

## DID WILLIAM SHAKSPER WRITE SHAKE- SPEARE ?<sup>1</sup>

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YOU are not about to be favored with a definite answer to this interrogatory, nor yet punished by a speculative presentation of the claims of those who believe Sir Francis Bacon was the author of the works attributed to William Shaksper of Stratford. After much research I am only able to say: I do not believe that any known contemporary of Shaksper wrote them or was, alone, capable of writing them; and I more than doubt whether Shaksper, unaided, wrote them. Before reaching these opinions I have examined some of the best evidences in support of his authorship in the light of the fact that for about two hundred and fifty years it was not seriously questioned.

I will try to summarise some of the facts (usually disregarding disputed statements) bearing on the question.

First, not desiring to be classed with those whom a Mr. Dana, for doubting William Shaksper's authorship, pronounces, "but one remove from lunatics," saying, "not a sound intelligence is on their side," unless I have some good company, I beg to name among those who, at least, have doubted, and most of whom have believed Lord Bacon was the real author, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Wendell Phillips, Justices Miller and Field (late of the Unites States Supreme Court), John A. Bingham, Nathaniel Holmes (late lecturer at Harvard), Walt Whitman, Benjamin F. Butler, Edwin Reed, James Kidpath, Mary Livermore, Charlotte Cushman, and Frances A. Willard in the United States; Leconte de Lisle (French Academy), Dr. Kuno Fischer of Heidleberg, the Scotch astronomer James Nasmith, Sir Patrick Colquhon, Lord Palmerston, John Bright, Mrs. Constance M. Potts (reputed the

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most thorough student of Shakespeare in England), Dr. R. M. Theobald, Geo. Stronach, A. M., Alaric A. Watts, Esq., and Percy W. Ames, F. S. A., all more or less learned and thoughtful. I have omitted from the list Ignatius Donnelly, Dr. Appleton Morgan, L. L. B., Judge John H. Stotsenberg, Wm. H. Edwards, Orville W. Owen, M. D., and others who have written with more or less partisanship against the claim that Shaksper was the author; and I have omitted some distinguished doubters like Charles Dickens, who said: "The life of Shakespeare is a fine mystery and I tremble every day lest something should turn up;" and Bishop Charles Wordsworth, who says: "It has been a frequent subject of complaint that so little has come down to us respecting our poet's life," and many others, also distinguished, who have expressed equally strong doubts.

No panegyric is too great for the Shakespeare plays and poems. The author (if one person) was profound in all learning of his time, including knowledge of Greek and Latin, the French and Spanish languages, and of ancient and modern writings. The author was a philosopher, a moralist, an historian, a linguist with a vocabulary larger (15,000 words, while the learned Milton, just after him, had only 8000) than any other writer of his day, and who coined more English words than any other writer, if not all other writers, of all time. He must have read untranslated books and manuscripts (such as Ovid, Homer, etc.), which he unmistakably consulted, quoted, or followed, as occasion required. His knowledge of philosophy and kindred subjects was so great that enthusiastic friends of his at this day not only deny that traces of Baconian philosophy are found in the works, but claim that Bacon sat at his feet, took notes of his wisdom, and "borrowed" much that made him famous. (Edwards 488.) The author excelled all medical men of his day in his knowledge and science of medicine and of the human system, especially in the qualities of the human mind. He is quoted as authority on questions of lunacy, and the moral and psychological characteristics of the intellect.

He wrote, as a naturalist and practical student, of the life and habits of domestic and wild animals, birds and fishes.

His works display, not only the learning of a critical student of the law, but that of an experienced practitioner at the English bar. They show knowledge of the Justinian Code, and a familiarity with Italian, French, and Spanish, as well as English, courts. His descriptions of court procedure are accurate, and, like all other of his displays of learning, go without criticism.

The author's familiarity with the life, habits, social customs and etiquette of those highest in the social scale, including kings and queens, courtiers or royalty in England and other countries (especially Italy) is apparent, throughout the writings, to the least observing.

As a metaphysician, the author was so learned that in this day the most thoughtful wonder at and consult him. His insight into love and the finer sentiments of the human heart excels all other writers.

He, as a moralist, was capable of the clearest and nicest distinctions, involving all the higher duties of man to man, measured by the purest principles of common justice and equity; and he did not hesitate to prescribe the duties of kings to their subjects and subjects to kings.

He had a profound knowledge of ancient and modern political governments, particularly of ancient dynasties, and the reign of the sovereigns of Spain, Italy, England, and other countries. He wrote not alone as one familiar with books of history and biography, but of courts and courtiers, their customs, social habits, and life.

His knowledge of military and naval arts and the science of war as then known and practised is manifest.

His attention to all the details in the life and character of the common, as well as the middle and aristocratic, people of his own and other countries is shown throughout his works.

Who was the author endowed with so much learning and genius? Whence came his opportunities for such proficiency and universality?

Genius may be granted to him; he must have been almost superhumanly endowed, or he would have still failed to write plays wherein so much varied knowledge and wisdom are embodied, and portrayed in character—he wrote for eternity.

Genius may adapt, but cannot dispense with, learning. It does not stand for learning. Genius readily turns to folly, unless grounded in common sense. The ancients said: "Genius cannot *milk a goat*." It is certain that genius, without scholastic learning, could not translate Latin and Greek, display a knowledge of literature, arts, the occult sciences, procedure in law and chancery, and of history and geography, and of the customs and habits of nations, peoples, animals, and of all living things—"running through the whole gamut of human nature."

It will be hard to convince the geniuses of this age that the plots, plans, and arrangements of the Shakespearian plays, with

their versatile literary composition, embodying wit, humor, pathos, tragedy, comedy, and erudition covering all phases of human life were the product of a natural impulse, or, like Minerva, "sprung from the brain of Jove." Toil, application, thought, study, reflection, observation, adaptation, perseverance, etc., only bear such immortal fruits.

