LANG ANDREW

SHAKESPEARE, BACON, AND THE GREAT UNKNOWN

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Содержание

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PREFACE

It is with some hesitation that I give my husband's last book to the world. It was in type when he died, but he had no time to correct even the first proofs, and doubtless he would have made many changes, if not in his views at least in his expression of them. Mr. Bartram has verified the quotations and dates with infinite care, and for this he has my warmest thanks. For the rest I can but ask those who differ from the author to remember the circumstances in which the work has been published.

L. B. L.

INTRODUCTION

The theory that Francis Bacon was, in the main, the author of "Shakespeare's plays," has now been for fifty years before the learned world. Its advocates have met with less support than they had reason to expect. Their methods, their logic, and their hypotheses closely resemble those applied by many British and foreign scholars to Homer; and by critics of the very Highest School to Holy Writ. Yet the Baconian theory is universally rejected in England by the professors and historians of English literature; and generally by students who have no profession save that of Letters. The Baconians, however, do not lack the countenance and assistance of highly distinguished persons, whose names are famous where those of mere men of letters are unknown; and in circles where the title of "Professor" is not duly respected.

The partisans of Bacon aver (or one of them avers) that "Lord Penzance, Lord Beaconsfield, Lord Palmerston, Judge Webb, Judge Holmes (of Kentucky, U.S.), Prince Bismarck, John Bright, and innumerable most *thoughtful scholars eminent in many walks of life*, *and especially in the legal profession*.. " have been Baconians, or, at least, opposed to Will Shakspere's authorship. To these names of scholars I must add that of my late friend, Samuel Clemens, D.Litt. of Oxford; better known to many as Mark Twain. Dr. Clemens was, indeed, no mean literary critic; witness his epoch-making study of Prof. Dowden's *Life of Shelley*, while his researches into the biography of Jeanne d'Arc were most conscientious.

With the deepest respect for the political wisdom and literary taste of Lord Palmerston, Prince Bismarck, Lord Beaconsfield, and the late Mr. John Bright; and with every desire to humble myself before the judicial verdicts of Judges Holmes, Webb, and Lord Penzance; with sincere admiration of my late friend, Dr. Clemens, I cannot regard them as, in the first place and professionally, trained students of literary history.

They were no more specially trained students of Elizabethan literature than myself; they were amateurs in this province, as I am an amateur, who differ from all of them in opinion. Difference of opinion concerning points of literary history ought not to make "our angry passions rise." Yet this controversy has been extremely bitter.

I abstain from quoting the "sweetmeats," in Captain MacTurk's phrase, which have been exchanged by the combatants. Charges of ignorance and monomania have been answered by charges of forgery, lying, "scandalous literary dishonesty," and even inaccuracy. Now no mortal is infallibly accurate, but we are all sane and "indifferent honest." There have been forgeries in matters Shakespearean, alas, but not in connection with the Baconian controversy.

It is an argument of the Baconians, and generally of the impugners of good Will's authorship of the plays vulgarly attributed to him, that the advocates of William Shakspere, Gent, as author of the plays, differ like the Kilkenny cats among themselves on many points. All do not believe, with Mr. J. C. Collins, that Will knew Sophocles, Euripides, and Æschylus (but not Aristophanes) as well as Mr. Swinburne did, or knew them at all – for that matter. Mr. Pollard differs very widely from Sir Sidney Lee on points concerning the First Folio and the Quartos: my sympathies are with Mr. Pollard. Few, if any, partisans of Will agree with Mrs. Stopes (herself no Baconian) about the history of the Stratford monument of the poet. About Will's authorship of *Titus Andronicus*, and *Henry VI*, Part I, the friends of Will, like the friends of Bacon, are at odds among themselves. These and other divergencies of opinion cause the Baconians to laugh, as if *they* were a harmonious circle..! For the Baconian camp is not less divided against itself than the camp of the "Stratfordians." Not all Baconians hold that Bacon was the legitimate son of "that Imperial votaress" Queen Elizabeth. Not all believe in the Cryptogram of Mr. Ignatius Donnelly, or in any other cryptograms. Not all maintain that Bacon, in the Sonnets, was inspired by a passion for the Earl of Essex, for Queen Elizabeth, or for an early miniature of himself. Not all regard him as the author of the plays of Kit Marlowe. Not all suppose him to be a

Rosicrucian, who possibly died at the age of a hundred and six, or, perhaps, may be "still running." Not all aver that he wrote thirteen plays before 1593. But one party holds that, in the main, Will was the author of the plays, while the other party votes for Bacon – or for Bungay, a Great Unknown. I use Bungay as an endearing term for the mysterious being who was the Author if Francis Bacon was not. Friar Bungay was the rival of Friar Bacon, as the Unknown (if he was not Francis Bacon) is the rival of "the inventor of Inductive reasoning."

I could never have expected that I should take a part in this controversy; but acquaintance with *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* (503 pp.), (1908), and later works of Mr. G. G. Greenwood, M.P., has tempted me to enter the lists.

Mr. Greenwood is worth fighting; he is cunning of fence, is learned (and I cannot conceal my opinion that Mr. Donnelly and Judge Holmes were rather ignorant). He is not over "the threshold of Eld" (as were Judge Webb and Lord Penzance when they took up Shakespearean criticism). His knowledge of Elizabethan literature is vastly superior to mine, for I speak merely, in Matthew Arnold's words, as "a belletristic trifler."

Moreover, Mr. Greenwood, as a practising barrister, is a judge of legal evidence; and, being a man of sense, does not "hold a brief for Bacon" as the author of the Shakespearean plays and poems, and does not value Baconian cryptograms. In the following chapters I make endeavours, conscientious if fallible, to state the theory of Mr. Greenwood. It is a negative theory. He denies that Will Shakspere (or Shaxbere, or Shagspur, and so on) was the author of the plays and poems. Some other party was, *in the main*, with other hands, the author. Mr. Greenwood cannot, or does not, offer a guess as to who this ingenious Somebody was. He does not affirm, and he does not deny, that Bacon had a share, greater or less, in the undertaking.

In my brief tractate I have not room to consider every argument; to traverse every field. In philology I am all unlearned, and cannot pretend to discuss the language of Shakespeare, any more than I can analyse the language of Homer into proto-Arcadian and Cyprian, and so on. Again, I cannot pretend to have an opinion, based on internal evidence, about the genuine Shakespearean character of such plays as *Titus Andronicus*, *Henry VI*, Part I, and *Troilus and Cressida*. About them different views are held *within* both camps.

I am no lawyer or naturalist (as Partridge said, *Non omnia possumus omnes*), and cannot imagine why our Author is so accurate in his frequent use of terms of law – if he be Will; and so totally at sea in natural history – if he be Francis, who "took all knowledge for his province."

How can a layman pretend to deal with Shakespeare's legal attainments, after he has read the work of the learned Recorder of Bristol, Mr. Castle, K.C.? To his legal mind it seems that in some of Will's plays he had the aid of an expert in law, and then his technicalities were correct. In other plays he had no such tutor, and then he was sadly to seek in his legal jargon. I understand Mr. Greenwood to disagree on this point. Mr. Castle says, "I think Shakespeare would have had no difficulty in getting aid from several sources. There is therefore no *prima facie* reason why we should suppose the information was supplied by Bacon."

Of course there is not!

"In fact, there are some reasons why one should attribute the legal assistance, say, to Coke, rather than to Bacon."

The truth is, that Bacon seems not to have been lawyer enough for Will's purposes. "We have no reason to believe that Bacon was particularly well read in the technicalities of our law; he never seems to have seriously followed his profession." [1]

Now we have Mr. Greenwood's testimonial in favour of Mr. Castle, "Who really does know something about law." [2] Mr. Castle thinks that Bacon really did not know enough about law, and

[1] E. J. Castle, *Shakespeare*, *Bacon*, *Jonson*, *and Greene*, pp. 194–195.

[2] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 145.

suggests Sir Edward Coke, of all human beings, as conceivably Will's "coach" on legal technicalities. Perhaps Will consulted the Archbishop of Canterbury on theological niceties?

Que sçais je? In some plays, says Mr. Castle, Will's law is all right, in other plays it is all wrong. As to Will's law, when Mr. Greenwood and Mr. Castle differ, a layman dare not intervene.

Concerning legend and tradition about our Will, it seems that, in each case, we should do our best to trace the *Quellen*, to discover the original sources, and the steps by which the tale arrived at its late recorders in print; and then each man's view as to the veracity of the story will rest on his sense of probability; and on his bias, his wish to believe or to disbelieve.

There exists, I believe, only one personal anecdote of Will, the actor, and on it the Baconians base an argument against the contemporary recognition of him as a dramatic author. I take the criticism of Mr. Greenwood (who is not a Baconian). One John Manningham, Barrister-at-Law, "a well-educated and cultured man," notes in his Diary (February 2, 1601) that "at our feast we had a play called Twelve Night or What you Will, much like the Comedy of Errors, or Menæchmi in Plautus, but most like and near to that in Italian called *Inganni*." He confides to his Diary the tricks played on Malvolio as "a good practice." [3] That is all.

About the authorship he says nothing: perhaps he neither knew nor cared who the author was. In our day the majority of people who tell me about a play which they have seen, cannot tell me the name of the author. Yet it is usually printed on the playbill, though in modest type. The public does not care a straw about the author's name, unless he be deservedly famous for writing letters to the newspapers on things in general; for his genius as an orator; his enthusiasm as a moralist, or in any other extraneous way. Dr. Forman in his queer account of the plot of "Mack Beth" does not allude to the name of the author (April 20, 1610). *Twelfth Night* was not published till 1623, in the Folio: there was no quarto to enlighten Manningham about the author's name. We do not hear of printed playbills, with author's names inserted, at that period. It seems probable that occasional playgoers knew and cared no more about authors than they do at present. The world of the wits, the critics (such as Francis Meres), poets, playwrights, and players, did know and care about the authors; apparently Manningham did not. But he heard a piquant anecdote of two players and (March 13, 1601) inserted it in his Diary.

