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BEN JONSON

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SHAKESPEARE

By

SIR GEORGE GREENWOOD

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# JONSON AND SHAKESPEARE

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AND  
SHAKESPEARE

By SIR GEORGE GREENWOOD

Author of

“Shakespeare’s Law,”

“The Shakespeare Problem Restated,”

“Is there a Shakespeare Problem?”

“The Vindicators of Shakespeare,”

“Shaksper’s Handwriting,”

etc.

EDWIN VALENTINE MITCHELL

27, LEWIS STREET, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

1922

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## FOREWORD

Sir Sidney Lee some twenty years ago committed himself to the following statement concerning William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon :—" Patient investigation which has been in progress for more than two hundred years has brought together a mass of biographical detail which far exceeds that accessible in the case of any poet contemporary with Shakespeare." (*Times*, Jan. 8, 1902).

Now if this statement is intended to mean (and I can assign no other reasonable significance to the words) that we know more about the life of Shakspeare of Stratford than we know about that of any poet contemporary with him, there is an audacity about it which is really quite sublime ; indeed the proverbial " one step " between the sublime and the ridiculous seems here to have entirely disappeared.

It is quite true that around the name of " Shake-speare " there has grown up a mountainous mass of literature—of criticism, of illustration, of theory, of conjecture, of dogmatism, of assertion, of allusions, real or supposed, etc., etc.—which is perfectly appalling in its extent and variety ; but notwithstanding that the whole world has been ransacked for evidence, and notwithstanding that lives have been devoted to the subject and an incredible amount of labour bestowed upon it, we find it as true to-day as it was when the late J. R. Green published his *History of the English People*, that " of hardly any great poet do we know so little."

In marked contrast with Sir Sidney's flamboyant assertion are the more sober, and quite veracious, words with which Mr. Gregory Smith commences his recently published study of Ben Jonson in the " Englishmen of Letters " series (1919) :—" We know more of Jonson than of any of the greater writers of his age. There are no mysteries, or at least great mysteries, in his literary career, and the biographer is not driven, with

the Shakespearians, to conjectural reconstruction from the shards of record and anecdote. Even his personality stands forth fresh and convincing beside the blurred portrait of Marlowe, or Shakespeare, or Fletcher. For this fuller knowledge we are indebted to Jonson himself."

Here I cannot do better than quote the words of a correspondent who has given much thought and study to this question. "It is the very fulness and precision of the information we possess respecting Jonson's literary and dramatic relationships, particularly during the eventful years of the 'Shakespeare' period, which prove that Jonson had little or nothing to do with Shakspeare. His aggressive self-assertion not only kept him in the lime-light, but dragged into public view every one that had anything to do with him, either as friend or foe. We have his correspondence, his conversation, his personal dealings with—even complimentary poems addressed to—everybody but Shakspeare." There is, indeed, nothing whatever to show that there was any real intimacy, nay, any friendship, or any "love lost," between Jonson and William Shakspeare of Stratford. The alleged "merry meeting" between these two and Drayton, at which Shakspeare is reported to have drunk so hard that he died from the effects of it, is so obviously a fable that it demands no consideration, and as to Jonson's remarks in his *Discoveries*, made many years after Shakspeare's death, and not published till some six years after Jonson's own death, it appears to me that these later utterances must be taken with many "grains of salt," for they bear no relation to, and have no correspondence with, the known facts of Jonson's life. As I have endeavoured to show in the following pages Jonson was closely associated with the preparation and publication of the Folio of 1623 (as a "send-off" for which he wrote his famous panegyric), and was fully cognisant of the true authorship of the plays therein given to the world; and it was, as I am convinced, this association and this knowledge which coloured the cryptic utterances of his old age.

As to the idea that Jonson was too uncompromisingly

honest to lend himself to any literary deception even in those days when literary deceptions were so extremely common as to be generally regarded as but venial offences, if not altogether justifiable, it may, perhaps, be of use to quote the judgment of a deceased writer and critic of no small distinction. "James," says Hepworth Dixon, "had made him [Jonson] laureate, and he had to earn his hundred marks. If flattery were wanted he was rich in phrases; if abuse were wanted he was no less rank in venom. Both were needed by the King: flattery the most fulsome, abuse the most scurrilous that poet had ever penned. He was extremely fond of drink; he was inordinately foul of tongue; in sycophancy he knew no depth; no sense of religion guided his erratic steps. . . . Born a Calvinist he became a Catholic. After the Powder Plot he joined the court religion and helped in hunting down his colleagues." (*Royal Windsor*, vol. iv., p. 92).

This, it may be said, is an unduly harsh judgment. Possibly it may be so, but it is at any rate much nearer to the truth than the assertions of some critics and controversialists, who, in the supposed interest of the traditional "Stratfordian" faith, apparently think it necessary to put "honest Ben," as they love to style him, in the same category with George Washington—"the man who never told a lie!"

But what a thousand pities it is that—so far as we know, and as we are fully justified in concluding—William Shakespere never addressed a letter or a poem to Jonson; never received a letter or a poem from Jonson; never received one of those gift-books which Jonson was so fond of presenting to his friends with his well-known and excellently-written autograph on the front page! What a thousand pities that Ben's "love," almost amounting to "idolatry"—and what is "idolatry" but the worship of a graven image?—never appears to have found utterance or expression till many years after William Shakspere's death!

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## JONSON AND SHAKESPEARE

THE sheet anchor of the traditional belief with regard to the authorship of the plays and poems of Shakespeare is undoubtedly Ben Jonson. It is to the Jonsonian utterances that the apostles of the Stratfordian faith always make their appeal. That faith we are told is based on the "irrefragable rock" of Ben Jonson's testimony.<sup>1</sup>

Well, it was not so very long ago that we used to be told that the truth of a universal deluge and the preservation of mankind and animals of every kind and species, in Noah's Ark, was established on the "impregnable rock" of Holy Scripture, and yet to-day we find even high Church dignitaries—with whom Mr. J. M. Robertson would certainly be in entire agreement here—disavowing any belief in this interesting mythological tradition. Is it not, then, possible that the Jonsonian testimony may prove no more "irrefragable" or "impregnable" than that of those old chronicles, which age-long tradition has ascribed to the authorship of "Moses"?

As a distinguished writer, well-known both in the political and the literary world, has written to me, the difficulties in the way of the orthodox "Shakespearian" belief seem to be insuperable. Are the Jonsonian utterances of such weight as to outweigh them all? I reply, put Jonson in one scale and all the difficulties and improbabilities

<sup>1</sup> "The testimony of Jonson is monumental and irrefragable."—The Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson in *The Observer*, of March 2nd, 1919.

—if not impossibilities—of the “Stratfordian” hypothesis in the other, and old Ben will kick the beam.

Now let us briefly consider this Jonsonian testimony. There are two utterances to which the orthodox appeal as conclusive evidence, viz. : the lines bearing Jonson’s signature prefixed to the Folio of 1623, and the much-quoted passage *De Shakespeare nostrati* in his *Timber or Discoveries*. Let us first consider the evidence of the Folio.

Seven years after the death of William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon, it entered into the mind of somebody to publish a collected edition of “Mr. William Shakespeare’s” plays. Who that somebody was we do not know, but we do know that Ben Jonson was very closely associated with the undertaking. It cannot reasonably be doubted that Jonson was the “literary man” who, as the Cambridge Editors long ago suggested, was called in to write the Preface “To the Great Variety of Readers” signed by the players Heminge and Condell.<sup>1</sup> That he did, indeed, write this Preface was, in my opinion, proved by that very able critic, George Steevens, in a masterly critical analysis. “After the publication of my first edition of Shakespeare’s works,” writes Steevens, “a notion struck me that the preface prefixed by the players in 1623 to their edition of his plays had much of the manner of Ben Jonson, and an attentive comparison of that preface with various passages in Jonson’s writings having abundantly supported and confirmed my conjecture, *I do not hesitate*<sup>2</sup> now to assert that the greatest part of it

<sup>1</sup> See Preface to the *Cambridge Shakespeare* (1863), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Original italics. Steevens’s first edition of Shakespeare was published in 1773.



was written by him. Heminge and Condell being themselves wholly unused to composition, and having ~~been furnished~~ by Jonson, whose reputation was then at its height, with a copy of verses in praise of Shakespeare, and with others on the engraved portrait prefixed to his plays, would naturally apply to him for assistance in that part of the work in which they were, for the first time, to address the publick in their own names. . . . I think I can show the whole of the first member of this address, comprising eighteen lines out of forty, to be entirely his ; . . . a minute comparison of the first half of this preface with various passages in Jonson's works will, I conceive, establish my hypothesis beyond a doubt."<sup>1</sup>

It will be noticed that Steevens here speaks *without doubt* as to part of this Preface only as having been written by Jonson, but we need have no hesitation in saying that if Jonson is proved to have written part he undoubtedly wrote the whole of the Preface. It seems to me absurd to suppose that, having been called in to write in the names of the players, he would have contented himself with composing a fragment of a preface, and have left the rest to others. Least of all would he have left what he had written to be completed by those "deserving men," Heminge and Condell, who were, as Steevens justly remarks, "wholly unused to composition." That was not the way in which old Ben, of all men, was in the habit of doing things. I entertain no doubt, therefore, that the Preface

<sup>1</sup> See *Boswell's Malone* (The "Third Variorum," 1821), Vol. 2, p. 663, where Steevens's masterly proof will be found. See also my *Shakespeare Problem Restated* at p. 264 *et seq.* : where, however, by an unfortunate slip, the demonstration is ascribed to Malone instead of to Steevens. See further *Is there a Shakespeare Problem?* p. 382 *et seq.*

“To the Great Variety of Readers” was wholly written by Ben Jonson.

But, further, there can be, in my judgment, no reasonable doubt that Jonson wrote the “Epistle Dedicatory” also. He was, doubtless (I use that often misused adverb with confidence here), employed as the “literary man” to write the prefaces to the Folio, as, also, the poetical eulogium of the author prefixed to it. The “Epistle Dedicatory” contains many classical allusions, quite in the Jonsonian style. Some of it is taken direct from the dedication of Pliny’s *Natural History*, and there is an obvious allusion to a well-known ode of Horace.<sup>1</sup> Mr. James Boaden, amongst others, had no doubts about the matter. “Ben,” he says, “it is now ascertained, wrote for the Player-Editors the Dedication and Preface to his [Shakespeare’s] works.”<sup>2</sup>

The Cambridge Editors—and the names of Messrs. W. G. Clark, John Glover, and Aldis Wright must always command respect—are at least so far in agreement that they tell us “*the Preface (to the Great Variety of Readers) may have been written by some literary man in the employment of the publishers, and merely signed by the two*

<sup>1</sup> *Odes*, Bk. III., 23. The reader will note the expression, “absolute in their numbers,” in the Preface “To the Great Variety of Readers”—a classical expression to be found in Pliny and Val. Maximus—and other similar expressions taken from the classics quite in the Jonsonian manner.