Some who concede that William Shaksper of Stratford was almost illiterate, refer to the Scottish bard, "Bobby Burns"; to John Bunyan who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, and to Abraham Lincoln, the great emancipator, as examples of the unlearned who wrote and achieved much. These characters were not without learning, commensurate with what they accomplished, however deficient they may have been in a scholastic way. But "Burns warbled his native wood notes wild" in language smacking of the heaths of Scotland, her people and their habits. Bunyan, taught in childhood to read and write, was a zealous preacher at twenty-seven, thoroughly educated in the Bible, yet only wrote his immortal work while long in Bedford jail, "in current English, the vernacular of his age." Lincoln, starting with some education, studied and struggled throughout his life for want of it, achieving nothing save through patience and perseverance, pretending to nothing in learning which he had not thus acquired. He came from a brainy, Puritan stock. He made good use of the few books in his reach in early life; later in his profession and in the field of politics and by application he attained much true and practical learning. What he wrote or spoke was in plain, unpretentious, though unsurpassed, English.

Neither of these great characters (so of others) wrote in Latin, Greek, or French, read and translated Ovid or Horace, assumed to write of the sciences, of philosophy, or of anything not naturally comprehended within the scope of his opportunities.

Others liken Shaksper of Stratford to Jesus Christ, assuming that, he too, was illiterate, and yet taught the people of his time, and for all time. Not conceding that our Saviour was unlearned in his native tongue, or otherwise, for his day, and putting his divine inspiration aside, he, too, taught in the plainest language, using parables easily understood, and most familiar illustrations, all within the comprehension of common people.

Wm. Shaksper was born at Stratford, April 23d, 1564, and died there, April 23d, 1616, (O. S.) at exactly 52 years of age. His father, John, was of peasant Warwickshire stock, as was his mother

(nee Arden) and his wife (Ann Hathaway). William had three brothers and two sisters who, in obscurity, lived to mature years.

John Shaksper (nor his ancestors) could not read or write, nor his wife, nor William's wife (Ann) nor any child of either family, unless William could. John was a little of a wool merchant, and accountant, using *counters* only, and was a butcher by occupation. John at one time had some estate but he became poor and so remained through life.

S-h-a-k-s-p e-r (thus spelled) seems not to have been spelled "Shakespeare" until the publication of *Venus and Adonis* (1593). The spelling and derivation of the name are of little importance, save in determining the education of William. The name was originally probably, *Jacques-Pierre* (John-Peter). William never wrote his name, S-h-a-k-e-s-p e-a-r-e, or twice alike. (Some doubt whether he ever wrote his name at all.) The varied spelling in court records and by parish and other clerks proves little. The name was spelled at least fourteen different ways.

At the age of seven (1571) custom required a boy to enter school—a Free Grammar School existed in Stratford where a Horne-Book was chained to a desk; perhaps a few other books. With what success William attended this school, if he attended at all, is only pretended to be known by those who reason conversely—from effect to cause. He quit school (if there at all) in "1577-1578—owing to his father's financial difficulties." (*Annals*, etc., 12 Vol. Larger Temple Ed.)

No friend claims for him (I believe) a longer period of scholastic days, than seven years. Some friends assume that he was taught, at Stratford, Latin and Greek, which (if he were there taught at all) is possibly true, to the exclusion of English, as was then the custom.

He was never a student in any other school, college, or university, and he was never employed by or with or lived or associated in his house, home, or otherwise socially, with people of education, unless, possibly, by chance, with frequenters of London theaters, alehouses, or inns.

He was, when about fourteen years of age, "apprenticed a a butcher," to his father most likely. There are some speculative traditions that William cracked jokes and rhymed over slaughtered calves and sheep, while pursuing, assiduously, his ancestral trade. Certain it seems that his precocity was made manifest when at eighteen years (Nov. 28, 1582) he "married in haste" Ann Hatha-

way, a (grass) widow (Whately) twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old, he giving bond "*against impediments.*"

The children of this marriage were Susanna (born May 26, 1583) who married Dr. John Hall, and Hamnet and Judith, twins (born Feb. 2, 1585). Judith married (Feb. 10, 1616) shortly before her father's death, Thomas Quayney. His only son, Hamnet, died Aug. 11, 1596.

Companies of strolling actors occasionally visited Stratford. Though such actors were in Shaksper's time and long after regarded as vagabonds, outlaws by law, whom judges on the Circuit charged juries to indict, it is reasonable to assume the youthful Shaksper saw, and admired them, and aspired to live their life, and enjoy the applause attending their rude, if not vulgar, public performances. About the year 1586, he was rather severely prosecuted and condemned for poaching—deer-stealing from the park of Sir Thomas Lucy (a friend of Francis Bacon) at Charlecote, about four miles from Stratford. Shaksper is credited by one Rowe (1709) with having lampooned Sir Lucy; and another (Oldys) about the same time, pretended to remember some of the lines, running in part thus:

"A parliament member, a justice of peace,  
At home a poor scare crow, at London an asse:  
If lousy is Lucy, as some folk miscall it,  
Then Lucy is lousy, whatever befall it."

Others have forged still more doggerel for this lampooning.

It is said, fresh prosecutions were to follow when Shaksper, then twenty-three years old, went to London, leaving his wife and children at Stratford in much poverty. His family, nor any member of it, are not known to have been in London, though he sojourned there about twenty-five years; he rarely visited Stratford in that period. He drifted to the play-house—theatres. "His first expedient was to wait at the door—hold the horses of those who had no servants"—"in a short time every man as he alighted called for Will Shaksper." "Shaksper, finding more horses put into his hand than he could hold, hired boys to wait under his inspection," who became known as "Shaksper's boys."