Shakespeare once anticipated Richard Burbage at an amorous tryst with a citizen's wife. Burbage had, by the way, been playing the part of Richard III. While Will was engaged in illicit dalliance, the message was brought (what a moment for bringing messages!) that Richard III was at the door, and Will "caused return to be made that William the Conqueror was before Richard III. *Shakespeare's name William*." (My italics.) Mr. Greenwood argues that if "Shakspere the player was known to the world as the author of the plays of Shakespeare, it does seem extremely remarkable" that Manningham should have thought it needful to add "Shakespeare's name William." [4]

But *was* "Shakspere," or any man, "known to the world as the author of the plays of Shakespeare"? No! for Mr. Greenwood writes, "nobody, outside a very small circle, troubled his head as to who the dramatist or dramatists might be." [5] To that "very small circle" we have no reason to suppose that Manningham belonged, despite his remarkable opinion that *Twelfth Night* resembles the *Menæchmi*. Consequently, it is *not* "extremely remarkable" that Manningham wrote "Shakespeare's name William," to explain to posterity the joke about "William the Conqueror," instead of saying, "the brilliant author of the Twelfth Night play which so much amused me at our feast a few weeks ago." [6] "Remarkable" out of all hooping it would have been had Manningham written in the style of Mr. Greenwood. But Manningham apparently did not "trouble his head as to who the dramatist

[3] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 340.

[4] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, pp. 340, 341.

[5] *In Re Shakespeare*, p. 54.

[6] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 341.

or dramatists might be." "Nobody, outside a very small circle," *did* trouble his poor head about that point. Yet Mr. Greenwood thinks "it does seem extremely remarkable" that Manningham did not mention the author.

Later, on the publication of the Folio (1623), the world seems to have taken more interest in literary matters. Mr. Greenwood says that then while "the multitude" would take Ben Jonson's noble panegyric on Shakespeare as a poet "*au pied de la lettre*," "the enlightened few would recognise that it had an esoteric meaning." [7] Then, it seems, "the world" – the "multitude" – regarded the actor as the author. Only "the enlightened few" were aware that when Ben *said* "Shakespeare," and "Swan of Avon," he *meant*– somebody else.

Quite different inferences are drawn from the same facts by persons of different mental conditions. For example, in 1635 or 1636, Cuthbert Burbage, brother of Richard, the famous actor, Will's comrade, petitioned Lord Pembroke, then Lord Chamberlain, for consideration in a quarrel about certain theatres. Telling the history of the houses, he mentions that the Burbages "to ourselves joined those deserving men, Shakspere, Heminge, Condell, Phillips and others." Cuthbert is arguing his case solely from the point of the original owners or lease-holders of the houses, and of the well-known actors to whom they joined themselves. Judge Webb and Mr. Greenwood think that "it does indeed seem strange.. that the proprietor[s] of the playhouses which had been made famous by the production of the Shakespearean plays, should, in 1635 – twelve years after the publication of the great Folio – describe their reputed author to the survivor of the Incomparable Pair, as merely a 'man-player' and 'a deserving man.'" Why did he not remind the Lord Chamberlain that this "deserving man" was the author of all these famous dramas? Was it because he was aware that the Earl of Pembroke "knew better than that"? [8]

These arguments are regarded by some Baconians as proof positive of their case.

Cuthbert Burbage, in 1635 or 1636, did not remind the Earl of what the Earl knew very well, that the Folio had been dedicated, in 1623, to him and his brother, by Will's friends, Heminge and Condell, as they had been patrons of the late William Shakspere and admirers of his plays. The terms of this dedication are to be cited in the text, later. *We* all *now* would have reminded the Earl of what he very well knew. Cuthbert did not.

The intelligence of Cuthbert Burbage may be gauged by anyone who will read pp. 481–484 in *William Shakespeare*, *His Family and Friends*, by the late Mr. Charles Elton, Q.C., of White Staunton. Cuthbert was a puzzle-pated old boy. The silence as to Will's authorship on the part of this muddle-headed old Cuthbert, in 1635–36, cannot outweigh the explicit and positive public testimony to his authorship, signed by his friends and fellow-actors in 1623.

Men believe what they may; but I prefer positive evidence for the affirmative to negative evidence from silence, the silence of Cuthbert Burbage.

One may read through Mr. Greenwood's three books and note the engaging varieties of his views; they vary as suits his argument; but he is unaware of it, or can justify his varyings. Thus, in 1610, one John Davies wrote rhymes in which he speaks of "our English Terence, Mr. Will Shakespeare"; "good Will." In his period patriotic English critics called a comic dramatist "the English Terence," or "the English Plautus," precisely as American critics used to call Mr. Bryant "the American Wordsworth," or Cooper "the American Scott"; and as Scots called the Rev. Mr. Thomson "the Scottish Turner." Somewhere, I believe, exists "the Belgian Shakespeare."

Following this practice, Davies had to call Will either "our English Terence," or "our English Plautus." Aristophanes would not have been generally recognised; and Will was no more like one of these ancient authors than another. Thus Davies was apt to choose either Plautus or Terence; it was

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 470.

[8] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 339.

even betting which he selected. But he chanced to choose Terence; and this is "curious," and suggests suspicions to Mr. Greenwood – and the Baconians. They are so very full of suspicions!

It does not suit the Baconians, or Mr. Greenwood, to find contemporary recognition of Will as an author. [9] Consequently, Mr. Greenwood finds Davies's "curious, and at first sight, inappropriate comparison of 'Shake-speare' to Terence worthy of remark, for Terence is the very author whose name is alleged to have been used as a mask-name, or *nom de plume*, for the writings of great men who wished to keep the fact of their authorship concealed."

Now Davies felt bound to bring in *some* Roman parallel to Shakespeare; and had only the choice of Terence or Plautus. Meres (1598) used Plautus; Davies used Terence. Mr. Greenwood [10] shows us that Plautus would not do. "Could *he*" (Shakespeare) "write only of courtesans and *cocottes*, and not of ladies highly born, cultured, and refined?.. "

"The supposed parallel" (Plautus and Shakespeare) "breaks down at every point." Thus, on Mr. Greenwood's showing, Plautus could not serve Davies, or should not serve him, in his search for a Roman parallel to "good Will." But Mr. Greenwood also writes, "if he" (Shakespeare) "was to be likened to a Latin comedian, surely Plautus is the writer with whom he should have been compared." [11] Yet Plautus was the very man who cannot be used as a parallel to Shakespeare. Of course no Roman nor any other comic dramatist closely resembles the *author* of *As You Like It*. They who selected either Plautus or Terence meant no more than that both were celebrated comic dramatists. Plautus was no parallel to Will. Yet "surely Plautus is the author to whom he should have been compared" by Davies, says Mr. Greenwood. If Davies tried Plautus, the comparison was bad; if Terence, it was "curious," as Terence was absurdly accused of being the "*nom de plume*" of some great "concealed poets" of Rome. "From all the known facts about Terence," says a Baconian critic (who has consulted Smith's *Biographical Dictionary*), "it is an almost unavoidable inference that John Davies made the comparison to Shakspere because he knew of the point common to both cases." The common point is taken to be, not that both men were famous comic dramatists, but that Roman literary gossips said, and that Baconians and Mr. Greenwood say, that "Terence" was said to be a "mask-name," and that "Shakespeare" is a mask-name. Of the second opinion there is not a hint in literature of the time of good Will.

What surprises one most in this controversy is that men eminent in the legal profession should be "anti-Shakesperean," if not overtly Baconian. For the evidence for the contemporary faith in Will's authorship is all positive; from his own age comes not a whisper of doubt, not even a murmur of surprise. It is incredible to me that his fellow-actors and fellow-playwrights should have been deceived, especially when they were such men as Ben Jonson and Tom Heywood. One would expect lawyers, of all people, to have been most impatient of the surprising attempts made to explain away Ben Jonson's testimony, by aid, first, of quite a false analogy (Scott's denial of his own authorship of his novels), and, secondly, by the suppression of such a familiar fact as the constant inconsistency of Ben's judgments of his contemporaries in literature. Mr. Greenwood must have forgotten the many examples of this inconsistency; but I have met a Baconian author who knew nothing of the fact. Mr. Greenwood, it is proper to say, does not seem to be satisfied that he has solved what he calls "the Jonsonian riddle." Really, there is no riddle. About Will, as about other authors, his contemporaries and even his friends, on occasion, Ben "spoke with two voices," now in terms of hyperbolical praise, now in carping tones of censure. That is the obvious solution of "the Jonsonian riddle."

I must apologise if I have in places spelled the name of the Swan of Avon "Shakespeare" where Mr. Greenwood would write "Shakspere," and *vice versa*. He uses "Shakespeare" where he means the Author; "Shakspere" where he means Will; and is vexed with some people who write the name of

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[9] *The Vindicators of Shakespeare*, pp. 115–116.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[11] *The Vindicators of Shakespeare*, p. 14.

Will as “Shakespeare.” As Will, in the opinion of a considerable portion of the human race, and of myself, *was* the Author, one is apt to write his name as “Shakespeare” in the usual way. But difficult cases occur, as in quotations, and in conditional sentences. By any spelling of the name I always mean the undivided personality of “Him who sleeps by Avon.”

I
THE BACONIAN AND ANTI-WILLIAN POSITIONS

Till the years 1856–7 no voice was raised against the current belief about Shakespeare (1564–1616). He was the author in the main of the plays usually printed as his. In some cases other authors, one or more, may have had fingers in his dramas; in other cases, Shakespeare may have "written over" and transfigured earlier plays, of himself and of others; he may have contributed, more or less, to several plays mainly by other men. Separately printed dramas published during his time carry his name on their title-pages, but are not included in the first collected edition of his dramas, "The First Folio," put forth by two of his friends and fellow-actors, in 1623, seven years after his death.

On all these matters did commentators, critics, and antiquarians for long dispute; but none denied that the actor, Will Shakspere (spelled as heaven pleased), was in the main the author of most of the plays of 1623, and the sole author of *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, and the Sonnets.

Even now, in England at least, it would be perhaps impossible to find one special and professed student of Elizabethan literature, and of the classical and European literatures, who does not hold by the ancient belief, the belief of Shakespeare's contemporaries and intimates, the belief that he was, in the sense explained above, the author of the plays.

But ours is not a generation to be overawed by "Authority" (as it is called). A small but eager company of scholars have convinced themselves that Francis Bacon wrote the Shakespearean plays. That is the point of agreement among these enthusiasts: points of difference are numerous: some very wild little sects exist. Meanwhile multitudes of earnest and intelligent men and women, having read notices in newspapers of the Baconian books, or heard of them at lectures and tea-parties, disbelieve in the authorship of "the Stratford rustic," and look down on the faithful of Will Shakespere with extreme contempt.