<sup>2</sup> *On the Portraits of Shakespeare*, 1824, p. 13. Mr. Furness, also, commenting upon a remark of Pope’s, writes that he “could hardly have been so unfamiliar with the Folios as not to have known that Jonson was the author of both the Address to the Reader and some commendatory lines in the First Folio.” (*Julius Cæsar*, by Furness, Act III., Sc. 1, p. 137 note). Mr. Andrew Lang writes, “Like Mr. Greenwood, I think that Ben was the penman.” (*Shakespeare, Bacon and The Great Unknown*, p. 207 note).

*players.*" Nor would this be at all an unusual thing to do. For example, when the folio edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's Plays was brought out in 1647, by the publisher Moseley, there was a dedicatory epistle, similar to that of the Shakespeare Folio, prefixed to it, and addressed to the survivor of the "Incomparable Paire," viz.: Philip, Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, who was then Lord Chamberlain. This was signed by ten of the players of the King's Company, but nobody, I imagine, supposes that they wrote it, or any one of them. "The actors who aided the scheme," says Sir Sidney Lee, in his Introduction to the Facsimile Edition of the Shakespeare Folio, "played a very subordinate part in its execution. They did nothing beyond seconding Moseley's efforts in securing the 'copy' and signing their names—to the number of ten—to the dedicatory epistle." From this I conclude that, in Sir Sidney Lee's opinion, the actors in this case, at any rate, did not write the epistle to which they so signed their names.

Now in the case of the Shakespeare Folio we know that Jonson wrote the lines facing the Droeshout engraving, subscribed with his initials, and the eulogistic verses signed with his name in full. Is it not reasonable, then, to conclude that he was the "literary man in the employment of the publishers," as suggested by the Cambridge Editors, and that he wrote the prefaces, which are entirely in his style? May we not go further and say that it is certain that he was the author of these prefaces? Let us see what the Professor of English Literature in the University of Pennsylvania has to say on the subject. Dr. Felix Schelling, who holds this position, is recognised

as a high Shakespearean authority. He is, moreover, a man to whom any doubt as to the "Stratfordian" authorship of the plays is anathema. And this is what he tells us with regard to the preparation for publication of the Folio of 1623 :—  
 "Neither Heminge nor Condell was a writer, and such a book ought to be properly introduced. In such a juncture there could be no choice. The best book of the hour demanded sponsorship by the greatest contemporary man of letters. Ben Jonson was the King's poet, the Laureate, the literary dictator of the age; and Jonson rose nobly to the task, penning not only the epigram 'To the Reader,' and his noble personal eulogium, but both the prose addresses of dedication. *Of this matter there can be no question whatever*, and if anyone is troubled by the signatures of Heminge and Condell appended to two addresses which neither of them actually wrote, let him examine into his own conduct in the matter of circulars, resolutions, and other papers which he has had written by skilled competence for the appendage of his signature."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See report of an address delivered at Houston Hall, Pennsylvania, by Dr. Felix Schelling, in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 16, 1920. My italics. The Jonsonian authorship has been again forcibly advocated by Professor W. Dinsmore Briggs. See *The Times Literary Supplement*, Nov. 12, 1914, April 22, and Nov. 18, 1915. See further, Appleton Morgan's Introduction to *Hamlet and the Ur-Hamlet* (Bankside Shakespeare, 1908, p. xxvii). Sir Sidney Lee appears to suppose that Heminge and Condell were imitating Jonson in these prefaces. Certain phrases therein he says "crudely echo passages" in Jonson's works (*Life* [1915], p. 558). This appears to me a ridiculous suggestion. The prefaces are Jonsonian to the core, and if the two "deserving men," or either of them, had been able to write in this style it is pretty certain that we should have heard of other writings from their pen. But, as the Cambridge Editors remark, they had no "practice in composition," these editors being thus in agreement with George Steevens who, as already mentioned, says of the two players that they were "wholly unused to composition." [Dr. Schelling has now re-published the above mentioned address under title "The Seedpod of Shakespeare Criticism."]

But, as every student of Shakespeare knows, the players, in the Preface "to the Great Variety of Readers," ~~which bore~~ their signatures, say, or rather, are made to say, that the readers of the plays who were "before . . . abus'd with diverse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious imposters," are now presented with correct versions, "cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he [Shakespeare] conceived them." Whereupon the Cambridge Editors justly remark, "The natural inference to be drawn from this statement is that all the separate editions of Shakespeare's plays were 'stolen,' 'surreptitious,' and 'imperfect,' and that all those published in the Folio were printed from the author's own manuscripts. But it can be proved to demonstration that several of the plays in the Folio were printed from earlier quarto editions, and that in other cases the quarto is more correctly printed, or from a better manuscript, than the Folio text, and therefore of higher authority. . . . *As the 'setters forth' are thus convicted of a 'suggestio falsi' in one point it is not improbable that they may have been guilty of the like in another.*"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have dealt at some length with this matter in *Is there a Shakespeare Problem?* ch. XI. As Mr. J. Dover Wilson writes, "The title-page (of the Folio) is inscribed 'Published according to the True Originall Copies,' while the sub-title on a later page is still more explicit:—'The Workes of William Shakespeare, containing all his Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies: Truly set forth, according to their first ORIGINALL.' The phrase 'first original' can mean only one thing—author's manuscript. Mr. Dugdale Sykes is, therefore, perfectly correct in his statement that those responsible for the Folio claimed to be printing all the plays in the volume from Shakespeare's autograph." (*Times Literary Supplement*, Jan. 22, 1920.) And this claim we know to be false.

Jonson then, as writer of the prefaces, and closely associated with the preparation and publication of the Folio, was guilty of the *suggestio falsi* concerning the "stolne and surreptitious copies," with which the Cambridge Editors justly charge the "setters forth," or the "literary man" who, as they suggest, wrote the prefaces for them. And even if it may be contended, as Mr. A. W. Pollard contends, that, speaking strictly by the card, the statement was true, inasmuch as "not all but only *some* of the quartos ought to be treated as "stolne and surreptitious," that cannot acquit the author of the preface, seeing that, as this learned writer admits, "*with the sale of the First Folio in view it was doubtless intended to be interpreted*" as it has, in fact, been interpreted ever since, viz. : that the plays were all now for the first time published from perfect author's manuscripts, which certainly is very far from the truth.<sup>1</sup>

Jonson must have known also that a large quantity of work was included in the Folio which was not "Shakespearean" at all, *i.e.*, which was not the work of the real "Shakespeare," whoever he was, the one supremely great man who has given us such plays as *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Othello*, to take but three examples. Many plays had been published in the convenient name of "Shakespeare," or as by "W.S.," such as the *Tragedy of Locrine* (1595), *Sir John Oldcastle* (1600), *Thomas Lord Cromwell* (1602), *The London Prodigal* (1605), *The Puritan* (1607), *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos*, by A. W. Pollard (1909), pp. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Both *A Yorkshire Tragedy* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* were licensed as by Shakespeare.

and *Pericles* (1609). All these were rejected by the editor, or editors, of the First Folio, although they were included by the editors of the Third Folio (1664) and retained by the editors of the Fourth Folio (1685).

On the other hand, there were included in the First Folio such plays as *Henry VI., Part I.*, which all are agreed is not Shakespearean, although it is possible that it contains some few items of Shakespeare's work; *Henry VI., Parts II. and III.*, a very large part of which is certainly not Shakespearean; *Titus Andronicus*, which, according to the overwhelming balance of authority, is not Shakespearean; *The Taming of the Shrew*, as to which it is unanimously agreed that Act I. is not Shakespeare's, and which is considered by many, and I think with reason, not to be Shakespearean at all; *Timon of Athens* generally believed to be very largely non-Shakespearean; and other plays, such as *Troilus and Cressida*, in which the work of one or two other pens is, probably, to be found. Nevertheless, all these plays were published as by "Shakespeare."

Again, take the case of *Henry VIII.* James Spedding long ago proved that the greater part of this play, including Wolsey's famous soliloquy, and Buckingham's beautiful and pathetic speech on his way to execution, is the work of Fletcher; and now Mr. H. Dugdale Sykes, in an excellent little book published at the Shakespeare Head Press at Stratford-on-Avon, with the blessing of that strictly orthodox Shakespearean, the late Mr. A. H. Bullen, entitled *Sidelights on Shakespeare*, has contended—and I think there can be no doubt he is right—that all of this magnificent drama that was not written by Fletcher is the work

of Massinger. In fact, as Mr. Sykes writes, "the editor of the folio foisted upon the public as a Shakespearean drama an early work of Massinger and Fletcher's."

What, then, becomes of the supposed guarantee of "those deserving men" Heminge and Condell? What becomes of the dismal farce of the "unblotted manuscripts?"

Let us listen to what Mr. Dugdale Sykes, himself, I believe, a quite orthodox "Stratfordian," has to say on these points. In reply to the question how it was that Heminge and Condell came to include *Henry VIII.* in the First Folio Shakespeare, and how it was that Waterson came to put Shakespeare's name with Fletcher's on the title-page of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, he writes, "I suggest as a possible answer to this question that neither Heminge and Condell nor Waterson possessed a higher standard of honesty than seems to have been prevalent among the publishers of their day: that in this respect there may have been little to choose between them and Humphrey Moseley, who in 1647 printed as Beaumont and Fletcher's (from 'the author's original copies') thirty-five plays of which a large number were written by Massinger and Fletcher, while three (*The Laws of Candy*, *The Fair Maid of the Inn*, and *Love's Cure*) contain no recognizable trace either of Beaumont or Fletcher. When we find that two publishers issued spurious plays as Shakespeare's during his lifetime, and that a third put Shakespeare's name on the title-page of the early play of *King John* in 1623, there appears to me to be no reason why we should accept Heminge and Condell's attribution of *Henry VIII.* to Shakespeare as decisive. And I submit that we



have a solid reason for doubting their honesty, inasmuch as their assertion that all the plays in the Folio were printed from the author's manuscripts is known to be untrue."<sup>1</sup>

So much then for the "deserving men," and the "True Originalls" and the "unblotted manuscripts." And what becomes of Jonson's testimony? Jonson was "in the swim." He was concerned "up to the hilt" in the publication of the Folio, and all these facts must have been within his knowledge.

