attention, they were not altogether new to me, and I did not consider myself at liberty to draw him into a controversy that might be endless.

* * * * On the question of the legal and classical attainments of the author of the Plays, I did not deem it necessary to dwell for the purpose of the

argument of my book. That these attainments were extensive and very wonderful, had, as I thought, been sufficiently shewn by other writers.

Their inference had been that William Shakespeare had made these attainments.

It was not enough for the argument to show that Bacon had made them also, or that William Shakespeare had never made them at all, or both these suppositions; it would still remain to be proved that Francis Bacon, out of all the men of his time, was in fact the veritable author. Of course one grand step is taken when William Shakespeare is "removed from his pedestal in Poet's Corner." Another is taken when it is shewn that Bacon was capable of occupying it; and on this point your citation from Tobie Matthews' opinion of him, and Ben Jonson's also, are precious and brilliant sparks of evidence, if anything more were needed than the Shakesperian brilliancy of his own writings. The final step must be to show that Bacon and none other is in real truth entitled to occupy that pedestal.

On this I shall take the demonstration to be conclusive until somebody shows a like identity, or something that begins to approach a similar identity, in the writings of two men known to be different in any age of the world's literature.

I really think that you in England, and Miss Bacon in this country, have done the literary world a real service in setting this ball in motion; I only help roll it on.

Merely to know that the name of the author was Francis Bacon, and not William Shakespeare, would be a matter of little importance; but to know that it was a man like Bacon, and not such a man as we have known, for William Shakespeare that was the author of these Plays, is, I conceive, a matter of vast importance: first, as it bears upon the interests of learning

and education, and refutes the common notion of the all-sufficiency of mere genius without learning or industry; and secondly, as it must tend to procure a more general and attentive study of the Plays themselves—at least among scholars—and to my mind the thing itself is most profoundly interesting, and the most marvellous developement that I know of in all literary history.

The extraordinary nature of the proposition makes it appear quite absurd to the mass of readers, notwithstanding there are more converts than we imagine, perhaps in both countries.

I have had no concern about comments, knowing how readily those who cannot investigate for themselves follow the teaching of those that can, or whom they think to be learned or profound. I have felt the responsibility that anyone must assume in promulgating such a revelation; and accordingly, when after one year's study, was enough pretty thoroughly to convince me, I spent eight or nine years, partly to find additional proofs, but in greater part to search out everything that could tend to contradict the former conclusion, or show it to be erroneous, and not the least persuasive evidence at last consisted of this very thing, that every fact, circumstance and consideration pointed the same way, and concurred in the same result when duly considered.

I have received assurances from many eminent scholars in this country that they consider the arguments conclusive. One of them (an eminent Dr. of Divinity, and one of the first scholars and thinkers in America) though personally a stranger to me, writes me as follows: "I am one of the many who have never been able to bring the life of W. S. and the Plays of Shakespeare within a planetary space of each other—are there any two things in the world more

incongruous? Had the Plays come down to us anonymously, had the labor of discovering the author been imposed upon after generations, I think we should have found no one of that day but F. Bacon to whom to assign the crown.

"In this case it would be resting now on his head by almost common consent. If it could be proved that W. S. wrote the Plays, it would be worth while to search and ascertain whether he did not write Bacon's works also."

The *North American Review*, in a brief article, made a like suggestion that either Bacon wrote Shakespeare, or Shakespeare wrote Bacon. Here is the true dilemma. Whoever refuses to make a choice of horns must demonstrate how it is to be avoided—or give it up.

My Publishers have written me that they expected soon to issue a 38th edition of my book, and when that is done I may have an opportunity to add an appendix, in which I shall take care to notice your works on the subject in a way to do you justice.

I shall be glad to hear from you when you may have anything to communicate on a topic in which I take great interest.

Yours truly,
Signed, NATHANIEL HOLMES.