From the Baconians we receive a plain straightforward theory, "Bacon wrote Shakespeare," as one of their own prophets has said. [12] Since we have plenty of evidence for Bacon's life and occupations during the period of Shakespearean poetic activity, we can compare what he was doing as a man, a student, a Crown lawyer, a pleader in the Courts, a political pamphleteer, essayist, courtier, active member of Parliament, and so on, with what he is said to have been doing – by the Baconians; namely, writing two dramas yearly.

But there is another "Anti-Willian" theory, which would dethrone Will Shakspere, and put but a Shadow in his place. Conceive a "concealed poet," of high social position, contemporary with Bacon and Shakespeare. Let him be so fond of the Law that he cannot keep legal "shop" out of his love Sonnets even. Make him a courtier; a statesman; a philosopher; a scholar who does not blench even from the difficult Latin of Ovid and Plautus. Let this almost omniscient being possess supreme poetic genius, extensive classical attainments, and a tendency to make false quantities. Then conceive him to live through the reigns of "Eliza and our James," without leaving in history, in science, in society, in law, in politics or scholarship, a single trace of his existence. He left nothing but the poems and plays usually attributed to Will. As to the date of his decease, we only know that it must necessarily have been later than the composition of the last genuine Shakespearean play – for this paragon wrote it.

Such is the Being who occupies, in the theory of the non-Baconian, *but not Anti-Baconian*, Anti-Willians, the intellectual throne filled, in the Will Shakespeare theory, by Will; and in the Baconian, by Bacon – two kings of Brentford on one throne.

We are to be much engaged by the form of this theory which is held by Mr. G. G. Greenwood in his *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*. In attempting to explain what he means I feel

[12] *Francis Bacon Wrote Shakespeare*. By H. Crouch-Batchelor, 1912.

that I am skating on very thin ice. Already, in two volumes (*In Re Shakespeare*, 1909, and *The Vindicators of Shakespeare*), Mr. Greenwood has accused his critics of frequently misconceiving and misrepresenting his ideas: wherefore I also tremble. I am perfectly confident in saying that he "holds no brief for the Baconians." He is *not* a Baconian. His position is negative merely: Will of Stratford is *not* the author of the Shakespearean plays and poems. Then who is? Mr. Greenwood believes that work by an unknown number of hands exists in the plays first published all together in 1623. Here few will differ from him. But, setting aside this aspect of the case, Mr. Greenwood appears to me to believe in an entity named "Shakespeare," or "the Author," who is the predominating partner; though Mr. Greenwood does not credit him with all the plays in the Folio of 1623 (nor, perhaps, with the absolute entirety of any given play). "The Author" or "Shakespeare" is not a syndicate (like the Homer of many critics), but an individual human being, apparently of the male sex. As to the name by which he was called on earth, Mr. Greenwood is "agnostic." He himself is not Anti-Baconian. He does not oust Bacon and put the Unknown in his place. He neither affirms nor denies that Bacon may have contributed, more or less, to the bulk of Shakespearean work. To put it briefly: Mr. Greenwood backs the field against the favourite (our Will), and Bacon *may* be in the field. If he has any part in the whole I suspect that it is "the lion's part," but Mr. Greenwood does not commit himself to anything positive. We shall find (if I am not mistaken) that Mr. Greenwood regards the hypothesis of the Baconians as "an extremely reasonable one," [13] and that for his purposes it would be an extremely serviceable one, if not even essential. For as Bacon was a genius to whose potentialities one can set no limit, he is something to stand by, whereas we cannot easily believe – I cannot believe – that the actual "Author," the "Shakespeare" lived and died and left no trace of his existence except his share in the works called Shakespearean.

However, the idea of the Great Unknown has, for its partisans, this advantage, that as the life of the august Shade is wholly unknown, we cannot, as in Bacon's case, show how he was occupied while the plays were being composed. He *must*, however, have been much at Court, we learn, and deep in the mysteries of legal terminology. Was he Sir Edward Coke? Was he James VI and I?

It is hard, indeed, to set forth the views of the Baconians and of the "Anti-Willians" in a shape which will satisfy them. The task, especially when undertaken by an unsympathetic person, is perhaps impossible. I can only summarise their views in my own words as far as I presume to understand them. I conceive the Baconians to cry that "the world possesses a mass of transcendent literature, attributed to a man named William *Shakespeare*." Of a man named William *Shakspere* (there are many varieties of spelling) we certainly know that he was born (1564) and bred in Stratford-on-Avon, a peculiarly dirty, stagnant, and ignorant country town. There is absolutely no evidence that he (or any Stratford boy of his standing) ever went to Stratford school. His father, his mother, and his daughter could not write, but, in signing, made their marks; and if he could write, which some of us deny, he wrote a terribly bad hand. As far as late traditions of seventy or eighty years after his death inform us, he was a butcher's apprentice; and also a schoolmaster "who knew Latin pretty well"; and a poacher. He made, before he was nineteen, a marriage tainted with what Meg Dods calls "ante-nup." He early had three children, whom he deserted, as he deserted his wife. He came to London, we do not know when (about 1582, according to the "guess" of an antiquary of 1680); held horses at the door of a theatre (so tradition says), was promoted to the rank of "servitor" (whatever that may mean), became an actor (a vagabond under the Act), and by 1594 played before Queen Elizabeth. He put money in his pocket (heaven knows how), for by 1597 he was bargaining for the best house in his native *bourgade*. He obtained, by nefarious genealogical falsehoods (too common, alas, in heraldry), the right to bear arms; and went on acting. In 1610–11 (?) he retired to his native place. He never took any interest in his unprinted manuscript plays; though rapacious, he never troubled himself about his valuable copyrights; never dreamed of making a collected edition of his works. He died in 1616,

[13] *The Shakespere Problem Restated*, p. 293.

probably of drink taken. Legal documents prove him to have been a lender of small sums, an avid creditor, a would-be encloser of commons. In his will he does not bequeath or mention any books, manuscripts, copyrights, and so forth. It is utterly incredible, then, that this man wrote the poems and plays, so rich in poetry, thought, scholarship, and knowledge, which are attributed to "William Shakespeare." These must be the works of "a concealed poet," a philosopher, a courtier moving in the highest circles, a supreme legist, and, necessarily, a great poet, and student of the classics.

No known person of the age but one, Bacon, was a genius, a legist, a scholar, a great poet, and brilliant courtier, with all the other qualifications so the author of the plays either was Francis Bacon – or some person unknown, who was in all respects equally distinguished, but kept his light under a bushel. Consequently the name "William Shakespeare" is a pseudonym or "pen-name" wisely adopted by Bacon (or the other man) as early as 1593, at a time when William Shakspere was notoriously an actor in the company which produced the plays of the genius styling himself "William Shakespeare."

Let me repeat that, to the best of my powers of understanding and of expression, and in my own words, so as to misquote nobody, I have now summarised the views of the Baconians *sans phrase*, and of the more cautious or more credulous "Anti-Willians," as I may style the party who deny to Will the actor any share in the authorship of the plays, but do not overtly assign it to Francis Bacon.

Beyond all comparison the best work on the Anti-Willian side of the controversy is *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, by Mr. G. G. Greenwood (see my Introduction). To this volume I turn for the exposition of the theory that "Will Shakspere" (with many other spellings) is an actor from the country – a man of very scanty education, in all probability, and wholly destitute of books; while "William Shakespeare," or with the hyphen, "Shake-speare," is a "*nom de plume*" adopted by the Great Unknown "concealed poet."

When I use the word "author" here, I understand Mr. Greenwood to mean that in the plays called "Shakespearean" there exists work from many pens: owing to the curious literary manners, methods, and ethics of dramatic writing in, say, 1589–1611. In my own poor opinion this is certainly true of several plays in the first collected edition, "The Folio," produced seven years after Will's death, namely in 1623. These curious "collective" methods of play-writing are to be considered later.

Matters become much more perplexing when we examine the theory that "William Shakespeare" (with or without the hyphen), on the title-pages of plays, or when signed to the dedications of poems, is the chosen pen-name, or "*nom de plume*," of Bacon or of the Unknown.

Here I must endeavour to summarise what Mr. Greenwood has written [14] on the name of the actor, and the "*nom de plume*" of the unknown author who, by the theory, was not the actor. Let me first confess my firm belief that there is no cause for all the copious writing about the spellings "Shakespeare" or "Shake-speare" – as indicating the true but "concealed poet" – and "Shakspere" (&c.), as indicating the Warwickshire rustic. At Stratford and in Warwickshire the clan-name was spelled in scores of ways, was spelled in different ways within a single document. If the actor himself uniformly wrote "Shakspere" (it seems that we have but five signatures), he was accustomed to seeing the name spelled variously in documents concerning him and his affairs. In London the printers aimed at a kind of uniformity, "Shakespeare" or "Shake-speare": and even if he wrote his own name otherwise, to him it was indifferent. Lawyers and printers might choose their own mode of spelling – and there is no more in the matter.

I must now summarise briefly, in my own words, save where quotations are indicated in the usual way, the results of Mr. Greenwood's researches. "The family of William Shakspere of Stratford" (perhaps it were safer to say "the members of his name") "wrote their name in many different ways – some sixty, I believe, have been noted.. but the form 'Shakespeare' seems never to have been employed by them"; and, according to Mr. Spedding, "Shakspere of Stratford never so wrote his name 'in any known case.'" (According to many Baconians he never wrote his name in

[14] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, pp. 31–37.

his life.) On the other hand, the dedications of *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and of *Lucrece* (1594) are inscribed "William Shakespeare" (without the hyphen). In 1598, the title-page of *Love's Labour's Lost* "bore the name W. Shakespere," while in the same year *Richard II* and *Richard III* bear "William Shake-speare," with the hyphen (not without it, as in the two dedications by the Author). "The name which appears in the body of the conveyance and of the mortgage bearing" (the actor's) "signature is 'Shakespeare,' while 'Shackspeare' appears in the will, prepared, as we must presume, by or under the directions of Francis Collyns, the Stratford solicitor, who was one of the witnesses thereto" (and received a legacy of £13, 6*s.* 8*d.*).

Thus, at Stratford even, the name was spelled, in legal papers, as it is spelled in the two dedications, and in most of the title-pages – and also is spelled otherwise, as "Shackspeare." In March 1594 the actor's name is spelled "Shakespeare" in Treasury accounts. The legal and the literary and Treasury spellings (and conveyances and mortgages and wills are *not* literature) are Shakespeare, Shackspeare, Shake-speare, Shakespere – all four are used, but we must regard the actor as never signing "Shakespeare" in any of these varieties of spelling – if sign he ever did; at all events he is not known to have used the *a* in the last syllable.