He then had other occupation as a "serviture" in and about a theatre, and was soon admitted into a company of players, "at first, in a very mean rank (says Rowe), but his admirable wit, and the natural turn of it to the stage soon distinguished him."

His vocabulary must have then been Warwickshire *patois*, spoken exclusively by his family and familiars—hardly intelligible

to Londoners—a dialect peculiar to farmers and the common people with whom he had lived.

The members of Queen Elizabeth's Parliament from different parts could not always comprehend each other. So soldiers summoned could not then understand words of command unless given by officers of their own shire.

Macauley (*His. Eng.*, I., 298) describing an English country gentlemen of William III.'s time, says:

“His language and pronunciation were such as we should now expect to have only from the most ignorant clowns. His oaths, coarse jests and scurrilous terms of abuse were uttered with the broadest accent of his province.”

This being true then of the English country gentlemen, what must have been the language of the untutored common people of the same period, or of Shaksper's time, one hundred years earlier?

Little is known of Shaksper's employment between 1587 and 1592. As the London theaters were closed in 1586 on account of the plague, it seems certain his first connection with them was somewhat later. He was then poor and doubtless struggling for subsistence—not to acquire an education. On his advent in London there were two theaters—“The Theater” in Shoreditch of Richard Burbage, and “The Curtain” in Moorsfield—both outside of the city civic jurisdiction; neither stage-plays or players being popular with those in authority or the general public, though Lords Leicester and Derby are credited with patronising a company of players (Leicester's Co.) in which Shaksper soon became a member, in some capacity, and, later, as a player in London, and, in summer travelling through the country visiting small towns, when the law was not enforced against them.

The interdicted theatre in London of Shaksper's time, and much later, was a wretched structure. Only the stage part was under cover; the front being an open pit; curtains or stage-scenery were almost unknown, and there was little provision for actors to retire from view. The pit was unseated, and wholly exposed to the weather. A little later a sort of gallery at the top of the pickets or walls enclosing the pit was constructed, alike unprotected. The plays, chiefly for want of means of lighting were conducted in the afternoons, ending when darkness came.

The usual charge for the pit was “two pence”; and a degraded, mixed mass of ignorant people, even for the time, occupied it, who were, during the performances, guilty of dissipations, disorders, sometimes assaulting the players, and by jeers and cries

expressed their displeasure, or by wild shouts their delight. Indecent acts were common in the pit. In the galleries (such as they were) a pretended higher class assembled, including, however, questionable female characters, and their admirers, though they were more orderly. The gentlemen of quality—a few ladies—had seats or stools on the rough stage or in its wings.

Such were the character and order of people for whom the immortal Shakespearean plays are *supposed* to have been written and before whom first performed.

Shaksper appears early to have been provident, and soon came to be a part owner of the Globe and other theaters. He, later, made fortunate real estate investments in London and at and about Stratford, and by a penurious economy, in time, became a man of fortune, with an annual income of £5000.

He did not cease to go about the country as a travelling player in summer, and he was an actor in his own theaters, and, perhaps on a few special occasions, appeared before Queen Elizabeth and royalty, in "*buskin and socks.*"

Players in Shaksper's time when "wandering about without license" were liable to be taken up, punished by whipping, fine, imprisonment, and "burned through the gristle of the ear." (Act of 1572, 14 Eliz., *Enc. Brit.*, 9th Ed.) When protected they were called the "Queen's licensed vagabonds." In 1572 noblemen were authorised to license actors to "*stroll and play,*" but this was changed (1604) by statute (James I.) which provided that they "*shall authorise none to go abroad.*" That Shaksper was the companion of a class who were under the ban of the law and public opinion itself, argues that his associates were not persons who would tend to educate him morally, or mentally, for great authorship. Perhaps men of a higher class acted at times on the stage in London theaters, but they were doubtless few in number.

There were many writers of plays and songs in London in Shaksper's time. Greene, Kyd, Burbage, Peele, Nash, Marlowe, Beaumont, Ben Jonson, Lodge, Chapman, Fletcher, Sir Philip Sidney and Webster are among the most prominent. None of them, though university educated men, wrote much that lived. Shaksper is not known to have been an intimate of, or closely associated with, any of these.

Their authorship and attainments are quite easily shown in contemporary history, and by writings left by each. His association socially seems to have been with persons who frequented inns and ale-houses to eat, drink, and make merry.



One story (by Mannington) only is related in some detail connecting him with an amour (March 13th, 1601) in which he impersonated another player. Its importance consists in turning light on his life and character after he is supposed to have written some of the greater plays. His much-exploited "*bouts of wit*" in "*Ale Houses*" seem, also, to have been, throughout his life, "*bouts of wit.*"

Shaksper lived in a period of eminent men. Raleigh, Sidney, Spencer, the Bacons (Francis and Thomas), Cecil, Walsingham, Coke, Camden, Hooker, Drake, Hobbes, Herbert, Laud, Pym, Hampden, and others were his contemporaries; their history and work are not in doubt; there is no evidence tending to show that he was personally known to one of them, or to any of lesser note among statesmen, scholars, or artists. Nor did they discover *him*.