The orthodox were wont to appeal to Messrs. Heminge and Condell as though it were blasphemous to doubt the truth of any word they have said. Now this bubble has been pricked, and soon, perhaps, it may dawn upon the critics that "Jonson's testimony" with regard to the Shakespearean Folio and its supposed author is not of much greater value. He knew that not all the plays included in the Folio were written by

<sup>1</sup> *The Two Noble Kinsmen* was attributed on the title-page of the first Edition (1634) to "the memorable worthies of their time, Mr. John Fletcher and Mr. William Shakespeare." It is now, as I apprehend, established by Mr. Dugdale Sykes, following "Mr. Robert Boyle's extremely able advocacy of Massinger's claims to the authorship of the scenes attributed to Shakespeare" (Transactions of the New Shakespeare Society for 1882), that the play is the joint work of Massinger and Fletcher. See Mr. A. H. Bullen's Prefatory note to *Sidelights on Shakespeare*, p. viii. With regard to Waterson's ascription of the play to Shakespeare and Fletcher in 1634, Mr. Sykes writes, "The omission of the play from the later Shakespeare Folios and its inclusion in the second Beaumont and Fletcher Folio, after it had been issued with Shakespeare's name on the title-page, deprives this of any value." (See *Times Literary Supplement*, Jan. 1, 1920). Mr. Sykes, by the way, warns us that "the inclusion of the play in the second Beaumont and Fletcher folios is of no more value as evidence for Beaumont than for Massinger, as it has been established beyond doubt that Massinger and not Beaumont was Fletcher's partner in a large number of the so-called Beaumont and Fletcher plays." *Work cited*, p. 1 note.

“ Shakespeare ” ; he knew well enough that they were not printed from the “ true originals ” ; he knew that the statement about the “ unblotted manuscripts ” was mere fudge.<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary to condemn him and the players as guilty of dishonesty in the same measure as we should do if we tried them by the standard of the present day, for we should remember that such aberration from the path of strict veracity was, as Mr. Dugdale Sykes truly says, looked upon as a more or less venial offence in those times when literary mystifications of this sort were of common occurrence, and when plays, and other works, were frequently published in the names of writers who were not really the authors thereof.

And now, in 1623, all “ Shakespeare’s ” plays were to be published in collected form, “ Truly set forth, according to their first ORIGINALL,”

<sup>1</sup> Very much the same thing was said about Fletcher by Moseley in his introduction to the Beaumont and Fletcher Folio, viz. : that what he wrote was “ free from interlining ” and that he “ never writ any one thing twice.” The saying appears to have become a *cliché*. Moreover, what of Jonson’s statement in his eulogium prefixed to the Folio to the effect that Shakespeare was wont to “ strike the second heat upon the Muses anvil,” in order to fashion his “ well-turnéd and true-filé lines ” ? This means, of course, that, instead of writing *currente calamo* and leaving “ scarce a blot ” on his papers (an absurd idea on the face of it), he carefully revised his plays. It follows, therefore, that when these plays were handed to the players (if ever they were so handed) either the manuscripts must have shown many a blotted line, or the players received “ fair copies.” If we adopt the first alternative the statement of the writer of the Folio preface was untrue ; if we adopt the second the hypothesis of the fair copies is vindicated. Some critics, however, who cling tenaciously to the idea of the “ unblotted manuscripts ” would have us reject Jonson’s testimony as to Shakespeare’s patient revising. Jonson, in fact, is to be taken as an unimpeachable witness of truth when it suits these critics so to take him, but to be summarily dismissed as untrustworthy when his testimony does not square with their theories. In any case, then, Jonson’s evidence is discredited.

as the second title-page of the Folio informs the reader. But alas, they were far from being all Shakespearean work, and many of them far from being "set forth according to their first original." Jonson, however, was employed to give the volume a good send-off, not only by writing the prefaces, and making himself responsible for the statements therein contained, together with those on the two title-pages, but also by the exercise of his poetical genius. He accordingly wrote the very remarkable lines which face the paralysing Droeshout engraving and also the long eulogy signed by his name prefixed to the Folio.

Now, what was the state of the case, as I conceive it to have been? I conceive that the name of "Shakespeare," first given to the public on the dedicatory page of *Venus and Adonis*, in 1593, had been adopted as a convenient mask-name.<sup>1</sup> That many subsequently wrote under that name besides the real "Shakespeare," whoever he was, is a simple matter of fact, and also that they did so unrebuked and unrestrained, without let or hindrance. I conceive that several men of high position, but, more especially one man of high position and of supreme genius, wrote plays under that name. I conceive that Shakspere,

<sup>1</sup> In its hyphenated form the name 'Shake-speare,' which so often appears, was an excellent pseudonym. But why on earth should player Shakspere wish to appear as "Shake-speare?" A man of the name of Northcliffe (*e.g.*) does not usually desire to publish under the name of "North-Cliffe." Nor if his name happens to be Sheepshanks does he give his writings to the public in the name of 'Sheep-Shanks.' Nor does Mr. Ramsbottom feel any call to write in the name of "Rams-Bottom." 'Shake-speare' was a good "mask-name," *et voilà tout*. As old Thomas Fuller says, the name has a warlike sound, "*Hastivibrans*," or "Shake-speare," and as Jonson writes, it is a name under which the author

" Seems to shake a lance  
As brandish'd in the eyes of ignorance."

the actor-manager, who was probably himself able to “bumbast out a blank verse,” acted as “honest broker” for these plays.<sup>1</sup> He received them, and put them on the stage if he thought fit to do so, and they became, presumably, the property of the Company. They became “Shakespeare’s” plays, and the authorship, about which there was no questioning—for who cared a twopenny button-top about the authorship at that date?<sup>2</sup>—was, I take it, generally attributed to him, though, as a fact, it must have been known that, whether he or somebody else were the real “Shakespeare,” many of these plays were not “Shakespearean” at all. But this was a matter in which but few people took any interest in those days.

Now, some six-and-twenty years ago Frances E. Willard wrote in the *Arena Magazine* (Boston, Mass., 1893): “It seems perfectly reasonable to me that Lord Bacon and a number of other brilliant thinkers of the Elizabethan era, who were nobles, and who, owing to the position of the stage, would not care to have their names associated with the drama, composed or moulded the plays.” This fairly well expresses my own view, with the qualification that I make no assumption whatever

<sup>1</sup> If Jonson in his *Poet-Ape* Epigram referred to Shakspere, as seems to be almost certain, he considered him as, at that time, concerned in the “brokage” of other men’s writings. See below, at p. 27. As to the term “actor-manager,” see Note B at p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> “In earlier times, no doubt, people didn’t trouble at all about the author of a play. It was the play ‘presented by the Earle of Leicester’s servantes,’ ‘by the children of Pawles,’ ‘by the children of the chapell,’ ‘by the Lord Admiral’s servantes,’ ‘by the Lord Chamberleyne’s servantes,’ or by ‘Her Majesties’ servantes.’ We have much the same thing nowadays, when a ‘producer’ advertises his new pieces as if they were his own invention; and when we have phrases like ‘the new Gaiety piece,’ ‘the new Kingsway play,’ etc.”—Mr. Ernest Law in the *Times Literary Supplement*, Dec. 30 1920.

with regard to the "Baconian" hypothesis. I would rather say, "it seems perfectly reasonable to me" that some men of high position, and especially one great man of transcendent ability, wrote dramas under the mask-name of "Shakespeare"—a name which had been already adopted by the author of *Venus and Adonis*—which were confided to the actor-manager to be put upon the stage. If anybody asks why they should think it necessary to conceal their identity, I need do no more than advise him to study the social history of the Elizabethan age. "The period of the Tudors," writes E. A. Petherick, in his preface to Edwin Johnson's *Rise of English Culture*, "was not only a time of severe repression and of harsh government, but also a time when free speech was impossible. Able men could only dissemble and speak in allegory. The plays of Shakespeare and of other writers are doubtless a reflection of the period; the names but a disguise—the playwrights merely the spokesmen of those who would have been sent to the Tower and the Block if they had expressed their opinions openly." This may be an exaggerated statement, but quite apart from any fear of punishment, to write dramas for the players was considered altogether below the dignity of a noble, or any man of high position in the community. However innocent might be the work, it brought him into ridicule and contempt, and might prove an insuperable obstacle to his advancement in the State. Even to publish poetry in his own name was unworthy of a man of high position.<sup>1</sup> In these circumstances

<sup>1</sup> This was so even at a much later time. The learned Selden (*e.g.*) writes, "'Tis ridiculous for a Lord to print verses; 'tis well enough to make them to please himself, but to make them publick is foolish."—*Table Talk*, under title "Poetry."

it was but natural that men in high place, who had in mind, it might be, to instruct and improve, as well as to entertain, the public, through the medium of the drama, should do so under the disguise of a pen-name; and "Shakespeare," or, as it was so often written on title-pages, "Shake-speare," formed an excellent pen-name.

But now the time had come when these "Shakespearean" plays—those of them which appeared to the editor, or editors, of the Folio to be most worthy of publication—were to be collected and republished (such as had already been published), and with them were to be given to the world sixteen dramas which had never seen the light in print before, including such masterpieces of literature as *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *A Winter's Tale*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth* and *Cymbeline*. These now, seven years after William Shakspeare's death, were to be rescued from that oblivion to which the actor-author (if, indeed, he was the author of them) was, apparently, quite content that they should be consigned.

And now Jonson was to write a poetical panegyric which should commend the Folio to the reading public, and give it a good send-off. And right well he did it, and fully does the world now recognise that he did not exaggerate by one jot or tittle the eulogy of that "Shakespeare" whose writings he held up to the admiration of all readers, as such

"As neither Man, nor Muse, can praise too much."

The plays, I repeat, were the plays of the actor-manager; they were, it would seem, the property of his Company; they were "Shakespeare's" plays, and the authorship was, we may suppose, generally

ascribed to him, so far as anyone ever concerned himself about the authorship. It was, then, for Jonson to eulogize "Shakespeare," and for the general public "Shakespeare" would, I imagine, be Shakspere of Stratford, the actor-manager.<sup>1</sup> The true Shakespeare's real name could not be revealed, but some ostensible author there must be. Why, then, disturb the accepted legend? So Shakespeare would for the general public be the "Swan of Avon," as he appears in Jonson's poem.

But here the indignant critic will doubtless interpose. "What! Jonson wrote thus, though knowing all the facts. Then, according to you, Jonson was a liar!" Whereat we of the "heretical" persuasion can afford to smile. For we see no reason to suppose that Jonson might not have taken the course we attribute to him, and considered himself quite justified in so doing.

Nearly three hundred years sever us from the publication of the Folio, and, as I have already said, we know that at that date very much less strict views were commonly held as to the obligations of literary integrity. Literary deceptions—"frauds" we might perhaps call them at the present day—were constantly perpetrated. Works were not infrequently attributed by their authors to other writers, who were, in fact, guiltless of any responsibility for them. Moreover, nobody at that date could foresee that the authorship of the Shakespearean plays would be a matter of such transcendent importance as it has now become. Not having met Jonson in the flesh, and not knowing what his views may have been with regard to these literary deceptions, or by what constraining influences his action may have been

<sup>1</sup> But see Note B at p. 45.

governed, but knowing something concerning the practice of the times in this connexion, I see nothing unreasonable in believing that he acted as I have suggested, and I should no more think of calling him "a liar" on that account than I should think of branding Sir Walter Scott with that opprobrious epithet because he denied point-blank the authorship of the *Waverley Novels*. We know that he considered himself justified in so doing, and we doubt not that Jonson also considered himself justified in what he did.