I now give the essence of Mr. Greenwood's words [15] concerning the *nom de plume* of the "concealed poet," whoever he was.

"And now a word upon the name 'Shakespeare.' That in this form, and more especially with a hyphen, Shake-speare, the word makes an excellent *nom de plume* is obvious. As old Thomas Fuller remarks, the name suggests *Martial* in its warlike sound, 'Hasti-vibrans or Shake-speare.' It is of course further suggestive of Pallas Minerva, the goddess of Wisdom, for Pallas also was a spear-shaker (Pallas ἀπὸ του πάλλειν τὸ δόρυ); and all will remember Ben Jonson's verses.. " on Shakespeare's "true-filed lines" —

> "In each of which he seems to shake a lance,
> As brandished at the eyes of ignorance."

There is more about Pallas in book-titles (to which additions can easily be made), and about "Jonson's Cri-spinus or Cri-spinas," but perhaps we have now the gist of Mr. Greenwood's remarks on the "excellent *nom de plume*" (*cf.* pp. 31–37. On the whole of this, *cf. The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, pp. 293–295; a *nom de plume* called a "pseudonym," pp. 307, 312; Shakespeare "a mask name," p. 328; a "pseudonym," p. 330; "*nom de plume*," p. 335).

Now why was the "*nom de plume*" or "pseudonym" "William Shakespeare" "an excellent *nom de plume*" for a concealed author, courtier, lawyer, scholar, and so forth? If "Shakespeare" suggested Pallas Athene, goddess of wisdom and of many other things, and so was appropriate, why add "William"?

In 1593, when the "pseudonym" first appears in *Venus and Adonis*, a country actor whose name, in legal documents – presumably drawn up by or for his friend, Francis Collyns at Stratford – is written "William Shakespeare," was before the town as an actor in the leading company, that of the Lord Chamberlain. This company produced the plays some of which, by 1598, bear "W. Shakespere," or "William Shakespeare" on their title-pages. Thus, even if the actor habitually spelled his name "Shakspere," "William Shakespeare" was, practically (on the Baconian theory), not only a pseudonym of one man, a poet, but also the real name of another man, a well-known actor, who was *not* the "concealed poet."

"William Shakespeare" or "Shakespere" was thus, in my view, the ideally worst pseudonym which a poet who wished to be "concealed" could possibly have had the fatuity to select. His plays and poems would be, as they were, universally attributed to the actor, who is represented as a person

[15] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, pp. 36–37.

conspicuously incapable of writing them. With Mr. Greenwood's arguments against the certainty of this attribution I deal later.

Had the actor been a man of rare wit, and of good education and wide reading, the choice of name might have been judicious. A "concealed poet" of high social standing, with a strange fancy for rewriting the plays of contemporary playwrights, might obtain the manuscript copies from their owners, the Lord Chamberlain's Company, through that knowledgeable, witty, and venal member of the company, Will Shakspere. He might then rewrite and improve them, more or less, as it was his whim to do. The actor might make fair copies in his own hand, give them to his company, and say that the improved works were from his own pen and genius. The lie might pass, but only if the actor, in his life and witty talk, seemed very capable of doing what he pretended to have done. But if the actor, according to some Baconians, could not write even his own name, he was impossible as a mask for the poet. He was also impossible, I think, if he were what Mr. Greenwood describes him to be.

Mr. Greenwood, in his view of the actor as he was when he came to London, does not deny to him the gift of being able to sign his name. But, if he were educated at Stratford Free School (of which there is no documentary record), according to Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps "he was removed from school long before the usual age," "in all probability" when "he was about thirteen" (an age at which some boys, later well known, went up to their universities). If we send him to school at seven or so, "it appears that he could only have enjoyed such advantages as it may be supposed to have provided for a period of five or six years at the outside. He was then withdrawn, and, as it seems, put to calf-slaughtering." [16]

What the advantages may have been we try to estimate later.

Mr. Greenwood, with Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, thinks that Will "could have learned but little there. No doubt boys at Elizabethan grammar schools, if they remained long enough, had a good deal of Latin driven into them. Latin, indeed, was the one subject that was taught; and an industrious boy who had gone through the course and attained to the higher classes would generally be able to write fair Latin prose. But he would learn very little else" (except to write fair Latin prose?). "What we now call 'culture' certainly did not enter into the 'curriculum,' nor 'English,' nor modern languages, nor 'literature.'" [17] Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps says that "removed prematurely from school, residing with illiterate relatives in a bookless neighbourhood, thrown into the midst of occupations adverse to scholastic progress – it is difficult to believe that when he first left Stratford he was not all but destitute of polished accomplishments." [18] Mr. Greenwood adds the apprenticeship to a butcher or draper, but doubts the poaching, and the frequent whippings and imprisonments, as in the story told by the Rev. R. Davies in 1708. [19]

That this promising young man, "when he came to London, spoke the Warwickshire dialect or *patois* is, then, as certain as anything can be that is incapable of mathematical proof." [20] "Here is the young Warwickshire provincial.. " [21] producing, apparently five or six years after his arrival in town, *Venus and Adonis*.. "Is it conceivable that this was the work of the Stratford Player of whom we know so little, but of whom we know so much too much? If so we have here a veritable sixteenth-century miracle." [22] Moreover, "our great supposed poet and dramatist had at his death neither book nor manuscript in his possession, or to which he was legally entitled, or in which he had any interest whatever." [23]

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[16] *Tue Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 20.

[17] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, pp. 47–48.

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 193.

If it be not conceivable now that the rustic speaking in a *patois* could write *Venus and Adonis*, manifestly it was inconceivable in 1593, when *Venus and Adonis* was signed "William Shakespeare." No man who knew the actor (as described) could believe that he was the author, but there does not exist the most shadowy hint proving that the faintest doubt was thrown on the actor's authorship; ignorant as he was, bookless, and rude of speech. For such a Will as Mr. Greenwood describes to persuade the literary and dramatic world of his age that he *did* write the plays, would have been a miracle. Consequently Mr. Greenwood has to try to persuade us that there is no sufficient evidence that Will *did* persuade, say Ben Jonson, of his authorship and we shall see whether or not he works this twentieth-century miracle of persuasion.

Of course if Will were unable to write even his name, as an enthusiastic Baconian asserts, Mr. Greenwood sees that Will could not easily pass for the Author. [24] But his own bookless actor with a *patois* seems to him, as author of *Venus and Adonis*, almost inconceivable. Yet, despite Will's bookless rusticity, this poem with *Lucrece*, which displays knowledge of a work of Ovid not translated into English by 1593, was regarded as his own. I must suppose, therefore, that Will was *not* manifestly so ignorant of Latin as Mr. Greenwood thinks. "I think it highly probable," says this critic, "that he attended the Grammar School at Stratford" (where nothing but Latin was taught) "for four or five years, and that, later in life, after some years in London, he was probably able to 'bumbast out a line,' and perhaps to pose as 'Poet-Ape that would be thought our chief.' Nay, I am not at all sure that he would not have been capable of collaborating with such a man as George Wilkins, and perhaps of writing quite as well as he, if not even better. But it does not follow from this that he was the author either of *Venus and Adonis* or of *Hamlet*." [25]

Nothing follows from all this: we merely see that, in Mr. Greenwood's private opinion, the actor might write even better than George Wilkins, but could not write *Venus and Adonis*. Will, therefore, though bookless, is not debarred here from the pursuits of literature, in partnership with Wilkins. We have merely the critic's opinion that Will could not write *Hamlet*, even if, like Wordsworth, "he had the mind," even if the gods had made him more poetical than Wilkins.

Again, "he had had but little schooling; he had 'small Latin and less Greek'" (as Ben Jonson truly says), "but he was a good *Johannes Factotum*; he could arrange a scene, and, when necessary, 'bumbast out a blank verse.'" [26]

The "*Johannes Factotum*," who could "bumbast out a blank verse," is taken from Robert Greene's hackneyed attack on an actor-poet, "Shake-scene," published in 1592. "Poet-Ape that would be thought our chief," is from an epigram on an actor-poet by Ben Jonson (1601–16?). If the allusions by Greene and Jonson are to our Will, he, by 1592, had a literary ambition so towering that he thought his own work in the new art of dramatic blank verse was equal to that of Marlowe (not to speak of Wilkins), and Greene reckoned him a dangerous rival to three of his playwright friends, of whom Marlowe is one, apparently.

If Jonson's "Poet-Ape" be meant for Will, by 1601 Will would fain "be thought the chief" of contemporary dramatists. His vanity soared far above George Wilkins! Greene's phrases and Jonson's are dictated by spite, jealousy, and envy; and from them a true view of the work of the man whom they envy, the actor-poet, cannot be obtained. We might as well judge Molière in the spirit of the author of *Elomire Hypocondre*, and of de Visé! The Anti-Willian arguments keep on appearing, going behind the scenes, and reappearing, like a stage army. To avoid this phenomenon I reserve what is to be said about "Shake-scene" and "Poet-Ape" for another place (pp. 138–145 *infra*). But I must give the reader a warning. Concerning "William Shakespeare" as a "*nom de plume*," or pseudonym, Mr. Greenwood says, "Some, indeed, would see through it, and roundly accuse the player of putting

[24] See his *Vindicators of Shakespeare*, p. 210.

[25] *Vindicators*, p. 187.

[26] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 223.

forth the works of others as his own. To such he would be a 'Poet-Ape,' or 'an upstart crow' (Shake-scene) 'beautified with the feathers of other writers.'" [27]

If this be true, if "some would see through" (Mr. Greenwood, apparently, means *did* "see through") the "*nom de plume*," the case of the Anti-Willians is promising. But, in this matter, Mr. Greenwood *se trompe*. Neither Greene nor Jonson accused "Shake-scene" or "Poet-Ape" of "putting forth the works of others as his own." That is quite certain, as far as the scorns of Jonson and Greene have reached us. (See pp. 141–145 *infra*.)

If an actor, obviously incapable of wit and poetry, were credited with the plays, the keenest curiosity would arise in "the profession," and among rival playwrights who envied the wealth and "glory" of the actors. This curiosity, prompting the wits and players to watch and "shadow" Will, would, to put it mildly, most seriously imperil the secret of the concealed author who had the folly to sign himself "William Shakespeare." Human nature could not rest under such a provocation as the "concealed poet" offered.

This is so obvious that had one desired to prove Bacon or the Unknown to be the concealed author, one must have credited his mask, Will, with abundance of wit and fancy, and, as for learning – with about as much as he probably possessed. But the Baconians make him an illiterate yokel, and we have quoted Mr. Greenwood's estimate of the young Warwickshire provincial.