Emerson says, "not a single fact bearing on his literary character has come down to us," though he had examined with care the entire correspondence covering Shaksper's time, in which almost every person of note of his day are mentioned, and adds :

"Since the constellation of great men who appeared in Greece in the time of Pericles, there never was any such society, yet their genius failed them to find out the *best head in the universe.*"

The testimony seems to show, notwithstanding Shaksper's convivial habits, that he was extremely penurious, and accepted small (£5) gifts from friends. Notwithstanding Shaksper enjoyed, in time, a large fortune, even for royalty in Queen Elizabeth's reign; he was litigious; the records show he mercilessly pursued his poor debtors in the courts even for sums less than a pound. He was involved in a long drawn out chancery case (Shaksper vs. Lambert) in which the family name is (as usual) variously spelled. It involved the forfeiture of an interest in lands once owned by his mother (Mary Arden). This case, commenced in 1597, showed some life until 1599, when an order to take testimony was made by the Chancellor, and thereafter, as to it, there was "*no equity stirring.*" Some who believe William was learned in the law, cite this case as giving him practical knowledge of the chancery side, and as having led him to put in Falstaff's mouth the expression "*There's no equity stirring,*" and to make Hamlet indulge in the grave-yard soliloquy, wherein he, over a *skull*, displays great contempt for a lawyer, and much knowledge of intricate law terms, little used save by those versed in law-Latin (a mixture of bad French and Latin) thus :

"There's another : Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer ? Where be his quiddities now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures and his tricks ? Why does he suffer this rude knave to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery ? Hum ! This fellow might be in's time a great buyer of land, with his statues, his recognisances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries : is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt ? Will his vouchers vouch no more of purchases, and double one too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures ? "

But did the peasant boy of Stratford pen the strains of wit, wisdom, and philosophy pervading all of "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark?"

Quoting a little more of the grave-yard scene :

"*Hamlet*.—How absolute the Knave is ! we must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, this three years I have taken note of it ; the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe. How long hast thou been a grave-maker ?

"*1st Clo.*—Of all the days 'i the year. I came to 't that day our King Hamlet o'ercame Frontinbras.

"*Ham*.—How long is that since ?

"*1st Clo*.—Cannot you tell that ? every fool can tell that : it was that very day young Hamlet was born ; he that is mad, and sent to England.

"*Ham*.—Ah, marry, why was he sent to England ?

"*1st Clo*.—Why, because a' was mad : a' shall recover his wits there ; or, if a' do not, tis no great matter there.

"*Ham*.—Why ?

"*1st Clo*.—Twill not be seen in him there ; there the men are as mad as he.

"*Ham*.—How came he mad ?

"*1st Clo*.—Very strangely, they say.

"*Ham*.—How strangely ?

"*1st Clo*.—Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

"*Ham*.—Upon what ground ?

"*1st Clo*.—Why here in Denmark : I have been sexton here, man and boy thirty years.

"*Ham*.—How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot ?

"*1st Clo*.—I' faith, if he be not rotten before he die— . . . a' will last you some eight year or nine year : a tanner will last you nine year.

"*Ham*.—Why he more than another ?

"*1st Clo*.—Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade that a' will keep out water a great while ; . . . Here's a skull now : this skull has lain in the earth three and twenty years.

"*Ham*.—Whose was it ? . . .

"*1st Clo*.—. . . This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the King's jester.

"*Ham*.—Let me see. (Taking up the skull.) Alas, poor Yorick ! I knew him, Horatio : a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy : he hath borne me on his back a thousand times ; and now how abhorred in my imagination it is ! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your jibes now ? your gambols ? your songs ? your flashes of merriment that

were wont to set the table on roar? No one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chop-fallen? . . . Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

"*Hor.*—What's that my lord?

"*Ham.*—Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth.

"*Hor.*—E'en so.

"*Ham.*—And smelt so? Pah!

"*Hor.*—E'en so my lord.

"*Ham.*—To what base uses we may return, Horatio? Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole? . . . As thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returned to dust; the dust is earth, of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

"Imperious Ceasar, dead and turned to clay,  
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away;  
O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,  
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw."

But how, when, and where did Shaksper study; and what were his opportunities?

How, when, and where did he acquire knowledge of Spanish, French, Latin, or Greek so perfectly as to read and translate from the original of each, is wholly unknown, putting aside the remote possibility of his having had a little training in Latin in Stratford "*free-school*" before receiving any scholastic knowledge of the English language, and before he was apprenticed a "butcher boy."

How, when, and where did he acquire knowledge of philosophy, medicine, and medical jurisprudence, of physiology, pathology, and anatomy, of mental and moral science, and of technical and professional terms pertaining to each, so wonderfully woven into the "Shakespeare plays," is even more difficult to ascertain than the erudition displayed in them relating to law and languages. The analysis and the theories as to soundness or unsoundness of the human mind, found in the writings, were in advance of the professional learning of Shaksper's age, and are still fundamentally quoted in text-books, and medical jurisprudence.

How, when, and where did Shaksper attain profundity in literature, history, and biography, practically comprehending all then extant. From such knowledge the writer coined, with proper derivatives, more words (5,000 it is said, Ed. 197) for the English tongue than any, perhaps all, other men of learning of any age. Tested by three centuries of progressive learning the author's use of words, and forms of speech, (if not his rhetoric) stand above just criticism. He may fairly be said to have pioneered present English literature.

How, when, and where did Shaksper become familiar with court customs and manners, and generally with all gentility incident to royalty, not alone in England but in the capitals of other countries to which he was never introduced, or even traveled, and about which, little, comparatively, had then been written, useful to a writer, and without which familiar knowledge the author could not have penned the lifelike characters, and portrayed their attributes.

“There were then no public libraries, no encyclopædias, no dictionaries, no magazines, no newspapers, no English literature.” Macaulay in his essay on Bacon says: “All the valuable books then extant in all the vernacular languages of Europe would hardly have filled a single shelf.”

Plutarch is said to have been the master at whose feet Shaksper sat and acquired history that he adapted to his purposes in writing. But Plutarch wrote gossipy, and often inaccurate lives of great men, and compared some of them, but otherwise his works would little aid an author requiring universal erudition, especially in the technical and poetic display of recondite learning, and human character. Some of the characters may have been built up from *Plutarch's Lives*; also some historical incidents (not always true to history) may have been gleaned from him, yet, if so, it proves nothing. But it is only a guess that Shaksper perused Plutarch; and another poet could also have read him.