So much, then, for Jonson's famous panegyric, which probably did more for the sale of the Folio than even his equally famous *suggestio falsi* (in the Preface "To the Great Variety of Readers"), to the effect that all the plays therein included were now published "perfect of their limbes" and "absolute in their numbers,"<sup>1</sup> as the poet conceived them. What now of the allusion to Shakespeare in his *Discoveries*? Here Jonson, writing late in life, apparently some time between 1630 and 1637, records in glowing terms the high personal regard in which he held Shakespeare the man. "I loved the man and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any." But he goes on to say of him that he was such a voluble talker that at times it was necessary to "closure" him. He had to be "stopped." Like Haterius, who had such a deplorable rapidity of utterance, "sufflaminandus erat,"<sup>2</sup> *i.e.*, the brake had to be applied. "His wit was in his own

<sup>1</sup> As already mentioned, this is a classical, and quite Jonsonian expression. Like certain other expressions in the Epistle Dedicatory, evidential of the Jonsonian authorship, it is taken from Pliny; "liber numeris omnibus absolutus" (Ep. 9, 38). Not much like poor Heminge and Condell, I apprehend!

<sup>2</sup> The word sufflaminare means to check or repress in *speaking*. See *Is there a Shakespeare Problem?* p. 387, and the passages from Seneca and Ménage there cited.



power, would that the rule of it had been so too," says Jonson. "Nevertheless," adds Ben, "he redeemed his vices with his virtues."

Now, is it credible that Jonson was here speaking of the man whom he had so eulogized some ten or twelve years before; the "soul of the age," the man whom he believed to have been the author of *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and all those wondrous plays of which he had spoken with such glowing admiration some thirteen years before? If he was speaking of the player only, knowing that the author—who was "not of an age but for all time"—was a different person, there is nothing extraordinary in this carping, though, as we may believe, quite just criticism which has so much perturbed and astonished those who assume that he is alluding in such shabby and disparaging terms to the "sweet Swan of Avon." Or must we assume that he was in his dotage when he so wrote?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jonson says, "Many times he fell into those things could not escape laughter, as when he said in the person of Caesar, one speaking to him, 'Caesar, thou dost me wrong.' He replied, 'Caesar did never wrong but with just cause,' and such like, which were ridiculous." Can this be a reference to Shakespeare the dramatist? "*He said in the person of Caesar*" in answer to "*one speaking to him!*" He said something *in persona Caesaris!* Would one so speak of a dramatist with reference to something he had *written*? Does it not rather indicate something said on the stage by an actor, as Pope long ago suggested? And "*he fell*" into things which excited laughter. Does this suggest that Jonson was criticising the considered writing of a dramatist? Surely it rather suggests the actor. It is true that Jonson, in the Induction to his *Staple of News* (1625), makes "Prologus," say, "Cry you mercy, you never did wrong but with just cause," but this does not prove that the words were in Shakespeare's play. It is more likely that Jonson only heard them at the theatre (or heard of them as spoken at the theatre), as Gifford thought. Can this be Jonson's deliberate criticism of the immortal bard whom he had lauded to the skies in 1623? Or is he speaking of the actor, and not the author? (As to Jonson's quotation, "Caesar did never wrong," etc., I would refer the reader to *Is there a Shakespeare Problem?* p. 390 and following). As to Jonson's borrowing from Seneca, see p. 59.

But, it will be objected, Jonson speaks of the players as saying of Shakespeare that "he never blotted out a line," and writes of them as commending "their friend" by that "wherein he most faulted." Jonson, therefore, identifies player and poet. And this, no doubt, will be conclusive for those who find it impossible to believe that Jonson knew all the facts of the case, but felt bound in 1630-6, as he had been in 1623, not to reveal them to the world. But what of the "unblotted manuscripts?" Are we really to believe that player Shakspeare wrote *Hamlet* (e.g.) *currente calamo*, and "never blotted out a line?" No more preposterous suggestion was ever made, even in Shakespearean controversy. No; if the players really said of Shakespeare that he "never blotted out a line" (or that they had "scarse received from him a blot in his papers") and if the statement was true, so far as their experience went, it shows that the players had received from the author fair copies only, and here is a piece of evidence which the sceptics may well pray in aid. For if the real "Shakespeare" was "a concealed poet" he would, naturally, have had fair copies of his dramas made for him, and these would have been set before the players. As R. L. Stevenson wrote long ago, "We hear of Shakespeare and his clean manuscript; but in the face of the evidence of the style itself and of the various editions of *Hamlet* this merely proves that Messrs. Heminge and Condell were unacquainted with the common enough phenomenon called a fair copy. He who would recast a tragedy already given to the world, must frequently and earnestly have revised details in the study." (*Men and Books*, p. 149). But let the reader glance at

Shakspeare's signatures, and ask himself if it is possible to conceive that the Shakespearean dramas were not only written by the man who so wrote, but written without a blot! No; if the anti-Stratfordian case seems improbable here, surely the "orthodox" case is more improbable still, so improbable indeed, as to be incredible. And of two improbabilities, if such there be, it is wise to choose the less.<sup>1</sup>

But there are some earlier Jonsonian utterances upon which we have not yet touched, but which must by no means be left out of the account. In 1616, the year of player Shakspeare's death, Jonson published a book of Epigrams. The volume was dedicated to William Earl of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain, the elder brother of the "Incomparable Pair" of the Shakespeare Folio, and Jonson writes, "I here offer to your lordship the ripest of my studies, my Epigrams." Now among these Epigrams appears one which must have been written a good many years earlier, "On Poet-Ape," and there can be little doubt that by "Poet-Ape" Jonson intended to make reference to player Shakspeare. This Epigram runs as follows:—

Poor Poet-Ape, that would be thought our chief,  
 Whose works are e'en the frippery of wit,  
 From brokage is become so bold a thief,  
 As we, the robb'd, leave rage, and pity it.  
 At first he made low shifts, would pick and glean,  
 Buy the reversion of old plays, now grown  
 To a little wealth and credit in the scene,  
 He takes up all, makes each man's wit his own,  
 And told of this, he slights it. 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.

<sup>1</sup> See further on Jonson's *Discoveries*, Note C at p. 56.

Jonson, then, it seems looked upon Shakspeare very much as Greene looked upon "the only Shakescene," viz., as "an upstart crow" beautified with stolen feathers.<sup>1</sup> "Poet-Ape" is the player-poet, arrayed in garments stolen from others, whose works are "the frippery of wit" (*i.e.*, the cast-off garments of others); who lives by "brokage" (was Shakspeare then, perchance, a broker of plays?), and "makes each man's wit his own." Here we may compare the Prologue to Jonson's *Poetaster* where the figure of *Envy* is brought on the stage and asks,

"Are there no *players* here? No *poet-apes*?"

and where we read further

"And apes are apes though clothed in scarlet,"

which reminds us that players belonging to the royal household were clothed in scarlet cloth.

We remark also the words "he takes up all," an expression which brings to our mind *Pantalabus* of the *Poetaster* (Act. iii., sc. i.). This *Pantalabus* was a player and "parcel-poet"<sup>2</sup> who had the reputation of writing "high, lofty, in a new stalking strain," and against whom Jonson is bitterly sarcastic. His name is, obviously, derived from the Greek πάντα λαμβάνειν to "take all," or to "take up all," as "Poet-Ape" is said to do.

In this play also (Act I., sc. 1) we find *Tucca*, the braggart Captain saying, with reference to the players, "They forget they are i' the statute, the rascals, they are blazoned there, there they are

<sup>1</sup> cf. Horace Epist., 1, 3, 18.

"Ne si forte suas repetitum venerit olim  
Grex avium plumas, moveat cornicula risum  
Furtivis nudata coloribus."

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.*, like a parcel-gilt goblet, a poet on the surface only, but inwardly and truly only base metal. Herrick has written two lines headed "Parcel-gilt Poetry"

tricked, they and their pedigrees; they need no other heralds I wiss." The statute is, of course, the statute of Elizabeth (see 14 Eliz., c. 5, and 39 Eliz., c. 4) under which players were classed with "Rogues and Vagabonds" unless duly licensed to play under the hand and seal of any Baron of the Realm or other Personage of greater Degree, and one can hardly doubt that the words, "they are blazoned there," etc., are a hit at Shakspeare's prolonged but ultimately successful efforts to obtain a Coat of Arms, to which Jonson makes another and still more obvious allusion in *Every Man out of his Humour*. I refer to the conversation between *Sogliardo*, *Sir Puntarvolo*, and *Carlo Buffone*, the Jester, in Act III., sc. 1. Here we find *Sogliardo* saying,

"By this parchment, gentlemen, I have been so toiled among the harrots [*i.e.*, heralds] yonder you will not believe; they do speak i' the strangest language and give a man the hardest terms for his money, that ever you knew."

"But," asks *Carlo Buffone*, "ha' you arms? ha' you arms?" To which *Sogliardo* replies: "I' faith I thank God, *I can write myself a gentleman now*; here's my patent, it cost me thirty pound by this breath."

Then, after more talk about this newly-granted "coat" and the "crest," during which *Puntarvolo* says ("aside") "It is the most vile, foolish, absurd, palpable, and ridiculous escutcheon that ever these eyes survised," the same character, asked by *Sogliardo*, "How like you 'hem, signior?" replies, "Let the word [*i.e.*, the Motto] be, '*Not without mustard.*' Your crest is very rare, sir."

Now these words, "not without mustard," are, I think undoubtedly a parody of the Motto

assigned to Shakspeare, when he and his father, after much "toiling among the harrots," obtained from them a grant of arms with the challenging Motto "*Non sans Droit.*" This they finally did in 1599, though they had previously obtained a draft, and a "tricking" (cf. "there they are tricked" of the *Poetaster*) in October, 1596, and another later in the same year, neither of which drafts, says Sir Sidney Lee, was fully executed.<sup>1</sup> *Every Man out of his Humour* was produced in 1599, and it may be noted that *Sogliardo*, who is laughed at as "a boor" by *Sir Puntarvolo*, is the younger brother of *Sordido*, a farmer (Shakspeare's father was also a farmer amongst other things) and is described as "so enamoured of the name of gentleman that he will have it though he buys it." The *Poetaster* was entered on the stationers' registers in December, 1601.<sup>2</sup>

Now is it possible to believe that when Jonson composed that splendid eulogium of "Shakespeare" which was prefixed to the Folio of 1623, he was really addressing the man whom he had satirized as "Poet-Ape," and whose proceedings in obtaining a coat of arms, in order that he might "write himself a gentleman," he had held up to public contempt and ridicule? It appears to me impossible so to believe.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *A Life of Shakespeare* (1915), p. 282 seq.