We all have our personal equations in the way of belief. That the plot of the "*nom de plume*" should have evaded discovery for a week, if the actor were the untutored countryman of the hypotheses, is to me, for one, absolutely incredible. A "concealed poet" looking about for a "*nom de plume*" and a mask behind which he could be hidden, would not have selected the name, or the nearest possible approach to the name, of an ignorant unread actor. As he was never suspected of not being the author of the plays and poems, Will cannot have been a country ignoramus, manifestly incapable of poetry, wit, and such learning as the plays exhibit. Every one must judge for himself. Mr. Greenwood fervently believes in what I disbelieve. [28]

"Very few Englishmen.. in Elizabethan times, concerned themselves at all, or cared one brass farthing, about the authorship of plays.. " says Mr. Greenwood.

Very few care now. They know the actors' names: in vain, as a rule, do I ask playgoers for the name of the author of their entertainment. But in Elizabeth's time the few who cared were apt to care very much, and they would inquire intensely when the Stratford actor, a bookless, untaught man, was announced as the author of plays which were among the most popular of their day. The seekers never found any other author. They left no hint that they suspected the existence of any other author. Hence I venture to infer that Will seemed to them no unread rustic, but a fellow of infinite fancy, – no scholar to be sure, but very capable of writing the pieces which he fathered.

They may all have been mistaken. Nobody can prove that Heywood and Ben Jonson, and the actors of the Company, were not mistaken. But certain it is that they thought the Will whom they knew capable of the works which were attributed to him. Therefore he cannot possibly have been the man who could not write, of the more impulsive Baconians; or the bookless, and probably all but Latinless, man of Mr. Greenwood's theory. The positions already seem to me to be untenable.

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[27] *In Re Shakespeare*, p. 54.

[28] In a brief note of two pages (*Cornhill Magazine*, November 1911) he makes such reply as the space permits to a paper of my own, "Shakespeare or X?" in the September number. With my goodwill he might have written thirty-two pages to my sixteen, but I am not the Editor, and never heard of Mr. Greenwood's note till May 1912.He says that I had represented him as stating that the Unknown genius adopted the name of William Shake-speare or Shakespeare "as a good *nom de guerre*, without any reference to the fact that there was an actor in existence of the name of William Shakspere, whose name was sometimes written Shakespeare, and without the least idea that the works he published under this pseudonym would be fathered upon the actor.. " (My meaning has obviously been too obscurely stated by me.)Mr. Greenwood next writes that the confusion between the actor, and the unknown taking the name William Shakespeare, "did happen and was intended to happen."*C'est là le miracle*!How could it happen if the actor were the bookless, ignorant man whom Mr. Greenwood describes? It could not happen: Will must have been unmasked in a day. The fact that a strange plot existed was only too obvious. The Unknown's secret must have been tracked by the hounds of keenest nose in the packs of rival and jealous authors and of actors. None gives tongue.

II
THE "SILENCE" ABOUT SHAKESPEARE

Before proceeding further to examine Mr. Greenwood's book, and the Baconian theories, with the careful attention which they deserve, we must clear the ground by explaining two points which appear to puzzle Baconians, though, to be sure, they have their own solutions of the problems.

The first question is: Why, considering that Shakespeare, by the consent of the learned of most of the polite foreign nations, was one of the world's very greatest poets, have we received so few and such brief notices of him from the pens of his contemporaries?

"It is wonderful," exclaims Mr. Crouch-Batchelor, "that hundreds of persons should not have left records of him. [29] We know nearly as much about the most insignificant writer of the period as we know of him, but fifty times more about most of his contemporaries. It is senseless to try to account for this otherwise than by recognising that the man was not the author."

Mr. Crouch-Batchelor is too innocent. He sees the sixteenth century in the colours of the twentieth. We know nothing, except a few dates of birth, death, entrance at school, College, the Inns of Court, and so forth, concerning several of Shakespeare's illustrious contemporaries and successors in the art of dramatic poetry. The Baconians do not quite understand, or, at least, keep steadily before their minds, one immense difference between the Elizabethan age and later times. In 1590–1630, there was no public excitement about the characters, personalities, and anecdotage of merely literary men, poets, and playwrights, who held no position in public affairs, as Spenser did; or in Court, Society, and War, as Sidney did; who did not write about their own feuds and friendships, like Greene and Nash; who did not expand into prefaces and reminiscences, and satires, like Ben Jonson; who never killed anybody, as Ben did; nor were killed, like Marlowe; nor were involved, like him, in charges of atheism, and so forth; nor imprisoned with every chance of having their ears and noses slit, like Marston. Consequently, silence and night obscure the lives and personalities of Kyd, Chapman, Beaumont, Fletcher, Dekker, Webster, and several others, as night and silence hide Shakespeare from our view.

He was popular on the stage; some of his plays were circulated separately in cheap and very perishable quartos. No collected edition of his plays appeared during his life; without that he could not be studied, and recognised in his greatness. He withdrew to the country and died. There was no enthusiastic curiosity about him; nobody Boswellised any playwright of his time. The Folio of 1623 gave the first opportunity of studying him as alone he can be studied. The Civil Wars and the Reign of the Saints distracted men's minds and depressed or destroyed the Stage.

Sir William Davenant, a boy when Shakespeare died, used to see the actor at his father's inn at Oxford, was interested in him, and cherished the embers of the drama, which were fading before the theatres were closed. Davenant collected what he could in the way of information from old people of the stage; he told Shakespearean anecdotes in conversation; a few reached the late day when uncritical inquiries began, say 1680–90 at earliest. The memories of ancient people of the theatre and clerks and sextons at Stratford were ransacked, to very little purpose.

As these things were so, how can we expect biographical materials about Shakespeare? As to the man, as to how his character impressed contemporaries, we have but the current epithets: "friendly," "gentle," and "sweet," the praise of his worth by two of the actors in his company (published in 1623), and the brief prose note of Ben Jonson, – this is more than we have for the then so widely admired Beaumont, Ben Jonson's friend, or Chapman, or the adored Fletcher. "Into the dark go one and all,"

[29] *Francis Bacon Wrote Shakespeare*, p. 37.

Shakespeare and the others. To be puzzled by and found theories on the silence about Shakespeare is to show an innocence very odd in learned disputants.

The Baconians, as usual, make a puzzle and a mystery out of their own misappreciation of the literary and social conditions of Shakespeare's time. That world could not possibly appreciate his works as we do; the world, till 1623, possessed only a portion of his plays in cheap pamphlets, in several of these his text was mangled and in places unintelligible. And in not a single instance were anecdotes and biographical traits of playwrights recorded, except when the men published matter about themselves, or when they became notorious in some way unconnected with their literary works. Drummond, in Scotland, made brief notes of Ben Jonson's talk; Shakespeare he never met.

That age was not widely and enthusiastically appreciative of literary merit in playwrights who were merely dramatists, and in no other way notorious or eminent. Mr. Greenwood justly says "the contemporary eulogies of the poet afford proof that there were some cultured critics of that day of sufficient taste and acumen to recognise, or partly recognise, his excellence.. " [30] (Here I omit some words, presently to be restored to the text.) From such critics the poet received such applause as has reached us. We also know that the plays were popular; but the audiences have not rushed to pen and ink to record their satisfaction. With them, as with all audiences, the actors and the *spectacle*, much more than the "cackle," were the attractions. When Dr. Ingleby says that "the bard of our admiration was unknown to the men of that age," he uses hyperbole, and means, I presume, that he was unknown, as all authors are, to the great majority; and that those who knew him in part made no modern fuss about him. [31]

The second puzzle is, – Why did Shakespeare, conscious of his great powers, never secure for his collected plays the permanence of print and publication? We cannot be sure that he and his company, in fact, did not provide publishers with the copy for the better Quartos or pamphlets of separate plays, as Mr. Pollard argues on good grounds that they sometimes did. [32] For the rest, no dramatic author edited a complete edition of his works before Ben Jonson, a scholarly man, set the example in the year of Shakespeare's, and of Beaumont's death (1616). Neither Beaumont nor Fletcher collected and published their works for the Stage. The idea was unheard of before Jonson set the example, and much of his work lay unprinted till years after his death. We must remember the conditions of play-writing in Shakespeare's time.

There were then many poets of no mean merit, all capable of admirable verse on occasion; and in various degrees possessed of the lofty, vigorous, and vivid style of that great age. The theatre, and writing for the theatre, afforded to many men of talent a means of livelihood analogous to that offered by journalism among ourselves. They were apt to work collectively, several hands hurrying out a single play; and in twos or threes, or fours or fives, they often collaborated.

As a general rule a play when finished was sold by the author or authors to a company of players, or to a speculator like the notorious Philip Henslowe, and the new owners, "the grand possessors," were usually averse to the publication of the work, lest other companies might act it. The plays were primarily written to be acted. The company in possession could have the play altered as they pleased by a literary man in their employment.

To follow Mr. Greenwood's summary of the situation "it would seem that an author could restrain any person from publishing his manuscript, or could bring an action against him for so doing, so long as he had not disposed of his right to it; and that the publisher could prevent any other publisher from issuing the work. At the same time it is clear that the law was frequently violated.. whether because of the difficulty of enforcing it, or through the supineness of authors; and that in

[30] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 333.

[31] In the passage which I quoted, with notes of omission, from Mr. Greenwood (p. 333), he went on to say that the eulogies of the poet by "some cultured critics of that day," "afford no proof that the author who published under the name of Shakespeare was in reality Shakspere the Stratford player." That position I later contest.

[32] See chap. XI, *The First Folio*.

consequence authors were frequently defrauded by surreptitious copies of their works being issued by piratical publishers." [33]

It may appear that to "authors" we should, in the case of plays, add "owners," such as theatrical companies, for no case is cited in which such a company brings an action against the publisher of a play which they own. The two players of Shakespeare's company who sign the preface to the first edition of his collected plays (1623, "The First Folio") complain that "divers stolen and surreptitious copies" of single plays have been put forth, "maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors." They speak as if they were unable to prevent, or had not the energy to prevent, these frauds. In the accounts of the aforesaid Henslowe, we find him paying forty shillings to a printer to stop or "stay" the printing of a play, *Patient Grizel*, by three of his hacks.

We perhaps come across an effort of the company to prevent or delay the publication of *The Merchant of Venice*, on July 17, 1598, in the *Stationers' Register*. James Robertes, and all other printers, are forbidden to print the book without previous permission from the Lord Chamberlain, the protector of Will Shakespeare's company. Two years passed before Robertes issued the book. [34] As is well known, Heywood, a most prolific playwright, boasts that he never made a double sale of his pieces to the players and the press. Others occasionally did, which Heywood clearly thought less than honest.