That Shaksper ever owned a book, or consulted one, is only an inference. He left no book, not even a Bible, so far as known, at his death. He bequeathed one, though his will did not “despise small things.” (One lone book, *Montaigne's Essays* (1603) in the British Museum, has a “Shaksper signature” on the title page, shown to have been forged about 1778, which some sentimental admirers of Shaksper weep over.)

But it was in the universality of *common* knowledge that the author excelled. That genius here had a wide field for display all must agree, especially in being able to discern in detail the things which nature and her laws contain, and what is seen and found on every hand in physical or animal life, or in the universal beauties of nature so bountifully laid about mankind to be appropriated to their purposes and pleasures, but here, too, time and opportunity for observation were required to enable him to absorb and utilise the requisite information. *Genius*, without opportunity, will not familiarise a man with the woods, fields, and rocks, the nature and habits of plants, birds, and animals, any more than it, alone, will

enable a person to translate Latin and Greek. How, when, and where did the "apprenticed butcher boy" acquire all that is painted in poetic beauty on the pages of *Shakespeare's Works*, necessarily gathered from a familiarity with nature and the common affairs and things of life.

How, when, and where did he acquire a knowledge of military and naval affairs, and the proper technical use of terms pertaining to armies, fleets, and sea-navigation. The author critically describes maneuvers of large and small bodies of men, and of ships on stormy seas—in a *Tempest*.

All the wonderful things necessarily attained and brought into requisition by the author were not born of that thing called *genius*, so often found dangerous to the possessor, and so sparingly meted out to mankind, and so little relied on by those who achieve great things. But genius of the superhuman kind claimed for Shaksper has never yet been found in combination with a low, sordid, penurious, litigious disposition—one who, not only loved money, but assiduously devotes himself to making, and meanly saving it.

Opportunity to come in contact with men of distinction, and with courtiers of learning, may possibly have been open to Shaksper, but there is no direct evidence that it was availed of by him. The presumption is that it was not. A "strolling player," under the ban of the law would not easily find access to such men, especially in the then state of English society. He with his "*travelling company*" did have the protecting patronage of one or two royal personages through whom it had a sort of license to travel, but such personages did not render, and were themselves incapable of rendering, aid to Shaksper as a writer. Whatever of snobbish patronage was shown him as part owner of a theater was to gain conspicuous seats on the theater stage. If in contact with playwrights, it was to arrange their productions in his theaters; and if he were a writer of plays, other writers would only have been his jealous competitors for public applause. From none of his possible intimates can it be fairly concluded that he received instruction tending to qualify him as an author. Of another class (*habitués* of theaters) we shall yet speak.

He travelled to no foreign countries, he attended no night or other schools as far as known, if such existed in his time. His nights seem to have been spent in ale and porter houses. He had no correspondents, as did Bacon and all known writers of his period. It has never been claimed that he ever wrote a letter, or received more than one,—the Richard Quynney letter (Oct. 25th,

1598)—and that asking a loan of money, which, so far as known, he did not answer. He is not known to have ever written a letter not even to his wife or children though absent from them a quarter of a century.

Some of the most profound of the "Shakespeare Plays" were written soon after his advent into London. Aside from poems or sonnets and minor dramas claimed to have been written by Shaksper earlier than any we now name, we give here an accepted chronology.

Love's Labor's Lost, 1589; The Two Gentlemen of Verona, 1591; Comedy of Errors, 1592; Romeo and Juliet, 1592-1593; Richard II., 1593; Richard III., 1593; Titus and Andronicus, 1594; The Taming of the Shrew, 1594; Merchant of Venice, 1594; King John, 1594; Midsummer Night's Dream, 1593-1595; All's Well that Ends Well (before) 1595; Henry IV., 1597. (12 Temple Ed. *Shakespeare-Annals*.)

Other of the plays and poems seem to have a date earlier than 1589, others later than 1595, but learned critics fail to discover in the later ones deeper learning or insight into nature and affairs, though some pretend to find in the later plays and sonnets evidence of higher learning—literary improvement. Others have shown, with apparent success, that in "Love's Labor's Lost" (played first in 1589 according to Flea) and other of the earliest alleged Shakespeare dramas, tragedies, comedies, and poems, are to be found the highest and best conceptions of the immortal writer, particularly in linguistic attainments.

Turning back to Shaksper at Stratford—there we find him in 1587, aged twenty-three, just out of his apprenticeship, five years married, a wife and three children which he was too poor to maintain, save in squalor, just then convicted of crime, and being still further prosecuted for some offense, in disgust and doubtless in dismay, compelled to flee to London from family, home, and friends, scarcely one of whom could read or write. None of his blood had succeeded in anything above the ordinary.