<sup>2</sup> I have dealt with these matters at some length in *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* (1903). See p. 454 et seq.

<sup>3</sup> If he had come to look upon the man whom he had satirized under the name of "Poet-Ape" as having become the "Soul of the Age" would he have republished the Epigram among "the ripest of his studies" in 1616, and in a volume dedicated to the Earl of Pembroke? And would he have continued the contemptuous passage concerning Shakspeare's coat of arms in *Every Man out of his Humour*, when he published that play in 1601 and again in 1616?

We, therefore, who find ourselves unable to believe that the young man who came from Stratford to London in 1587 as "a Stratford rustic" (as Messrs. Garnett and Gosse very truly describe him in their *Illustrated History of English Literature*, p. 200), composed "*Love's Labour's Lost*" in, say, 1590, and *Venus and Adonis* in, say, 1592; we to whom the arguments against the "Stratfordian" authorship appear insuperable; we who are in agreement with Professor Lefranc when he writes: "J'ai la conviction que toute personne dont le jugement est resté libre en ce qui concerne le problème shakespearien, reconnaîtra que les anciennes positions de la doctrine traditionnelle ne sauraient être maintenues"<sup>1</sup>; we "heretics" are convinced that when Ben Jonson wrote his panegyric of "Shakespeare" as a send-off for the Folio, in the publication of which he was so closely associated, he was perfectly well aware that "Shakespeare"—speak of him as the "Swan of Avon" though he might, and depreciate his learning though he might<sup>2</sup>—was, in truth and in fact, but a mask-name for other writers, and more particularly for one man of transcendent genius who was, indeed, "not of an age but for all time."

<sup>1</sup> *Sous de Masque de "William Shakespeare,"* by Abel Lefranc, Professor au Collège de France (1919), Preface p. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> "And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek" wrote Jonson. "Here," says the learned Dr. Ingleby, "hadst is the subjunctive. The passage may be thus paraphrased: 'Even if thou hadst little scholarship, I would not seek to honour thee by calling thee as others have done, Ovid, Plautus, Terence, etc., i.e., by the names of the classical poets, but would rather invite them to witness how far thou dost outshine them.' Ben does not assert that Shakespeare had 'little Latin and less Greek,' as several understand him." (*Centurie of Prayse*, 2nd Edit., p. 151). This may be correct, but others contend that Ben's words are to be taken not in the subjunctive but in the indicative mood. It may be so, since Ben was writing on the hypothesis that the player would be generally taken as the poet, and, naturally, had to adapt his language to that hypothesis. Either interpretation will equally well suit the sceptical case.

And here it seems right that I should say a word concerning Jonson's ten lines "To the Reader," introducing him to the Droeshout Engraving of "Gentle Shakespeare."

Now as to this famous engraving, I can never understand how any unprejudiced person, endowed with a sense of humour, can look upon it without being tempted to irreverent laughter. Not only is it, as many have pointed out, and as is apparent even to the untrained eye, altogether out of drawing; not only is the head preternaturally large for the body; not only is it quaintly suggestive of an unduly deferred razor; but it looks at one with a peculiar expression of sheepish oafishness which is irresistibly comic. As George Steevens long ago remarked, "Shakespeare's countenance deformed by Droeshout resembles the sign of Sir Roger de Coverley when it had been changed into a Saracen's head, on which occasion the *Spectator* observes that the features of the gentle knight were still apparent through the lineaments of the ferocious Mussulman." Even Mr. Pollard writes: "If his [Jonson's] lines on Droeshout's portrait are compared with their subject, we may well be inclined to wonder whether he had seen that very doubtful masterpiece at the time that he wrote them"—a suggestion which certainly does not say much for the value of Jonson's testimony.

And it is of this ridiculous caricature that Jonson writes:

This Figure that thou seest put  
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut  
Wherein the graver had a strife  
With nature to out-doo the life.

Now Jonson was an enthusiast concerning the pictorial art. "Whoever loves not picture," he



writes, " is injurious to truth and all the wisdom of poetry. ~~www.Picture is the~~ invention of heaven, the most ancient and most akin to Nature."<sup>1</sup> How then could he have thus written concerning the Droeshout signboard? When one looks at this graven image of the Folio frontispiece, the suggestion that the Graver had here a strife with nature to " out-doo the life " appears to be so absurd that, surely, it can hardly be taken as seriously intended.

And what interpretation are we to put upon the following lines?

O, could he but have drawn his wit  
As well in brass as he hath hit  
His face, the Print would then surpasse  
All that was ever writ in brasse.

Sir Sidney Lee's comment is: " Jonson's testimony does no credit to his artistic discernment." But is it possible to believe that old Ben was not only so lacking in " artistic discernment " but also so deficient in the sense of humour and the perception of the grotesque as to write these lines with the Droeshout engraving before him, if, indeed, he wrote them seriously? I think, on the contrary, it is reasonable to believe that Jonson was aware when he so wrote that this portentous caricature was not, in truth and in fact, a portrait of the true Shakespeare; that the lines above quoted are capable of a meaning other than that which the ordinary reader would put upon them; that, as that " orthodox " writer, Mr. John Corbin, says, Ben does well to advise the reader, " if he wants to find the real Shakespeare, to turn to the plays " and to look " not on his picture, but his book," which is certainly very excellent advice.

<sup>1</sup> Discoveries CIX. and CX., *Poesis et pictura* and *De Pictura*.

Here, then, the sceptic can find no strengthening of the orthodox tradition concerning the Shakespearean authorship. He rather prays in aid the portentous Droeshout portrait, and the Jonsonian lines, as lending themselves to a cryptic interpretation which, as it appears to him, may quite reasonably be put upon them, and which is, to say the least of it, quite consistent with the "heretical" case.<sup>1</sup>

But did those who were intimate with Shakspere of Stratford really believe that *he* was the man whom Jonson intended to eulogise as the author of the plays of "Shakespeare"? Did they themselves believe that he was, in truth and in fact, the author of those plays?

Now but twelve years after Jonson's magnificent panegyric was published, viz., in 1635, we find that the Burbages, to wit, Cuthbert Burbage, and Winifred, the widow of Richard Burbage, and William his son, presented a petition to the Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, the survivor of the "Incomparable Pair" to whom the Folio was dedicated in such eulogistic terms, and then Lord Chamberlain, praying that their rights and interests in the Globe Theatre, which they say they built at great expense, and the Blackfriars, which was their inheritance from their father—those theatres where "Shakespeare's" dramas were presented—should be recognized and respected. The petitioners are naturally anxious to say all they possibly can for themselves and the company of players with whom they were associated, and they seek to enforce their claim by a reference to the past history of those theatres,

<sup>1</sup> I have dealt with this matter at greater length in *Is there a Shakespeare Problem?* at p. 395 *et seq.*

and those connected with them, both as players and profit-sharers. One of those players, one of the "partners in the profits of that they call the House" (viz., the Globe) was William Shakspeare.

And how do they speak of him? Surely here was a great opportunity to remind the Earl that one of their company had been that man of transcendent genius, "Shakespeare," the great dramatist, the renowned poet, the "sweet swan of Avon," whom no less a man than Ben Jonson had eulogised but twelve years before—viz., in that great work containing his collected plays which was dedicated to the Earl himself and his brother—as the "Soul of the age, the applause, delight, the wonder of the stage"; that man whom, and whose works, the two Earls had "prosecuted with so much favour" during his lifetime! Surely they ought to have done this! Surely, as shrewd men of business, wishing to recommend their case to the Lord Chamberlain, they could not fail to recite these facts, so much in their favour, if facts they were! Surely they must have appealed to Jonson's splendid panegyric of their fellow, if they really believed that the Earl believed that it was their fellow whom Jonson had in mind as the author of the plays and the object of his eulogy! Yet what do they actually say? "To ourselves we joined those *deserving men*, Shakspeare, Heminge, Condall, Phillips, and others, partners in the profits, etc.," and, as to the Blackfriars, there they say they 'placed *men players* which were Hemings, Condall, Shakspeare, etc."

Those of the orthodox faith, who refuse to admit that there is a Shakespeare Problem at all, of course make light of this. They affect to think it the most natural thing in the world. Yet,

surely, to the impartial man it must seem incredible that the Burbages should have thus written about Shakspeare, calling him just a "man-player," and speaking of him in the same terms as of the other players, viz., as a "deserving man," and nothing more, if indeed both they and the Lord Chamberlain knew, and all the world knew, that he was the immortal poet who was "not of an age but for all time," whose collected works, dedicated to the two Earls, to their everlasting honour, had been for twelve years before the public, and whose poems, dedicated to another great Earl, were "familiar as household words" to every man of the time who had the slightest pretension to literary taste or knowledge! The author of *Venus and Adonis*, and *Lucrece*, of *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Othello*, of *As You Like It*, *The Merchant*, and *Twelfth Night*, and all the other immortal works, but a "man-player" and "a deserving man"! Is it not incredible that he should be so described?

But it was as a fellow-player—a "man-player" and a "deserving man"—that the Burbages knew Shakspeare. It was in these capacities that the Earl of Pembroke knew him; and it was in these capacities, as I am convinced, that Ben Jonson knew him, however much it may have suited his purpose and the purpose of those who were associated with him in the publication of the Folio, that he should "camouflage" the immortal poet under the semblance of the player.

The truth is, as I cannot doubt, that the Burbages were writing as plain men dealing with facts, while Jonson's ambiguous poem has to be interpreted in an esoteric sense. If then, the real truth were known, I have no doubt that the "irrefragable rock" would turn out to be but scenic canvas

after all. There was "camouflage" even in those days, and plenty of it, although the name was then unknown.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Another instance in point is the case of John Manningham, barrister of the Middle Temple, a cultured and well-educated man, who saw *Twelfth Night* acted in the Hall of that Inn, and was so struck by it that he makes an appreciative note in his diary concerning it, under date Feb. 2, 1601, yet had no idea that player Shakspere was the author of the play, for on March 13 of the same year he makes a note of a scandalous story concerning Burbage and Shakspere while acting in *Richard III.*, and instead of recording that Shakspere was the author either of that play or of the play that pleased them so much on the occasion of their Grand Night at the Middle Temple, he appends the laconic remark, "Shakespeare's name William!" How differently did he speak of Ben Jonson! Would he write "Jonson's name Benjamin?" Hardly. He well knew the literary and the theatrical world, and he tells us of "Ben Jonson, the poet," though "Shakespeare *the poet*" was unknown to him! See the Diary under date Feb. 12, 1603.