As an author who was also an actor, and a shareholder in his company, Will's interests were the same as theirs. It is therefore curious that some of his pieces were early printed, in quartos, from very good copies; while others appeared in very bad copies, clearly surreptitious. Probably the company gave a good MS. copy, sometimes, to a printer who offered satisfactory terms, after the gloss of novelty was off the acted play. [35] In any case, we see that the custom and interests of the owners of manuscript plays ran contrary to their early publication. In 1619 even Ben Jonson, who loved publication, told Drummond that half of his comedies were still unprinted.

These times were not as our own, and must not be judged by ours. Whoever wrote the plays, the actor, or Bacon, or the Man in the Moon; whoever legally owned the manuscripts, was equally incurious and negligent about the preservation of a correct text. As we shall see later, while Baconians urge without any evidence that Bacon himself edited, or gave to Ben Jonson the duty of editing, the first collected edition (1623), the work has been done in an indescribably negligent and reckless manner, and, as Mr. Greenwood repeatedly states, the edition, in his opinion, contains at least two plays not by his "Shakespeare" – that "concealed poet" – and masses of "non-Shakespearean" work.

How this could happen, if Bacon (as on one hypothesis) either revised the plays himself, or entrusted the task to so strict an Editor as Ben Jonson, I cannot imagine. This is also one of the difficulties in Mr. Greenwood's theory. Thus we cannot argue, "if the actor were the author, he must have been conscious of his great powers. Therefore the actor cannot have been the author, for the actor wholly neglected to collect his printed and to print his manuscript works."

This argument is equally potent against the authorship of the plays by Bacon. He, too, left the manuscripts unpublished till 1623. "But he could not avow his authorship," cry Baconians, giving various exquisite reasons. Indeed, if Bacon were the author, he might not care to divulge his long association with "a cry of players," and a man like Will of Stratford. But he had no occasion to avow it. He had merely to suggest to the players, through any safe channel, that they should collect and publish the works of their old friend Will Shakspere.

Thus indifferent was the main author of the plays, whether he were actor or statesman; and the actor, at least, is not to blame for the chaos of the first collected edition, made while he was in

[33] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, pp. 305, 306.

[34] Furness, *Merchant of Venice*, pp. 271, 272.

[35] On this see Mr. Pollard's *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos*, pp. 1–9.

his grave, and while Bacon was busy in revising and superintending Latin translations of his works on scientific subjects.

We now understand why there are so few contemporary records of Shakspere the man; and see that the neglect of his texts was extreme, whether or not he were the author. The neglect was characteristic of the playwrights of his own and the next generation. In those days it was no marvel; few cared. Nine years passed before a second edition of the collected plays appeared: thirty-two years went by before a third edition was issued – years of war and tumult, yet they saw the posthumous publication of the collected plays of Beaumont and Fletcher.

There remains one more mystery connected with publication. When the first collected edition of the plays appeared, it purported to contain "All His Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies." According to the postulate of the Baconians it was edited by the Author, or by Jonson acting for him. It contains several plays which, according to many critics, are not the author's. This, if true, is mysterious, and so is the fact that a few plays were published, as by Shakespeare, in the lifetime both of the actor and of Bacon; plays which neither acknowledged for his own, for we hear of no remonstrance from – whoever "William Shakespeare" was. It is impossible for me to say why there was no remonstrance.

Suppose that Will merely supplied Bacon's plays, under his own name, with a slight difference in spelling, to his company. It was as much his interest, in that case, to protest when Bacon's pen-name was taken in vain, as if he had spelled his own surname with an *a* in the second syllable.

There is another instance which Mr. Greenwood discusses twice. [36] In 1599 Jaggard published "*The Passionate Pilgrim*; W. Shakespeare." Out of twenty poems, five only were by W. S. In 1612, Jaggard added two poems by Tom Heywood, retaining W. Shakespeare's name as sole author. "Heywood protested" in print, "and stated that *Shakespeare* was offended, and," says Mr. Greenwood, "very probably he was so; but as he was, so I conceive, 'a concealed poet,' writing under a *nom de plume*, he seems to have only made known his annoyance through the medium of Heywood."

If so, Heywood knew who the concealed poet was. Turning to pp. 348, 349, we find Mr. Greenwood repeating the same story, with this addition, that the author of the poems published by Jaggard, "to do himself right, hath since published them in his own name." That is, W. Shakespeare has since published under his own name such pieces of *The Passionate Pilgrim* as are his own. "The author, I know," adds Heywood, "was much offended with Mr. Jaggard that (altogether unknown to him) presumed to make so bold with his name."

Why was the author so slack when Jaggard, in 1599, published W. S.'s poems with others *not* by W. S.?

How can anyone explain, by any theory? It was as open to him in 1599 as in 1612 to publish his own pieces under his own name, or pen-name.

"Here we observe," says Mr. Greenwood, [37] "that Heywood does nothing to identify 'the author with the player.'" This is, we shall see, the eternal argument. Why should Heywood, speaking of W. Shakespeare, explain what all the world knew? There was no other W. Shakespeare (with or without the *e* and *a*) but one, the actor, in the world of letters of Elizabeth and James. Who the author was Heywood himself has told us, elsewhere: the author was – Will!

But why Shakespeare was so indifferent to the use of his name, or, when he was moved, acted so mildly, it is not for me or anyone to explain. We do not know the nature of the circumstances in detail; we do not know that the poet saw hopes of stopping the sale of the works falsely attributed to him. I do not even feel certain that he had not a finger in some of them. Knowing so little, a more soaring wit than mine might fly to the explanation that "Shakespeare" was the "*nom de plume*" of Bacon or

[36] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, pp. 202, 348, 349.

[37] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 349.

his unknown equivalent, and that he preferred to “let sleeping dogs lie,” or, as Mr. Greenwood might quote the Latin tag, said *ne moveas Camarinam*.

III
THAT IMPOSSIBLE HE – THE SCHOOLING OF SHAKESPEARE

The banner-cry of the Baconians is the word "Impossible!" It is impossible that the actor from Stratford (as they think of him, a bookless, untutored lad, speaking in *patois*) should have possessed the wide, deep, and accurate scholarship displayed by the author of the plays and poems. It is impossible that at the little Free School of Stratford (if he attended it), he should have gained his wide knowledge of the literatures of Greece and Rome. To these arguments, the orthodox Stratfordian is apt to reply, that he finds in the plays and poems plenty of inaccurate general information on classical subjects, information in which the whole literature of England then abounded. He also finds in the plays some knowledge of certain Latin authors, which cannot be proved to have been translated at the date when Shakespeare drew on them. How much Latin Shakespeare knew, in our opinion, will presently be explained.

But, in reply to the Baconians and the Anti-Willians, we must say that while the author of the plays had some lore which scholars also possessed, he did not use his knowledge like a scholar. We do not see how a scholar could make, as the scansion of his blank verse proves that the author did make, the second syllable of the name of Posthumus, in *Cymbeline*, *long*. He must have read a famous line in Horace thus, which could scarce 'scape whipping, even at Stratford Free School. In the same way he makes the penultimate syllable of Andronicus short, equally impossible.

"Eheu fugaces Posthoome, Posthoome!"

Mr. Greenwood, we shall see, denies to him *Titus Andronicus*, but also appears to credit it to him, as one of the older plays which he "revised, improved, and dressed," [38] and *that* is taken to have been all his "authorship" in several cases. A scholar would have corrected, not accepted, false quantities. In other cases, as when Greeks and Trojans cite Plato and Aristotle in *Troilus and Cressida*, while Plato and Aristotle lived more than a thousand years after the latest conceivable date of the siege of Troy, I cannot possibly suppose that a scholar would have permitted to himself the freak, any more than that in *The Winter's Tale* he should have borrowed from an earlier novel the absurdity of calling Delphi "Delphos" (a non-existent word), of confusing "Delphos" with Delos, and placing the Delphian Oracle in an island. In the same play the author, quite needlessly, makes the artist Giulio Romano (1492–1546) contemporary with the flourishing age of the oracle of the Pythian Apollo. This, at least, would not be ignorance.

We have, I think, sufficient testimony to Ben's inability to refrain from gibes at Shakspere's want of scholarship. Rowe, who had traditions of Davenant's, tells how, in conversation with Suckling, Davenant, Endymion Porter, and Hales of Eton, Ben harped on Will's want of learning; and how Hales snubbed him. Indeed, Ben could have made mirth enough out of *The Winter's Tale*. For, granting to Mr. Greenwood [39] that "the mention of Delphos suggests the Bohemia of a much earlier date, and under the reign of Ottocar (1255–78) Bohemia extended from the Adriatic to the shores of the Baltic," that only makes matters far worse. "Delphos" never was a place-name; there was no oracle on the isle of "Delphos"; there were no Oracles in 1255–78 (A.D.); and Perdita, who could have sat for her portrait to Giulio Romano, was contemporary with an Oracle at *Delphos*, but not with Ottocar.

[38] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 356.

[39] *In Re Shakespeare*, p. 88, note I.

There never was so mad a mixture, not even in *Ivanhoe*; not even in *Kenilworth*. Scott erred deliberately, as he says in his prefaces; but Will took the insular oracle of Delphos from Greene, inserted Giulio Romano "for his personal diversion," never heard of Ottocar (no more than I), and made a delightful congeries of errors in gaiety of heart. Nobody shall convince me that Francis Bacon was so charmingly irresponsible; but I cannot speak so confidently of Mr. Greenwood's Great Unknown, a severe scholar, but perhaps a frisky soul. There was no region called Bohemia when the Delphic oracle was in vigour; – this apology (apparently contrived by Sir Edward Sullivan) is the most comic of erudite reflections.

Some cruel critic has censured the lovely speech of Perdita, concerning the flowers which Proserpine let fall, when she was carried off by Dis. How could she, brought up in the hut of a Bohemian shepherd, know anything of the Rape of Proserpine? Why not, as she lived in the days of the Delphic Oracle – and Giulio Romano, and of printed ballads.

It is impossible, Baconians cry, that the rabbit-stealer, brought up among the Audreys and Jaquenettas of Warwickshire, should have created the noble and witty ladies of the Court; and known the style of his Armado; and understood how dukes and kings talk among themselves – usually in blank verse, it appears.