He appeared in London speaking a Warwickshire dialect, almost, if not quite, unintelligible to the native Londoner. He accepted employment about low theaters—a horse-holder for gentlemen, and otherwise serving—possibly soon connected himself with a strolling band of players, then going up and down England, in some subordinate capacity. Within two years (1589) thus coming and equipped, and thus employed, "Love's Labor's Lost" is played on the stage in London. This is a "play of high life, with kings,

princes, lords, ladies, ambassadors, as almost the only characters; full of Latin and French, quotations from Virgil, Horace, and Ovid, bristling with classical allusions and with learned dissertations of philosophy and orthography." The author of this play must have "lived in the best company," for as the Shakespearean author says: "*Thou wilt not utter what thou dost not know.*" The comedies are genteel, the product of one who had lived in the best society, not of him who had lived in the lowest and most vulgar company—did not smell of the Rose Tavern. Quoting Dr. Lee: "Love's Labor's Lost," "suggests that its author had already enjoyed extended opportunities of surveying London life and manners. . . . embodies keen observation of contemporary life in many ranks of society, both in town and country, while the speeches of Biron clothe much sound philosophy in masterly rhetoric. . . . It (the plot) not known to have been borrowed, and stands quite alone in travesting known traits and incidents of current social and political life." Another (Hazlitt) says of the play: "The style savors more of the pedantic spirit of Shakespeare's time than of his own genius; more of controversial divinity than of the inspiration of the muse. It transports us quite as much to the manners of the court and the quirks of courts of law, as to the scenes of nature. . . . indicates the tone of polite conversation then prevailing among the fair, the witty and the learned. . . . The observations on the use and abuse of study, and on the power of beauty to quicken the understanding as well as the senses, are excellent." The scene of the play—"Love's Labor's Lost," is laid in Southern France with which, and its people, and their character and habits, the author was familiar—Shaksper was not.

"Comedy of Errors" was written as early as 1589 or 1590; so of the "Two Gentlemen of Verona," and "Romeo and Juliet" in 1591 or 1592, modern writers now say. All the plays are marvelously accurate in the description of the countries and cities wherein the scenes are laid, and of the courts and people there.

These must suffice as examples of all other of the great play writings. If Ann Hathaway's husband, so fresh from the butcher-shop, and Warwickshire society, thus early wrote these incomparable things, we may well assume he wrote all that is attributed to him.

Of the great author Goethe said :

"He is not a theatrical poet: he never thought of the stage: it was too narrow."

By the best evidence Shaksper had purchased and improved

*New Place*, in Stratford, and settled there as early as 1611-1612, thereafter rarely visiting London, and then only on business relating to property investments—not even as a player. His London life proper was between 1587 and 1612, possibly as much as twenty-five years. He appears to have continued, at Stratford to the end, his litigious character. In at least one instance he entertained a distinguished clergyman at New Place (Stratford, 1614), and demanded of the town reimbursement “for one quart of sack and one quart of claret wine given to the preacher, XXd.” He, though still young enough for work, is not known, after returning to Stratford, to have attempted anything of a literary character. He was never known to have owned or used paper, pen, or ink. He had no library, writing desk, or table, so far as the most diligent can discover. He left to his family or friends, so far as known, no books or manuscript, or print, certainly not of anything now attributed to him. His penurious habits alone would have led him to preserve and value manuscripts, books, or written folios. The most trifling things of and connected with him have been preserved—even the original “Dick” Quyne letter to him has been preserved, and reproduced in *facsimile*, as evidence that Shaksper could read. He never, so far as known, claimed authorship. If he had been the *great author*, he would have appreciated learning, and the value of his writings. His name was seldom mentioned in public records save in those relating to small lawsuits. He is not known to have sold or derived profit from the publication of any writing. His later, as well as earlier, habits of temperance were not the best. Whether or not he died from a fever contracted after a drunken debauch at a neighboring villa, while returning from which he and companions fell by the way by night in seeking their home, is immaterial here. It does tend, however, to show, if true, that the habit of his life was not that of a student.

(In the diary of Rev. John Ward, Vicar of Stratford-on-Avon—1662—this is found: “Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson had a merry meeting, and, it seems, drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a fever there contracted.”)

Francis Collins, solicitor at Warwick, drafted his will, of date of January 31st, 1616—spelling the name “Shackspeare,” the signature thereto being spelled “Shakspeare.” The will was not executed until March following. He died April 23, 1616.

There is inscribed on a flat stone over his remains in the chancel of Stratford Church, said to have been at his dictation :



"GOOD FRIEND FOR JESUS SAKE FORBEARE,  
TO DIG THE DUST ENCLOSED HEARE :  
BLEST BE YE MAN YT SPARES THES STONES,  
AND CURSED BE HE YT MOVES MY BONES."

It remains to speak of the signatures of Shaksper of Stratford. Though not entirely free from doubt, we assume there are five genuine signatures—the most any respectable authority now claims exist—one on each of the purchase and mortgage deeds (Blackfriar's House, London) 1613, one on each of three sheets of his will, perhaps written there for identification of them. These signatures, you, unaided, could not read—and the spelling is dissimilar, and has given rise to endless disputes. They are hardly near enough alike in spelling and chirography to be identified as from the same hand, though three were written at the same time presumably with one pen. They look like his father's, who did not know the letters of the alphabet. He, if a writer, should have long had a uniform signature and a rule of spelling his own name. These signatures are all of the alleged "Bard of Avon's" writing discoverable. Of them Dr. Samuel Johnson said: "I'd rather have a morning-glory vine than one of Shakespeare's autographs. It is far prettier, and quite as legible."

But his last will and testament testifies to some things we may not overlook. I have read it and re-read it with care. He disposes therein of a large estate to children and named persons, in detail, naming small amounts in pounds, shilling and pence, finger rings, plate and "*bole*," old clothes, "household stuff," etc., omitting in the first draft one natural object of his bounty, then had it interlined thus: "*I give unto my weife my second best bed with the furniture.*" So only did his wife come to be remembered with a necessary "*second best bed.*"

But there is no mention of a property right in manuscripts or of the existence of any—none were found in his possession at his death—or of any royalty, present or prospective, on publications from his writings (the equivalent of copyright then existed), nor is the subject of authorship or papers hinted at in his will. It was not hastily written or executed. He was, when it was written, in good health, and comparatively young. His cumulative habits and nature would have suggested to him a money value, if no other, for such manuscripts or rights, if they had existed. All his contemporaries who were writers left indubitable evidence of their authorship. Milton, eight years old when Shaksper died, left his title to *Paradise Lost*, and other writings, indisputable. So of all

his contemporary play-writers and poets, Burbage, Marlowe, Nash, Peele, Green, Fletcher, Webster, Kyd, Ben Jonson, and the earlier Spencer, Chaucer, and Beaumont. So of other great contemporary authors, Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh and others we have already named. Oliver Cromwell was almost exactly seventeen years of age when Shaksper died; he and the galaxy of soldiers, sailors, statesmen, Puritan and cavalier, can be identified with their work by their letters and contemporary history; not so William Shaksper, the one now generally reputed most learned and renowned of all men of all the ages.