NOTE A  
JONSON AND BACON

Although I have no intention of appearing as an advocate of the " Baconian " hypothesis, it seems desirable to say a word here concerning the relations between Bacon and Jonson.

There is, I think, good warrant for saying that in some of his dramas Jonson made satirical allusions to Bacon, but, however this may be, it is certain that in later years the two were on very intimate terms, and that Jonson entertained feelings of the highest respect and esteem towards " the large-browed Verulam."<sup>1</sup> I do not know that there is evidence to show just how it was that such intimacy commenced, but we learn from his conversation with Drummond that when Ben was setting forth, in the summer of 1618, on his walk to Scotland, Bacon laughingly told him that " he loved not to see Poesy go on other feet than poetical Dactylus and Spondæus." We know, too, that Bacon wrote in 1623, the very year of the publication of the Shakespeare Folio, " My labours are now most set to have those works which I had formerly published. . . . well translated into Latin by the help of some good pens that forsake me not "<sup>2</sup>; and that Jonson was one of these " good pens " we know, because, in " Remains now set forth by him under the title of Baconiana," Archbishop Tenison relates that the Latin translation of Bacon's Essays " was a work performed by diverse hands ; by those of Dr. Hackett (late Bishop of Lichfield), Mr. Benjamin Johnson (the learned and judicious poet), and others whose

<sup>1</sup> It seems somewhat remarkable that Jonson's feelings concerning both Bacon and " Shakespeare " appear to have changed at just about the same time.

<sup>2</sup> Spedding. Letters and Life, Vol. VII., p. 428.

names I once heard from Dr. Rawley, but I cannot now recall them.”

But there is evidence that Jonson was working for Bacon some years before 1623. We find, for example, Thomas Meautys writing to Lord St. Alban in 1621-2, “Your books are ready and passing well bound up. Mr. Johnson will be with your lordship to-morrow.”<sup>1</sup> But, further, we know that on January 22, 1621, Bacon had kept his sixtieth birthday at York House, and that Jonson had been with him, and had composed his well-known Ode in honour of that event.<sup>2</sup>

We find, then, Jonson a frequent visitor, if not also a resident, at York House, on intimate terms with Bacon, writing a highly complimentary ode to him on his birthday, and translating his works into Latin in 1623, the date when the Shakespeare Folio first saw the light.

We find, further, that Jonson is if not actually editing that work, at any rate taking great and responsible part in its publication. Nor can we omit to notice that if Jonson challenges “comparison” of Shakespeare’s works with “all that insolent Greece, or haughtie Rome sent forth, or since did from their ashes come,” he writes of Bacon in exactly the same terms, viz. : that he has “performed that in our tongue which may be compared or preferred either to insolent Greece or haughty Rome”—truly a most extraordinary coincidence, however much the “Stratfordians” may endeavour to make light of it.

Now that Bacon, whether or not he wrote any

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 354.

<sup>2</sup> It has been further said that Jonson was for a considerable time a resident member of Bacon’s household, but I do not know whether there is sufficient evidence in support of this statement.

of the plays, was concerned in their collection and publication in 1623, although he himself was, as usual, working "behind the scenes," appears to me eminently probable, and it is, to say the least of it, very possible that if we only knew the real circumstances in which that precious volume was given to the world a flood of light might be thrown on the Jonsonian utterances.

A powerful writer, and highly distinguished literary man, thus writes concerning the "Shakespeare Problem"; "I am 'a sort of' haunted by the conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practised on a patient world. The more I turn him round and round the more he so affects me. But that is all—I am not pretending to treat the question or to carry it any further. It bristles with difficulties and I can only express my general sense by saying that I find it *almost* as impossible to conceive that Bacon wrote the plays as to conceive that the man from Stratford, as we know the man from Stratford, did." So wrote Henry James to Miss Violet Hunt in August, 1903. (*Letters*, Macmillan, 1920, Vol. I., p. 432). Henry James, therefore, found it *almost* impossible to conceive that Bacon wrote the plays, but *quite* impossible to conceive that "the man from Stratford" wrote them. But this was written nearly twenty years ago, and much critical water has flowed beneath the Stratford bridge since that date, and it is but truth to say that all recent criticism and investigation have enormously strengthened the "anti-Stratfordian" case. The belief that the plays and poems of Shakespeare were written by "the man from Stratford" is one of the greatest of the many delusions which have afflicted "a patient world."



NOTE B. (see p. 24.)

In speaking of William Shakspeare as "actor-manager" I have followed the "orthodox" hypothesis, but there appears to be very little evidence to show that he really occupied that position; in fact there seems to be no little doubt with regard to his position on the stage generally. In the spring of 1597 he purchased New Place at Stratford-on-Avon, and, says Halliwell-Phillipps, "*there is no doubt that New Place was henceforward to be accepted as his established residence.*" Early in the following year, on February 4th, 1598, corn being then at an unprecedented and almost famine price at Stratford-on-Avon, he is returned as the holder of ten quarters in the Chapel Street Ward, that in which the newly acquired property was situated, and in none of the indentures is he described as a Londoner, but always as "William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon, in the County of Warwick, gentleman." (H.P. Vol. I., p. 122, 6th Edn.) There is evidence, as Halliwell-Phillipps also tells us, that at this time he was taking great interest in the maintenance and improvement of his grounds, orchards, etc. "Thenceforward his land, property and tithes purchases, along with the fact that in 1604 he takes legal action to enforce payment of a debt for malt which he had been supplying for some months past, are circumstances much more suggestive of permanent residence in Stratford, with an occasional visit may be to London, than of permanent residence in London, with occasional trips to Stratford. . . . From the time when he was described as William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon (1597) there is no proof that he was anywhere domiciled in London, whilst the proofs of his domiciliation in Stratford from this time forward are irrefutable and continuous. Clearly our conceptions of his residency in London are in need of complete revision."<sup>1</sup>

"Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke," adds Mr. Looney, "in the *Life of Shakspeare*, published along with their edition of his plays, date his retirement to Stratford

<sup>1</sup> "*Shakespeare Identified*, by J. Thomas Looney (Cecil Palmer, 1920) p. 56.

in the year 1604 precisely. After pointing out that in 1605 he is described as 'William Shakspere, gentleman, of Stratford-on-Avon,' they continued: 'Several things conduced to make him resolve upon ceasing to be an actor, and 1604 has generally been considered the date when he did so.' Several other writers, less well-known, repeat this date; and works of reference, written for the most part some years ago, place his retirement in the same year. 'There is no doubt he never meant to return to London, except for business visits, after 1604' (*National Encyclopedia*)." (*Ibid.*, p. 424.)

We are told that Shakspere lodged at one time in Bishopgate, and, later on, in Southwark, "because he was a defaultant taxpayer (for two amounts of 5s. and 13s. 4d. respectively) for whom the authorities were searching in 1598, ignorant of the fact that he had moved, some years before, from Bishopgate to Southwark. Evidently, then, he was not at that time living in the public eye and mixing freely in dramatic and literary circles." (*Ibid.*, p. 58). According to Sir Sidney Lee, Shakspere became liable for an aggregate sum of £2 13s. 4d. for each of three subsidies, but "the collectors of taxes in the City of London worked sluggishly. For three years they put no pressure on the [alleged] dramatist, and Shakespeare left Bishopgate without discharging the debt. Soon afterwards, however, the Bishopgate officials traced him to his new Southwark lodging." (*Life*, 1915, p. 274). But here we are met by the assertion of another eminent Shakespearean authority, viz. : Professor C. W. Wallace, of the "New Shakespeare Discoveries," who tells us "there is ample evidence of a negative sort, that Shakespeare never had residence in Southwark!" (*Harper's Magazine*, March, 1910, p. 505). "Who shall decide when doctors disagree?" This conflict of opinion but further illustrates the fact of the mystery which surrounds the question of Shakspere's residences while in London.

And now we are confronted with the dates of the Shakespearean drama. "It was not till the year 1597,"

says Halliwell-Phillipps, "that Shakespeare's public reputation as a dramatist was sufficiently established for the booksellers to be anxious to secure the copyright of his plays." (Vol. I., p. 134). In 1598 his name appears for the first time on the title page of a play, viz. : *Love's Labour's Lost*, where the author's name is given—for that one occasion only—as "W. Shakespere," and subsequently in the same year, on the title pages of *Richard II.* and *Richard III.*, the author appears as "William Shake-speare." "We are consequently faced," writes Mr. J. T. Looney, "with this peculiar situation that what has been regarded as the period of his highest fame in London began at the same time as his formal retirement to Stratford; and whilst there is undoubted mystery connected with his place or places of abode in London, there is none connected with his residence in Stratford. A curious fact in this connection is that the only letter that is known to have been addressed to him in the whole course of his life was from a native of Stratford addressed to him in London, which appears amongst the records of the Stratford Corporation, and which 'was no doubt forwarded by hand [to Shakspere whilst in London] otherwise the locality of residence would have been added' (Halliwell-Phillipps). Evidently his fellow townsmen who wished to communicate with him in London were unaware of his residence there; and the fact that this letter was discovered amongst the archives of the Stratford Corporation suggests that it had never reached the addressee" (p. 59). "In 1597 the publication of the plays begins in real earnest. In 1598 they begin to appear with 'Shakespeare's' name attached. From then till 1604 was the period of full flood of publication during William Shakspere's life time: and this great period of 'Shakespearean' publication (1597-1604) corresponds exactly with William Shakspere's busiest period in Stratford. In 1597 he began the business connected with the purchase of New Place. Complications ensued, and the purchase was not completed till 1602. 'In 1598 he procured stone for the repair of the house, and before 1602 had planted a fruit orchard.'

(S.L.) In 1597 his father and mother 'doubtless under their son's guidance' began a law-suit for the recovery of the mortgaged estate of Asbies in Wilmcote, which 'dragged on for some years.' (S.L.) 'Between 1597 and 1599 (he was) rebuilding the house, stocking the barns with grain, and conducting various legal proceedings.' (S.L.) In 1601 his father died and he took over his father's property. On May 1, 1602, he purchased 107 acres of arable land. In September, 1602, 'one Walter Gatley transferred to the poet a cottage and garden which were situated at Chapel Lane opposite the lower grounds of New Place.' 'As early as 1598 Abraham Sturley had suggested that Shakespeare [William Shakspeare] should purchase the tithes of Stratford.' In 1605 he completed the purchase of 'an unexpired term of these tithes.' 'In July, 1604, in the local court at Stratford he sued Philip Rogers, whom he had supplied since the preceding March with malt to the value of £1 19s. 10d., and on June 25 lent 2s. in cash.' In a personal record from which so much is missing we may justly assume that what we know of his dealings in Stratford forms only a small part of his activities there. Consequently, to the contention that this man was the author and directing genius of the magnificent stream of dramatic literature which in those very years was bursting upon London, the business record we have just presented would in almost any court in the land be deemed to have proved an *alibi*. The general character of these business transactions, even to such touches as lending the trifling sum of 2s. to a person to whom he was selling malt, is all suggestive of his own continuous day to day contact with the details of his Stratford business affairs." So writes Mr. Looney, with more to the same effect, and, in connexion with his argument, we must remember that a journey from London to Stratford and back was a very different thing in Shakspeare's time than what it is now, and, indeed, from what it was some hundred years later than Shakspeare's time, when roads and means of communication had been somewhat improved.