It is impossible that the home-keeping yokel should have heard of the "obscure" (*sic*!) Court of Navarre; and known that at Venice there was a place called the Rialto, and a "common ferry" called "the tranect." It is impossible that he should have had "an intimate knowledge of the castle of Elsinore," though an English *troupe* of actors visited Denmark in 1587. To Will all this knowledge was *impossible*; for these and many more exquisite reasons the yokel's authorship of the plays is a physical impossibility. But scholars neither invent nor tolerate such strange liberties with time and place, with history, geography, and common sense. Will Shakspere either did not know what was right, or, more probably, did not care, and supposed, like Fielding in the old anecdote, that the audience "would not find it out." How could a scholar do any of these things? He was as incapable of them as Ben Jonson. Such sins no scholar is inclined to; they have, for him, no temptations.

As to Shakspere's schooling, the Baconians point at the current ignorance of Stratford-on-Avon, where many topping burgesses, even aldermen, "made their marks," in place of signing their names to documents. Shakespeare's father, wife, and daughter "made their marks," in place of signing. So did Lady Jane Gordon, daughter of the Earl of Huntly, when she married the cultivated Earl of Bothwell (1566).

There is no evidence, from a roll of schoolboys at Stratford Free Grammar School, about 1564–77, that any given boy attended it; for no roll exists. Consequently there is no evidence that Will was a pupil.

"In the Appendix to Malone's *Life of Shakespeare* will be found two Latin letters, written by alumni of Stratford School contemporary with Shakespeare," says Mr. Collins. [40] But though the writers were Stratford boys contemporary with Shakespeare, in later life his associates, as there is no roll of pupils' names how do we know, the Baconians may ask, that these men were educated at Stratford School? Why not at Winchester, Eton, St. Paul's, or anywhere? Need one reply?

Mr. Collins goes on, in his simple confiding way, to state that "one letter is by Abraham Sturley, afterwards an alderman of Stratford.. " Pursuing the facts, we find that Sturley wrote in Latin to "Richard Quiney, Shakespeare's friend," who, if he could read Sturley's letter, could read Latin. Then *young* Richard Quiney, apparently aged eleven, wrote in Latin to his father. If young Richard Quiney be the son of Shakespeare's friend, Richard Quiney, then, of course, his Latin at the age of eleven would only prove that, if he were a schoolboy at Stratford, *one* Stratford boy could write Latin in the generation following that of Shakespeare. Thus may reason the Baconians.

[40] *Studies in Shakespeare*, p. 15; *Life of Shakespeare*, by Malone, pp. 561–2, 564; Appendix, XI, xvi.

Perhaps, however, we may say that if Stratford boys contemporary with Shakspere, in his own rank and known to him, learned Latin, which they retained in manhood, Shakspere, if he went to school with them, may have done as much.

Concerning the school, a Free Grammar School, we know that during Shakespeare's boyhood the Mastership was not disdained by Walter Roche, perhaps a Fellow of what was then the most progressive College in learning of those at Oxford, namely, Corpus Christi. That Shakespeare could have been his pupil is uncertain; the dates are rather difficult. I think it probable that he was not, and we do not know the qualifications of the two or three succeeding Masters.

As to the methods of teaching and the books read at Grammar Schools, abundance of information has been collected. We know what the use was in one very good school, Ipswich, from 1528; in another in 1611; but as we do not possess any special information about Stratford School, Mr. Greenwood opposes the admission of evidence from other academies. A man might think that, however much the quality of the teaching varied in various free schools, the nominal curriculum would be fairly uniform.

As to the teacher, a good endowment would be apt to attract a capable man. What was the endowment of Stratford School? It was derived from the bequest of Thomas Jolyffe (died 1482), a bequest of lands in Stratford and Dodwell, and before the Reformation the Brethren of the Guild were "to find a priest fit and able in knowledge to teach grammar freely to all scholars coming to him, taking nothing for their teaching.. " "The Founder's liberal endowment made it possible to secure an income for the Master by deed. Under the Reformation, Somerset's Commission found that the School Master had £10 yearly by patent; the school was well conducted, and was not confiscated." [41]

Baconians can compare the yearly £20 (the salary in 1570–6, which then went much further than it does now) with the incomes of other masters of Grammar Schools, and thereby find out if the Head-Master was very cheap. Mr. Elton (who knew his subject intimately) calls the provision "liberal." The Head-Master of Westminster had £20 and a house.

As to the method of teaching, it was colloquial; questions were asked and answered in Latin. This method, according to Dr. Rouse of Perse School, brings boys on much more rapidly than does our current fashion, as may readily be imagined; but experts vary in opinion. The method, I conceive, should give a pupil a vocabulary. Lilly's Latin Grammar was universally used, and was learned by rote, as by George Borrow, in the last century. See *Lavengro* for details. Conversation books, *Sententiæ Pueriles*, were in use; with easy books, such as Corderius's *Colloquia*, and so on, for boys were taught to *speak* Latin, the common language of the educated in Europe. Waifs of the Armada, Spaniards wrecked on the Irish coast, met "a savage who knew Latin," and thus could converse with him. The Eclogues of Mantuanus, a Latin poet of the Renaissance (the "Old Mantuan" of *Love's Labour's Lost*), were used, with Erasmus's *Colloquia*, and, says Mr. Collins, "such books as Ovid's Metamorphoses" (and other works of his), "the Æneid, selected comedies of Terence and Plautus, and portions of Cæsar, Sallust, Cicero, and Livy."

"Pro-di-gi-ous!" exclaims Mr. Greenwood, [42] referring to what Mr. Collins says Will had read at school. But precocious Latinity was not thought "prodigious" in an age when nothing but Latin was taught to boys – not even cricket. Nor is it to be supposed that every boy read in all of these authors, still less read all of their works, but these were the works of which portions were read. It is not prodigious. I myself, according to my class-master, was "a bad and careless little boy" at thirteen, incurably idle, but I well remember reading in Ovid and Cæsar, and Sallust, while the rest of my time was devoted to the total neglect of the mathematics, English "as she was taught," History, and whatsoever else was expected from me. Shakespeare's time was not thus frittered away; Latin was all he learned (if he went to school), and, as he was (on my theory) a very clever, imaginative kind

[41] C. I. Elton, *William Shakespeare*, *His Family and Friends*, pp. 97, 98.

[42] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 44.

of boy, I can conceive that he was intensely interested in the stories told by Ovid, and in Catiline's Conspiracy (thrilling, if you know your Sallust); and if his interest were once aroused, he would make rapid progress. My own early hatred of Greek was hissing and malignant, but as soon as I opened Homer, all was changed. One was intensely interested!

Mr. Greenwood will not, in the matter of books, go beyond Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, [43] "Lilly's Grammar, and a few classical works chained to the desks of the free schools." Mr. Collins himself gives but "a few classical books," of which *portions* were read. The chains were in all the free schools, if Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps is right. The chains, if authentic, do not count as objections.

Here it must be noted that Mr. Greenwood's opinion of Will's knowledge and attainments is not easily to be ascertained with precision. He sees, of course, that the pretension of the extreme Baconians – Will could not even write his name – is absurd. If he could not write, he could not pass as the author. Mr. Greenwood "fears that the arguments" (of a most extreme Baconian) "would drive many wandering sheep back to the Stratfordian fold." [44]

He has therefore to find a *via media*, to present, as the pseudo-author, a Will who possessed neither books nor manuscripts when he made his Testament; a rustic, bookless Will, speaking a patois, who could none the less pass himself off as the author. So "I think it highly probable," says Mr. Greenwood, "that he attended the Grammar School at Stratford for four or five years, and that, later in life, after some years in London, he was probably able to 'bumbast out a line,' and perhaps to pose as 'Poet-Ape who would be thought our chief.'" [45] Again, "He had had but little schooling; he had 'small Latin and less Greek'; but he was a good *Johannes Factotum*, he could arrange a scene, and, when necessary, 'bumbast out a blank verse.'" [46]

But this is almost to abandon Mr. Greenwood's case. Will appears to me to be now perilously near acceptance as Greene's "Shake-scene," who was a formidable rival to Greene's three professional playwrights: and quite as near to Ben's Poet-Ape "that would be thought our chief," who began by re-making old plays; then won "some little wealth and credit on the scene," who had his "works" printed (for Ben expects them to reach posterity), and whom Ben accused of plagiarism from himself and his contemporaries. But this Shake-scene, this Poet-Ape, is merely our Will Shakespeare as described by bitterly jealous and envious rivals. Where are now the "works" of "Poet-Ape" if they are not the works of Shakespeare which Ben so nobly applauded later, if they are not in the blank verse of Greene's Shake-scene? "Shakespeare's plays" we call them.

When was it "necessary" for the "Stratford rustic" to "bumbast out a blank verse"? Where are the blank verses which he bumbasted out? For what purposes were they bumbasted? By 1592 "Shake-scene" was ambitious, and thought his blank verse as good as the best that Greene's friends, including Marlowe, could write. He had plenty of time to practise before the date when, as Ben wrote, "he would be thought our chief." He would not cease to do that in which he conceived himself to excel; to write for the stage.

When once Mr. Greenwood deems it "highly probable" that Will had four or five years of education at a Latin school, Will has as much of "grounding" in Latin, I think, as would account for all the knowledge of the Roman tongue which he displays. His amount of teaching at school would carry and tempt even a boy who was merely clever, and loved to read romantic tales and comic plays, into Ovid and Plautus – English books being to him not very accessible.

Here I may speak from my own memories, for though utterly idle where set school tasks were concerned, I tried very early to worry the sense out of Aristophanes – because he was said to contain good reading.

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[43] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 39.

[44] *Vindicators of Shakespeare*, p. 210.

[45] *Vindicators of Shakespeare*, p. 187.

[46] *Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 223.

To this amount of taste and curiosity, nowise unexampled in an ordinary clever boy, add *Genius*, and I feel no difficulty as to Will's "learning," such as, at best, it was. "The Stratfordian," says Mr. Greenwood, "will ingeminate 'Genius! Genius!'" [47] I *do* say "Genius," and stand by it. The ordinary clever boy, in the supposed circumstances, could read and admire his Ovid (though Shakespeare used cribs also), the man of genius could write *Venus and Adonis*.

Had I to maintain the Baconian hypothesis, I would not weigh heavily on bookless Will's rusticity and patois. Accepting Ben Jonson's account of his "excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility.. ," accepting the tradition of his lively wit; admitting that he had some Latin and literature, I would find in him a sufficiently plausible mask for that immense Unknown with a strange taste for furbishing up older plays. I would merely deny to Will his *genius*, and hand *that* over to Bacon – or Bungay. Believe me, Mr. Greenwood, this is your easiest way! – perhaps this *is* your way? – the plot of the unscrupulous Will, and of your astute Bungay, might thus more conceivably escape detection from the pack of envious playwrights.