Shaksper, if the author, would have, above other men, understood the imperishable character of his works, and taken pains to perpetuate his title thereto, for he was not without vanity, as shown by his efforts to get the right to a "*coat-of-arms*" for his father, that he, the son, might be called a "*gentleman*." This coat-of-arms was first applied for (1596) on the ground that John Shaksper's "parents and late ancestors had rendered valiant service to King Henry VII"; then in 1599 the application was amended, alleging John's grandfather had been the valiant one; neither claim was accepted as true. William, neither then or later, laid claim to authorship as entitling him to a "*coat-of-arms*" or the rank of "*gentleman*," or to fame, nor did his family.

If Shaksper was so universally learned, why did he not educate at least one daughter, enough to enable her to read the simplest of his poems? What was the matter with the Stratford "*Free School*"? Why could not Susanna Hamnet or Judith learn there to read and write? Judith married two months before her father's death, and made her mark at the marriage altar. He was rich and could have educated his children.

All contemporary biographical writings have been explored to discover something bearing on Shaksper's authorship, but in vain, save inferences and assumptions, with few exceptions.

Some of the plays were published in his lifetime, at first indicating one "William Shakespeare" was the author, then republished, omitting the name. Some thus published are not now claimed to have been written by Shaksper, but proved to have been written by others.

The name Shaksper seems to have been used as a pseudonym for writers earlier than William's day.

In 1593, "*Venus and Adonis*" was published, after being entered in the "*Stationer's Register*," in the name of Richard Field, the dedication to the Earl of Southampton being however signed

“William Shakespeare” (as now generally spelled), from which time such spelling first dates. Shaksper of Stratford, in no extant signature, thus spelled his name. Thus spelled there is a strong probability that the name was used as pseudonym of an obscure but genuine poet, most likely of the travelling, tramp-class, then not uncommon—or for a number of such poets.

The First Folio, of Shakespeare’s plays, edited by Heminge and Condell, fellow play-wrights of Shaksper, appeared in 1623, seven years after his death, and contained twenty-two hitherto unpublished and, at least, seventeen hitherto unknown plays. This Folio was dedicated to Earls Pembroke and Montgomery, and inscribed—“Printed by Isaac Jaggard and Ed. Blount.” None of the plays therein published were ever entered in the “Stationer’s Register” in the name of an author named *Shakespeare*, however spelled. Neither William Shaksper’s executor (Dr. Hall) nor any member of his family, had any connection with furnishing the manuscripts or their publication, and if his, they must have been, at his death, lying unclaimed around London or Stratford, neglected because wholly unappreciated by him while he lived. The editors in an accompanying “Address” say, all prior Shakespeare “publications were from stolen and surreptitious copies, and deformed by the frauds and stealth of injurious imposters”—from whom stolen? The Stratford Shaksper never complained of the larceny. They say of the author: “*His mind and hand went together; and what he thought, he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers.*” (Who was the scrivener?) Who was the custodian from 1611–1612 when Shaksper retired from London—from 1616, when he died, to 1623, of these (and other) carefully prepared “papers”? Did the great author forget them, after his painstaking vigils in their preparation, without “*a blot*”? (Forty-two plays are credited to the “Bard of Avon.”) There was a dedication purporting to have been written by Ben Jonson, a play-writer and poet, in Shaksphere’s time. The authorship of this dedication is questioned, with a like dedication prefixed to the 1640 Folio publication, the lines of which are attributed to one Leonard Digges, though he died five years before (1635). Both dedications refer, in high eulogy, to a “Shakespeare” as the author of the published plays. Digges says: “Poets are born, not made.”

And Ben Jonson in his dedication sings:

“I therefore will begin: Soul of the Age  
The applause, delight and wonder of our stage:

My Shakespeare rise, I will not lodge thee by  
 Chaucer, or Spencer, or bid Beaumont lie  
 A little further to make thee room.  
 Thou art a monument without a tomb,  
 Thou art alive still while thy books do live  
 And we have wits to read and praise to give."

With much in the same strain, but differing from the dead, dedicatory poet Digges, Jonson further says :

"Who casts to write a living life must sweat  
 (Such as thine are) and strike the second heat  
 Upon the muse's anvil ; turn the same  
 (And himself with it) that he thinks to frame,  
 Or for the laurel he may gain a scorn,  
*For a good poet's made, as well as born.*"

The forms of expressions used by Digges and Ben Jonson were much the same, and had been used to eulogise dead poets earlier than *they* wrote. If Ben Jonson wrote the dedication credited to him, it is plain he wrote for pay, to aid the publishers to sell the Folio ; and his testimony, if necessary, might be discredited by his later writings. But did he write of the Shaksper of Stratford? If yes, he misspelled his name for euphony, or knew him not. Jonson, though always impecunious, was a poet of some fame ; he later criticised the real author.

It must be, however, admitted that if Ben Jonson is to be understood as referring to the Stratford Shaksper, and he is to be believed, the case is made out that the latter was the most marvellous literary character that ever appeared.