There is, however, evidence that in the year 1604

Shakspeare was lodging with one Montjoy, a "tire-maker" (*i.e.*, wig-maker) in "Muggle Streete" (*i.e.*, Monkwell Street) near Wood Street, Cheapside, for in the case of Bellott v. Montjoy, which was heard in the Court of Requests in 1612, there is a deposition signed, according to Professor Wallace, who discovered the documents at the Record Office, "Willm Shaks," but according to Sir E. Maude Thompson, "Willm Shaks,"<sup>1</sup> wherein the witness is described as "William Shakspeare," (not of London, be it remarked, but) "of Stratford-upon-Avon in the Countye of Warwicke, gentleman" (but not either as actor or dramatist!) from which, and other depositions, it appears that "Will" was, in fact, lodging at that time with the worthy "tire-maker," and lent his good offices to persuade Montjoy's apprentice Bellott to solicit the hand of the said Montjoy's daughter Mary in holy matrimony; whereupon the enthusiastic Professor Wallace at once jumps to the conclusion that "here at the corner of Muggell and Silver Streets Shakspeare was living when he wrote some of his greatest plays—*Henry V.*, *Much Ado*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *Othello*"! About this he tells us there can be no possible doubt whatever! But as this is the same Professor who also informed us that Shakspeare "honors his host by raising him in the play [*Henry V.*] to the dignity of a French Herald under his own name of Montjoy," in blissful ignorance of the fact that "Montjoy, King-at-Arms" was the official name of a French Herald, who, as Holinshed (whose history the Professor had apparently either not read or forgotten) tells us, was conspicuous at the time of the battle of Agincourt, and as, moreover, there is no evidence whatever for the above wild assertion, we may be content to dismiss such futilities with a smile, and pass on to more serious considerations.<sup>2</sup>

I will here leave this vexed question of Shakspeare's residence in London. Much more might be said, but

<sup>1</sup> See my *Shakspeare's Handwriting* (John Lane, 1920).

<sup>2</sup> See Note at p. 55.

I think enough has already been said to give us pause when we are asked to accept the statement that at one and the same period he was transacting all this business at Stratford, and composing all these marvellous plays, and performing the duties of "actor-manager" at a London theatre. To us, however, who entertain no doubt whatever that player Shakspeare of Stratford was not the author of the plays and poems of "Shakespeare," there appears to be no impossibility in the hypothesis that the player occupied the position of manager of the theatre with which he was connected, more especially in view of the fact that there is no evidence whatever to show that any important rôles were at any time assigned to him in the Shakespearean, or any other plays.

"There was not a single company of actors in Shakespeare's time," says Halliwell-Phillipps, "which did not make professional visits through nearly all the English counties, and in the hope of discovering traces of his footsteps during his provincial tours" this writer tells us that he has personally examined the records of no less than forty-six important towns in all parts of the country, "but in no single instance," says he, "have I found in any municipal record a notice of the poet himself."<sup>1</sup> Later investigations, including the archives of some five and twenty additional cities, have proved equally fruitless, yet, writes Sir Sidney Lee, indulging once more in his favourite adverb, "Shakespeare may be credited with faithfully fulfilling all his professional functions, and some of the references to travel in his sonnets were *doubtless* reminiscences of early acting tours"! The records of Edinburgh have been searched but again with negative results. There is no evidence whatever that Shakspeare was ever north of the Tweed. With regard to performances in London, the accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber, showing payments made for performances of The Burbage Company for the years 1597-1616 (except for the year 1602 the record of which is missing) have been scrutinized. Here we find mention of Heminge, Burbage, Cowley, Bryan, Pope and Augustine Phillipps, but not once does the

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines*, Second Edition (1882) pp. xiv., xv.

name of William Shaksperre occur in all these accounts. As to the Lord Chamberlain's books, which, as Mrs. Stopes writes, "supply much information concerning plays and players," the documents, as she adds, "unfortunately are missing for the most important years of Shakespearean history." "In the light of all the other mysterious silences regarding William Shaksperre," says Mr. Looney, "and the total disappearance of the 'Shakespeare' manuscripts, so carefully guarded during the years preceding the publication of the First Folio [viz.: the seven years which elapsed between Shaksperre's death and that publication], the disappearance of the Lord Chamberlain's books, recording the transactions of his department for the greatest period in its history, hardly looks like pure accident." Be this as it may, the loss is certainly very remarkable and most unfortunate. An entry has, however, been discovered in the accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber to the following effect;—"To William Kempe, William Shakespeare, and Richarde Burbage, servaunts to the Lord Chamberleyne, upon the Councelles warrant dated at Whitehall XV. to Marcij, 1594, for twoe severall comedies or enterludes shewed by them before her Majestie in Christmas tyme laste paste, viz.: upon St. Stephen's daye and Innocentes daye . . . in all xx. li." (H.P. Vol. I., p. 109). A foolish attempt has been made to make "Stratfordian" capital out of this, because the entry in question is said to have been prepared by the Countess of Southampton, to whose son "Shakespeare" had dedicated his two poems. As a fact, however, the entry referred to occurs in a roll of the Pipe Office "declared accounts," which contains the accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber from September, 1579, to July, 1596. These accounts were engrossed year by year by one of the Clerks in the Pipe Office, and signed by the Accountant in each year, or period of years. Now in 1594 Sir Thomas Heneage was Treasurer of the Queen's Chamber, and in May of that year he married Mary, widow of Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, but he died in October of the following year, and it seems that no "declared accounts"

had at that date been rendered since September, 1592. The Queen, therefore, issued her warrant to the Countess as widow and executrix of the late Treasurer, commanding her to render the account, which she duly did from September 29th, 1592, to November 30th, 1595. The entry in question therefore had no doubt, been prepared by one of the clerks in the office of the Treasurer of the Chamber, and was thus sent in to the Pipe Office by the Countess, according to the Queen's command. She was thus only formally connected with the account, and further than this there appears to have been no connexion whatever between her and Shakspere of Stratford. In all probability she never even saw the entry in question.<sup>1</sup> All that appears, therefore, from this entry, is that "William Shakespeare," with Kempe and Burbage, about March, 1594, received payment of £20 in all for two comedies or interludes "showed" by them "at the preceding Christmas, though what these comedies or interludes were, and what part in them was assigned to "William Shakespeare" we are not informed. He might have acted as prompter or stage-manager for all we know. "And this," writes Mr. Looney, "although occurring three years before the opening of the period of his [*i.e.*, 'Shakespeare's'] fame, is the only thing that can be called an official record of active participation in the performances of the Lord Chamberlain's Company, afterwards called the King's Players, and erroneously spoken of as Shakespeare's Company: the company of which he is supposed to have been one of the leading lights."

Jonson inserts the name of Shakespeare in the castes of his plays, *Every Man in his Humour*, and *Sejanus*, but no mention is made of the parts played by him. "We know," says Mr. Looney, "neither what parts he played nor how he played them; but the one thing we do know is that they had nothing to do with the great 'Shakespeare' plays. There is not a single record during the whole of his life of his ever appearing in a play of 'Shakespeare's.' . . . It is worth while noticing that although Jonson gives a foremost place to the name of

<sup>1</sup> See my *Vindicators of Shakespeare*, p. 28.



‘Shakespeare’ in these lists [viz. : of his plays above-mentioned] when Jonson’s ‘Every Man out of his Humour’ was played by the Lord Chamberlain’s Company, the whole of the company, with one notable exception, had parts assigned to them. That one exception was Shakspere, who does not appear at all in the cast.”<sup>1</sup>

All that Sir Sidney Lee can say, after mentioning a number of plays which Shakspere and his colleagues are said to have produced before the sovereign in Shakspere’s life-time, is “It may be presumed that in all these dramas some rôle was allotted to him!” In the list of actors prefixed to the Folio of 1623, in the preparation and publication of which Jonson took such a large part, the name of “William Shakespeare” stands first, as in the circumstances, we should expect that it would. But what parts did he play? Rowe in his “Life of William Shakspear,” published some ninety-three years after Shakspere’s death, says, “though I have inquired I could never meet with any further account of him this way [viz. : as an actor] than that the top of his Performance was the Ghost in his own *Hamlet*”!

All we can say, then, is that Shakspere was one of “those deserving men,” whom the Burbages, in their petition to the Lord Chamberlain, in 1635, say they joined to themselves as “partners in the profits” of the Globe; those “men players” whom they placed at the Black Friars. (*Ante*, p. 34.) Whether or not he acted as “Manager” of either theatre we really do not know. We only know that his name in its literary form of “Shakespeare,” or “Shake-Speare” was lent or appropriated to cover the authorship of a great number of plays which were published under that name. It seems not unreasonable to suppose that he acted as a “broker of plays”—as I have already suggested—on behalf of the theatres with which he was connected. It is curious that we find him in 1613, but three years before his death, after all the great

<sup>1</sup> See *Shakespeare Identified*, pp. 73-89. The reference is to the Folio Edition of Jonson’s plays published by him in 1616, the year of Shakspere’s death.

Shakespearean works had been written, and when, if he were in truth "the great dramatist" he must have been at the zenith of his fame, employed with Dick Burbage at Belvoir to work at the Earl of Rutland's new "device," or "impreso," for which each of them received the sum of 44s. !

Mr. Looney has summarized the results of his examination of the middle or London period of William Shakspeare's career, which, omitting three or four of them, are as follows :—

He was purely passive in respect to all the publications which took place under his name.

There is the greatest uncertainty respecting the duration of his sojourn in London and the strongest probability that he was actually resident at Stratford whilst the plays were being published. [For "published" we might, perhaps, substitute "performed."]

Nothing is known of his doings in London, and there is much mystery concerning his place of residence there.

Only after 1598, the date when plays were first printed with "Shakespeare's" name, are there any contemporary references to him as a dramatist.

The public knew "Shakespeare" in print, but knew nothing of the personality of William Shakspeare.

He has left no letter or trace of personal intercourse with any London contemporary or public man. The only letter known to have been sent to him was concerned solely with the borrowing of money.

