

THE BACON-SHAKESPEARE THEORY.

In my article on Shakespeare, I spoke of the Baconian theory as "fantastical and being without the slightest support except so far as negative evidence is concerned." My expression provoked some adherents of the Baconian theory and I am sorry that I gave offense, but the statement expresses my sincere conviction, at which I arrived after a due consideration of the arguments. When I first became acquainted with this startling theory, I was struck with some very strange coincidences dug out by Mr. Donnelly, Mr. Bormann and others. But the more I weighed the evidences, the less did they impress me.

The most remarkable result of Mr. Donnelly, in my opinion, is attained in his ninth chapter, where he expresses his formula thus:

$$"516 - 167 = 340 - 22b \text{ and } h = 327."$$

He expressed it in words as follows: "Every word of all the sentences in the following chapter grows out of the number 327."

The sentences which result from this complicated method of figuring out words is as follows:

"Seas-ill*-said-that-more-low†-or-Shak'st-pur-never-writ-a-word-of-them—
It-is-plain-he-is-stuffing-our-ears-with-false-reports-and-lies-this-many-a-year—
He-is-a-poor-dull-ill-spirited-greedy-creature-and-but-a-veil-for-some-one-else-
who-had-blown-up-the-flame-of-rebellion-almost-in-to-war-against-your-Grace-as-a-royal-tyrant."

The results of Mr. Donnelly are truly startling at first sight, but anyone who is familiar with cabalistic devices will not easily be imposed upon. The strangest combinations and hidden meanings in words can be discovered, if, according to definite rules, letters or syllables are transposed and replaced, either because they possess the same number value, or are for some reason or other assumed to be equivalent. If we proceed according to prescribed rules and definite methods, such as are employed in the Cabala, to discover cyphers in ancient books, we may discover the most unexpected revelations, sense and nonsense, and we shall have to confess that the Donnelly scheme proves nothing more than cabalistic devices. If we only seek we can find innumerable mysteries revealed, or oracles proclaimed, in any book to which we would be pleased to devote sufficient attention in a similar search. It would not be impossible to discover a key in the Bible, in Homer, or in other ancient or modern books which might reveal to us their hidden meaning or the secret of their authorship. But what would the argument amount to if, for instance, we would evolve from one of the Psalms the statement that the Bible was written by Homer or that Hesiod's "Theogony" was the work of Isaiah?

There was a man who made polished cuttings from gneiss, granite, and other rock formation of volcanic origin, and he claimed to have proved that a rich vegetative life must have covered the earth while it was still in its fiery state. He produced the flowers which appeared on the surface of his sections as evidences that could not be contradicted, because they were facts: and facts, he claimed, cannot be argued away. Indeed, facts are actual. Every *lusus naturæ* is a fact, and so is our error arising from a wrong interpretation of facts.

*This is supposed to mean "Cecil." †This is supposed to mean "Marlowe."