Little else will be found written by men who might have known Shaksper, tending to show him more than a player—what he called himself, and his Stratford neighbors called him. Sam Pepys's Diary was written later in the seventeenth century—he knew not the author "Shakespeare." But he saw played in 1662-1663, etc., "Midsummer Night's Dream," "Romeo and Juliet," "Twelfth Night," and the "Taming of the Shrew," and called one "insipid and ridiculous"; another "worst that I ever heard in my life;" still another, "acted well . . . but a silly play," and the last "a silly play and an old one."

You will ask, if Shaksper did not write Shakespeare, who did? My answer is, I do not know. I do not know enough to agree with Donnelly's—*The Great Cryptogram*—Baconian theory of authorship ; nor am I satisfied with Dr. Owen's or Mrs. Gallup's "Bacon's Cipher Story," all of whom are ambitious American authors who

have discovered much to support the claim that Francis Bacon is the true author. They prove their claim satisfactorily, if it may be conclusively determined in Bacon's favor by pointing out corresponding words, phrases, sentences, and whole paragraphs which are substantially or literally the same as found in Bacon's works. But may not the *real author* have been somewhat of a plagiarist? Might not Bacon, who assumed to draw all learning to himself, have been something of a plagiarist? He never showed particular moral sensibility, not even in his public complaint of the injustice he was subjected to by falsely charging him with taking from a litigant £2000, when he had only received £500 for a favorable chancery decree, while Lord Chancellor. Bacon, like Shaksper, had he been the author, would have claimed the honor of it. The plays do not read like a cold reasoning philosopher had penned them. But he too (as is probable, whoever was the author) might have had help.

Bacon, Shaksper's contemporary (born January 22, 1561, died April 9, 1626), owing to his fall through official bribery (1621) needed much to save him from being remembered only as infamous. He too failed to claim the authorship, though he wrote much of himself, and, without modesty, summarised all his pursuits through life and all his accomplishments and for which he sought credit—this after Shaksper's death and the printing of the First Folio (1623)—and to gain clemency from the King. (*Works of Bacon*, Vol. II., 549.)

The press informs us that another American—a Mrs. Gallup, has been proclaiming, in London, a Baconian (Dr. Owens) cipher theory, and in consequence, through the *Times* and other newspapers, Shakespearean scholars fought over it there with a fury almost unknown to the past.

Collaboration work, common to literary productions in Shaksper's time, may furnish a fairly satisfactory answer as to the authorship. I am inclined to envy those who have *faith* and *cannot* doubt. I almost regret I investigated the subject far enough to become a doubter. No harm can now come from believing in the "Bard of Avon." I am sorry he could not truthfully have dictated his claim to authorship, and by inscription on his tomb.

Had he been able to *do* this, then with less anxiety for his mortal "DUST," and "BONES," the first line of the inscription: "GOOD FRIEND FOR JESUS SAKE FORBEAR," would still have been appropriate, and his title to *immortal* fame might have been complete.

It may be reasonable to suppose that Shaksper with his acumen for the business of the theaters in London and the travelling companies with which he was connected, may have employed the best educated, but impecunious play-writers and poets, said to have been numerous in his day, some of whom had travelled in other countries, unsuccessfully seeking fame and fortune. Many of such are said to have been educated younger sons of wealthy gentlemen, whose fortunes went, by English law, to their eldest sons, leaving their brothers only an education which was often obtained at college or university. That Shaksper "*Kept a poet*" has long been believed by many. Perhaps, too, some of the known play-writers and poets worked in collaboration with these just referred to; and it is not impossible that even the writings of a Bacon and a Raleigh, or others of the then learned of England, may have been drawn on for parts, where special and professionally technical or scientific knowledge was required; and this may account for portions of Bacon's writings, cypher included, appearing in some of the Shakespeare plays and poems. It may be true that some of the great men were employed to revise particular parts of plays, the plans for and skeletons of which had been outlined by another or others. Some of these men were doubtless often needy, and might well have written for money.

The friends of Shaksper generally agree, too, that many of the plays—even the names of particular characters in them—were based on previous ones.

It is also true that there has been some revision of the plays, even since first printed, but not so much as to alter their primary character.

It is not, however, proposed to here give an opinion as to the authorship of the greatest of literary contributions to the world. But I cannot accord it to him, who, though rich, did not educate his children, and who, though he sought fame through a "*coat of arms*" claimed to have been earned by the valor of his great-grandfather, nowhere, not even in his last will and testament, claimed the fame of authorship—*such authorship*—and whose sole posthumous anxiety centered on his "*dust*" and "*bones*" remaining undistributed in the chancel of Stratford church.

Since Delia Bacon (1856) (no relation of the philosopher, Bacon), a Boston school teacher, in *Putnam's Magazine*—and she precipitated the never ending dispute—announced her problem: "Why did Bacon and others write the plays under the name of William Shakespeare?" the controversy has raged, and it has wid-

ened and deepened—"it will not down." Most likely the question will never be settled.

Mr. Bangs, in his story of *The House Boat on the Styx*, is responsible for the report of the dispute spreading to "The Literary Club" of the "Associated Shades," and there being taken up by the immortal Shades of Shaksper and Bacon, especially as to the authorship of Hamlet, which, happily, ended by an amicable agreement to settle the matter, and forever, by the disinterested and impartial award of the Shade, Sir Walter Raleigh, who assumed to be arbitrator only as to the authorship of the one play—"Hamlet." He heard, at length the high claimants, each on his own behalf, then weighing all exhibits and testimony, on mature deliberation, delivered himself thus: "*I am not ashamed of it—I wrote 'Hamlet' myself.*"

[General J. Warren Keifer has broached an interesting subject and we intend to take the discussion of it up in the next number, which shall contain an article on the Shakespeare problem, presenting the facts of the case, including a reprint of Shakespeare's will, of documents and other illustrations, so as to enable our readers to form their own opinion.—*Ed.*]