Although the company with which his name is associated toured frequently and widely in the provinces, and much has been recorded of their doings, no municipal archive, so far as is known, contains a single reference to him.

There is no contemporary record of his ever appearing in a "Shakespeare" play. The only plays with which as an actor his name was associated during his life-time are two of Ben Jonson's plays.

The accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber show only one irregular reference to him, three years before the period of his [*i.e.*, of "Shakespeare's"] greatest fame, and none at all during or after that period.

The Lord Chamberlain's Books, which would have [*i.e.*, which ought to have] furnished the fullest records of his doings ~~with~~ <sup>written</sup> ~~in~~ <sup>on</sup> these ~~years~~, are, like the "Shakespeare" manuscripts, missing.

His name is missing from the following records of the Lord Chamberlain's company in which other actor's names appear.

(1) The cast of Jonson's "Every Man out of his Humour," in which all the other members of the Company appear.

(2) The record of proceedings respecting the Essex Rebellion and the Company. [*i.e.*, with regard to the performance of *Richard II.*]

(3) The Company's attendance on the Spanish Ambassador in 1604. [See my *Is there a Shakespeare Problem?* p. 483.]

(4) The Company's litigation in 1612. [See Mrs. Stope's "Burbage and the Shakespeare Stage." pp. 106-107.]

(5) The Company's participation in the installation of the Prince of Wales.

(6) References to the burning of the Globe Theatre.

Further, even rumour and tradition assign him only an insignificant rôle as an actor.

NOTE TO P. 49.—Dr. Wallace says that "upon his own testimony Shakespeare lived at Mountjoy's during all the time of Bellott's apprenticeship, that is six years from 1598 to 1604" (*Harper's Magazine*, March, 1910, p. 505); but if Shakespeare's answer to Interrogatories in the case of *Bellott v. Mountjoy* be examined it will be found that he says nothing of the kind. A recent writer in America, however, has gone one better, and says that Shakespeare lodged with the tire-maker from 1598 to 1612, of which, so far as I know, there is not a scintilla of evidence. The supposed fact, however, is cited in support of the hypothesis that Bacon befriended Shakspeare, who thus came under Bacon's influence, because Bacon had a house in Noble Street, close to the junction of "Muggle Str." and "Sylver Str." where Mountjoy lived.—*Law Sports at Gray's Inn*, by Basil Brown, New York, 1921.

NOTE C. (Jonson's *Discoveries*.)

[www.libtexascentral.com](http://www.libtexascentral.com) (Referred to at p. 31.)

Ben Jonson's *Timber or Discoveries* was published in 1641, and, therefore, some six years after Jonson's death. The work apparently consists of notes written from time to time during the later years of his life. Into whose hands the manuscript notes fell and who edited them, and what became of them, and whether we now have them as Jonson wrote them, is, I apprehend, unknown. On the title-page we read, "Timber or Discoveries, Made upon Men and Matter: As They have flow'd out of his daily Readings; or had their reflux to his peculiar Notion of the Times," with the date MDCXLI. It seems clear that the notes were written during the last years of Jonson's life.<sup>1</sup> Sir Israel Gollancz, who edited the work, in the Temple Classics series (1902), writes, with reference to the note *De Shakespeare Nostrati* (No. LXIV.), "the impression it leaves is that it must have preceded that noblest of all eulogies on Shakespeare prefixed to the First Folio of 1623." But this appears to be an erroneous inference. Dr. Ingleby gives the limits of date as 1630-37 (*Centurie of Prayse*. Second Edition, p. 174). In an early note (No. XLV.) Jonson speaks of an event which happened in 1630. In note No. LVI. he tells us that his memory was good till he was past forty, but had since much decayed. If, therefore, we assume, as seems reasonable, that he was upwards of fifty when he so wrote, we arrive at a date certainly subsequent to 1623. Moreover in note No. LXXIII.<sup>2</sup> he speaks of "the late Lord Saint Alban," so that this note must have been written subsequently to Bacon's death in 1626.

<sup>1</sup> Of that opinion also is Professor Felix Schelling. See his edition of the work (1892), Introduction, p. xvii. See also the edition by Maurice Castelain (Paris, 1906), Introduction, p. xi., M. Castelain suggests that the book may have been begun after the burning of Jonson's library in 1623.

<sup>2</sup> The numbers are conveniently prefixed to the notes by Sir I. Gollancz.

It appears, therefore, that the note *De Shakespeare Nostrati* must be taken as representing Jonson's opinion of "the man" Shakspeare some seven or more years after the publication of "that noblest of all eulogies."<sup>1</sup> But some four years before the appearance of the Folio of 1623, viz. : in January, 1619, Jonson was staying with Drummond of Hawthornden, and Drummond made notes of his conversation, and, under the title, or heading, "His Acquaintance and Behaviour with poets living with him," we have recorded remarks made by Ben concerning Daniel, Drayton, Beaumont, Sir John Roe, Marston, Markham, Day, Middleton, Chapman, Fletcher, and others. What do we find concerning Shakspeare? "That Shakspeare wanted arte. . . . Shakspeer in a play, brought in a number of men saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where there is no sea neer by some 100 miles." Here, then, we have Jonson unbosoming himself in private conversation with his host and friend, and this, apparently, is all he has to say about the great bard who, only four years afterwards, he was to laud to the skies as the "Soul of the age, the applause, delight, the wonder of our stage." We would have expected to find whole pages of eulogy, in Drummond's notes, of the poet who "was not of an age but for all time," instead of which we have only these two carping little bits of criticism: "That Shakspeer wanted (*i.e.*, lacked) arte"—a curious remark to have proceeded from the mouth of him who wrote, in the Folio lines, that a poet must be "made as well as born"; that Nature must be supplemented by art; and that in Shakespeare's case such art was not lacking, but, on the contrary, was conspicuous "in his well-turned and true-filed lines." And then that niggling bit of criticism concerning the coast of Bohemia in the *Winter's Tale*, taken straight from the learned Greene's

<sup>1</sup> "In the remarks *de Shakespeare Nostrati* we have, doubtless, Ben's closet-opinion of his friend, opposed as it seems to be to that in his address to Britain," prefixed to the Folio of 1623. (Ingleby).

novel of *Dorastus and Fawnia*, which may be compared with the depreciatory allusion to *Julius Cæsar* in the *Discoveries*. w. Alston Professor Herford remarks, "It is significant that both in the 'Conversations' and the 'Discoveries,' where high praise is given to others, Jonson only notes in the case of Shakespeare his deficiency in qualities on which he himself set a very high value." (Article on Jonson in *Dict : Nat : Biog :*).

With regard to Jonson's allusion to the play of *Julius Cæsar*, some critics have suggested that the lines he has cited are merely misquotation. Thus Mr Andrew Lang asks, "of whom is Ben writing?" and answers, "of the author of *Julius Cæsar*, certainly, from which, his memory failing, he misquotes a line." (*Shakespeare; Bacon, and The Great Unknown*, p. 257). But if Ben here misquotes, owing to failing memory, it follows that the whole story is a myth. The basis of the story, if Jonson is alluding to the play, is that *Julius Cæsar* originally contained the words quoted by him, "Cæsar, thou dost me wrong," and Cæsar's answer as quoted. But in the play as we now have it there are no words such as "Cæsar, thou dost me wrong," uttered by Metellus Cimber (Act III., sc. 1., 33), so that, on Mr. Lang's hypothesis, Ben not only misquoted two lines, but invented the whole story. Gifford, on the other hand, says that Jonson must have heard the words he has quoted *at the theatre*.

Finally, it may be noted that although Jonson, writing in the late years of his life, says of Shakespeare (or Shakspere) that he "*lov'd the man*," and honours his memory, yet the often-quoted Nicholas Rowe (Shakespeare's first biographer—so-called—) tells us that "he was not very cordial in his friendship," nor have we, in fact, any evidence whatever that he and William Shakspere of Stratford were close friends. Shakspere's friends were men such as his fellow-players, Heminge, Burbage, and Condell, to whom he left by his Will 26s. 8d. apiece to buy them rings. He makes no mention whatever of Ben Jonson, who, (if, indeed, he was really the author of the note *de*

*Shakespeare Nostrati*, in the posthumously published *Discoveries*)<sup>1</sup> would have us believe that he so "lov'd the man," while as to the tradition chronicled by John Ward upwards of fifty years after Shakspeare's death (he became Vicar of Stratford in 1662) that Shakspeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson had "a merie meeting, and it seems drank too hard, for Shakespear died of a feavour there contracted," it is so obviously a myth that it is unworthy of serious consideration. There is no shred of evidence that Shakspeare was on intimate terms of friendship with either Jonson or Drayton, and Ben's remarks both in the "Discoveries," and in his conversation with Drummond, do but strengthen the hypothesis that the main object which Ben had in view in writing his poetical eulogy of "Shake-speare" prefixed to the First Folio, was to provide a good "send off," and to give "bold advertisement," for that volume, in the publication of which his services had been enlisted, and in which he was so intimately concerned. Moreover, as already mentioned, he must have written well knowing that several of the plays, and large portions of plays, therein ascribed to "Shake-speare" were not, in truth and in fact, by him, that is to say not by the true Shake-speare, whoever the true Shake-speare may have been.

It is remarkable that many passages in the *Discoveries* which have all the appearance of being Jonson's original observations are, in fact, literal translations from well-known Latin writers, such as Quintilian and the two Senecas. This is well seen in his remarks *De Shakespeare Nostrati*. "His wit was in his own power; would the rule of it had been so too! Many times he fell into those things could not escape laughter. . . . But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned." This is just taken from the elder Seneca's *Controversia* (Bk. iv., Preface), "In sua potestate habebat ingenium, in aliena modum. . . . Saepe incidebat in ea quae

<sup>1</sup> M. Castelain thinks that the Latin marginal titles of the various notes were "added by the editor" (p. ix.).

derisum effugere non possent. . . . redimebat tamen vitia virtutibus et persaepe plus habebat quod laudares quam cui ignosceres." There seems, however, nothing to be concluded from this except that Jonson thought Seneca's observations applicable to "Shakespeare," and adopted them as his own *pro hac vice*; just as when he said of Bacon that he had "performed that in our tongue which may be compared or preferred either to insolent Greece or haughty Rome"—words which he had previously used with reference to "Shakespeare," in his lines prefixed to the Folio of 1623—he was again quoting from Seneca: "Deinde ut possitis aestimare in quantum cotidie ingenia descrescant et nescio qua iniquitate naturae eloquentia se retro tulerit: quidquid Romana facundia habet, quod insolenti Graeciae aut opponat aut praeferat, circa Ciceronem effluit," etc. (*Controversia*, Bk. I, Preface, cf. the passage in the *Discoveries*, No. LXXII., *Scriptorum Catalogus*, which, by the way, makes no mention of Shakespeare).



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