According to "all tradition," says Mr. Greenwood, Shakespeare was taken from school at the age of thirteen. Those late long-descended traditions of Shakespeare's youth are of little value as evidence; but, if it pleases Mr. Greenwood, I will, for the sake of argument, accept the whole of them. Assuredly I shall not arbitrarily choose among the traditions: all depends on the genealogical steps by which they reach us, as far as these can be discovered. [48]

According to the tattle of Aubrey the antiquary, publishing in 1680, an opinion concerning Shakspere's education reached him. It came thus; there had been an actor in Shakspere's company, one Phillips, who, dying in 1605, left to Shakspere the usual thirty-shilling piece of gold; and the same "to my servant, Christopher Beeston." Christopher's son, William, in 1640, became deputy to Davenant in the management of "the King's and Queen's Young Company", and through Beeston, according to Aubrey, Davenant learned; through Beeston Aubrey learned, that Shakespeare "understood Latin pretty well, for he had been in his younger days a school-master in the country." Aubrey writes that "old Mr. Beeston, whom Mr. Dryden calls 'the chronicle of the stage,'" died in 1682. [49]

This is a fair example of the genealogy of the traditions. Phillips, a friend of Shakspere, dies in 1605, leaving a servant, Christopher Beeston (he, too, was a versifier), whose son, William, dies in 1682; he is "the chronicle of the stage." Through him Davenant gets the story, through him Aubrey gets the story, that Shakspere "knew Latin pretty well," and had been a rural dominie. Mr. Greenwood [50] devotes much space to disparaging Aubrey (and I do not think him a scientific authority, *moult s'en faut*), but Mr. Greenwood here says not a word as to the steps in the descent of the tradition. He frequently repeats himself, thereby forcing me to more iteration than I like. He had already disparaged Aubrey in note I to p. 105, but there he approached so closely to historical method as to say that "Aubrey quotes Beeston, a seventeenth-century actor, as his authority." On p. 209 he dismisses the anecdote (which does not suit his book) as "a mere myth." "*He* knows, *he* knows" which traditions are mythical, and which possess a certain historical value.

My own opinion is that Shakspere did "know Latin pretty well," and was no *scholar*, as his contemporaries reckoned scholarship. He left school, if tradition speak true, by a year later than the age, twelve, when Bacon went to Cambridge. Will, a clever kind of lad (on my theory), left school at an age when some other clever lads became freshmen. Why not? Gilbert Burnet (of whom you may have heard as Bishop of Salisbury under William III) took his degree at the age of fourteen.

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[47] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 69.

[48] See chapter X, *The Traditional Shakespeare*.

[49] See C. I. Elton, *William Shakespeare, His Family and Friends*, pp. 48, 343–8.

[50] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, pp. 207–9.

Taking Shakspere as an extremely quick, imaginative boy, with nothing to learn but Latin, and by the readiest road, the colloquial, I conceive him to have discovered that, in Ovid especially, were to be found the most wonderful and delightful stories, and poetry which could not but please his "green unknowing youth." In the years before he left Stratford, and after he left school (1577–87?), I can easily suppose that he was not *always* butchering calves, poaching, and making love; and that, if he could get books in no other way, this graceless fellow might be detected on a summer evening, knitting his brows over the stories and jests of the chained Ovid and Plautus on his old schoolroom desk. *Moi qui parle*, I am no genius; but stories, romance, and humour would certainly have dragged me back to the old desks – if better might not be, and why not Shakspere? Put yourself in his place, if you have ever been a lad, and if, as a lad, you liked to steal away into the world of romance, into fairyland.

If Will wrote the plays, he (and indeed whoever wrote the plays) was a marvel of genius. But I am not here claiming for him genius, but merely stating my opinion that if he were fond of stories and romance, had no English books of poetry and romance, and had acquired as much power of reading Latin as a lively, curious boy could easily gain in four years of exclusively Latin education, he might continue his studies as he pleased, yet be, so far, no prodigy.

I am contemplating Will in the conditions on which the Baconians insist; if they will indeed let us assume that for a few years he was at a Latin school. I credit the graceless loon with the curiosity, the prompt acquisitiveness, the love of poetry and romance, which the author of the plays must have possessed in youth. "Tradition says nothing of all that," the Baconian answers, and he may now, if he likes, turn to my reply in *The Traditional Shakespeare*. [51] Meanwhile, how can you expect old clerks and sextons, a century after date, in a place where literature was *not* of supreme interest, to retain a tradition that Will used to read sometimes (if he did), in circumstances of privacy? As far as I am able to judge, had I been a boy at Stratford school for four years, had been taught nothing but Latin, and had little or no access to English books of poetry and romance, I should have acquired about the same amount of Latin as I suppose Shakspere to have possessed. Yet I could scarcely, like him, have made the second syllable in "Posthumus" long! Sir Walter Scott, however, was guilty of similar false quantities: he and Shakspere were about equally scholarly.

I suppose, then, that Shakspere's "small Latin" (as Jonson called it) enabled him to read in the works of the Roman clerks; to read sufficient for his uses. As a fact, he made use of English translations, and also of Latin texts. Scholars like Bacon do not use bad translations of easy Latin authors. If Bacon wanted Plutarch, he went to Plutarch in Greek, not to an English translation of a French translation of a Latin translation.

Some works of Shakespeare, the *Lucrece*, for example, and *The Comedy of Errors* (if he were not working over an earlier canvas from a more learned hand), and other passages, show knowledge of Latin texts which in his day had not appeared in published translations, or had not been translated at all as far as we know. In my opinion Will had Latin enough to puzzle out the sense of the Latin, never difficult, for himself. He could also "get a construe," when in London, or help in reading, from a more academic acquaintance: or buy a construe at no high ransom from some poor scholar. No contemporary calls him scholarly; the generation of men who were small boys when he died held him for no scholar. The current English literature of his day was saturated with every kind of classical information; its readers, even if Latinless, knew, or might know a world of lore with which the modern man is seldom acquainted. The ignorant Baconian marvels: the classically educated Baconian who is not familiar with Elizabethan literature is amazed. Really there is nothing worthy of their wonder.

Does any contemporary literary allusion to Shakespeare call him "*learned*"? He is "sweet," "honey-tongued," "mellifluous," and so forth, but I ask for any contemporary who flattered him with the compliment of "learned." What Ben Jonson thought of his learning (but Ben's standard was very high), what Milton and Fuller, boys of eight when he died, thought of his learning, we know. They

[51] Chapter X, *infra.*

thought him "Fancy's child" (Milton) and with no claims to scholarship (Fuller), with "small Latin and less Greek" (Jonson). They speak of Shakespeare the author and actor; not yet had any man divided the persons.

Elizabethan and Jacobean scholarly poets were widely read in the classics. They were not usually, however, scholars in the same sense as our modern scholarly poets and men of letters; such as Mr. Swinburne among the dead, and Mr. Mackail and Sir Gilbert Murray – if I may be pardoned for mentioning contemporary names. But Elizabethan scholarly poets, and Milton, never regarded Shakespeare as learned. Perhaps few modern men of letters who are scholars differ from them. The opinion of Mr. Collins is to be discussed presently, but even he thought Shakespeare's scholarship "inexact," as we shall see.

I conceive that Shakspere "knew Latin pretty well," and, on Ben Jonson's evidence, he knew "less Greek." That he knew *any* Greek is surprising. Apparently he did, to judge from Ben's words. My attitude must, to the Baconians, seem frivolous, vexatious, and evasive. I cannot pretend to know what was Shakspere's precise amount of proficiency in Latin when he was writing the plays. That between his own knowledge, and construes given to him, he might easily get at the meaning of all the Latin, not yet translated, which he certainly knew, I believe.

Mr. Greenwood says "the amount of reading which the lad Shakspere must have done, and assimilated, during his brief sojourn at the Free School is positively amazing." [52] But I have shown how an imaginative boy, with little or no access to English poetry and romances, might continue to read Latin "for human pleasure" after he left school. As a professional writer, in a London where Latinists were as common as now they are rare in literary society, he might read more, and be helped in his reading. Any clever man might do as much, not to speak of a man of genius. "And yet, alas, there is no record or tradition of all this prodigious industry… " I am not speaking of "prodigious industry," and of that – at school. In a region so non-literary as, by his account, was Stratford, Mr. Greenwood ought not to expect traditions of Will's early reading (even if he studied much more deeply than I have supposed) to exist, from fifty to seventy years after Will was dead, in the memories of the sons and grandsons of country people who cared for none of these things. The thing is not reasonable. [53]

Let me take one example [54] of what Mr. E. A. Sonnenschein is quoted as saying (somewhere) about Shakespeare's debt to Seneca's then untranslated paper *De Clementia* (1, 3, 3; I, 7, 2; I, 6, I). It inspires Portia's speech about Mercy. Here I give a version of the Latin.

"Clemency becometh, of all men, none more than the King or chief magistrate (*principem*).. No one can think of anything more becoming to a ruler than clemency.. which will be confessed the fairer and more goodly in proportion as it is exhibited in the higher office.. But if the placable and just gods punish not instantly with their thunderbolts the sins of the powerful, how much more just it is that a man set over men should gently exercise his power. What? Holds not he the place nearest to the gods, who, bearing himself like the gods, is kind, and generous, and uses his power for the better?.. Think.. what a lone desert and waste Rome would be, were nothing left, and none, save such as a severe judge would absolve."

The last sentence is fitted with this parallel in Portia's speech:

> "Consider this
> That in the course of Justice none of us
> Should see salvation."

Here, at least, Protestant theology, not Seneca, inspires Portia's eloquence.

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[52] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 96.

[53] See chapter X, *The Traditional Shakespeare*.

[54] *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, pp. 94–96.

Now take Portia:

> “The quality of Mercy is not strain’d;
> It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
> Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed;
> It blesseth him that gives and him that takes;”

(Not much Seneca, so far!)

> “’Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
> The thronèd monarch better than his crown;
> His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
> The attribute to awe and majesty,
> Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
> But Mercy is above this sceptred sway,
> It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings,
> It is an attribute to God himself;
> And earthly power doth then show likest God’s,
> When mercy seasons justice.. ”

There follows the passage about none of us seeing salvation, already cited, and theological in origin.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.