THE LEFT-HANDED BACON.

BY NATHAN HASKELL DOLE.

Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence, Bart. published in 1910 a little volume entitled *Bacon is Shakespeare* and sent a copy of it to every library in the world. He has now supplemented it with a brochure entitled *The Shakespeare Myth* in which he adduces additional arguments to lay the ghost which is continually rising when a Baconian kills and buries William of Stratford. He first calls attention to the portrait prefixed to the Folio of 1623 and claims to be the first to show conclusively that it is a dummy. "It is almost inconceivable," he says, "that people with eyes to see should have looked at this so-called portrait for 287 years without perceiving that it consists of a ridiculous, putty-faced mask, fixed upon a stuffed dummy clothed in a trick coat." By "trick coat" he means "an impossible coat composed of the back and front of the same left arm." He fortifies this argument by an extract from *The Gentleman's Tailor Magazine* which in March, 1911, called the attention of the trade to the fact that "the tunic, coat, or whatever the garment may have been called at the time, is so strangely illustrated that the right-hand side of the fore part is obviously the left-hand side of the back part; and so gives a harlequin appearance to the figure, which it is not unnatural to assume was intentional and done with express object and purpose."

Sir Edwin then analyzes the ten lines facing the title-page and usually ascribed to Ben Jonson; he argues that instead of extravagant praise of a figure which Gainsborough damned in 1768, declaring that he never beheld a stupider face, Rare Ben, in language perfectly comprehensible at the time, praised the engraver for having "done out the life," that is to say covered it up and masked it. He retranslates the lines to read in modern English:
TO THE READER.

The dummy that thou seest set here
Was put instead of Shake-a-speare;
Wherein the graver had a strife
To extinguish all of Nature's life.
O, could he but have drawn his mind
As well as he's concealed behind
His face, the print would then surpasse
All that was ever writ in brasse.
But since he can not, do not looke
On his masked picture, but his Booke.

Sir Edwin finds 287 letters in the poem as printed in the Folio and that coincides exactly with the prophetic number of years which have elapsed since the Folio was published up to the time of this great discovery. Now 287 is a Masonic and Rosicrucian number, as mysterious as the number of the Beast in the Revelation. Sir Edwin says; "This important fact which can neither be disputed nor explained away, viz., that the figure upon the title-page of the first Folio of the plays in 1623 put to represent Shakespeare is a double left-armed and stuffed dummy, surmounted by a ridiculous putty-faced mask, disposes once and for all of any idea that the mighty plays were written by the drunken, illiterate clown of Stratford-on-Avon, and shows us quite clearly that the name 'Shakespeare' was used as a left-hand pseudonym behind which the great author Francis Bacon wrote securely concealed."

Sir Edwin next flies over to Holland and discovers there various editions of Bacon's works adorned with engraved title-pages which symbolically proclaim that Bacon was the great playwright. In that belonging to the ninth volume of De Augmentis Scientiarum there is a portrait of Lord Bacon seated and poring over a book which hides another (evidently the plays) while he lays his left hand on a theatrical figure in rags (evidently Shakespeare) holding up a book with a symbolical cover signifying a mirror: hence "The Mirror up to Nature," in other words, "The Book of the Immortal Plays." This is dated 1645.

Another dated three years earlier and ornamenting Bacon's "History of King Henry VII" contains five figures: one is a winged woman, Fame, standing naked on a globe and holding over Bacon's head in her right hand (to teach us that Bacon was 'the wisest of mankind') a salt-cellar, typical of human wit, and a mystical scroll which "it is absolutely certain... is a bridle without a bit, which is here put for the purpose of instructing us that the
future age is not to curb and muzzle and destroy Bacon's reputation.” Fame with her left hand turns a wheel like that of a yacht the rim of which is decorated with the mystical mirror, the rod for the back of fools (such fools as still believe that the clown of Stratford was the author of the plays), the “bason that receives your guilty blood,” that is, the symbol of tragedy, and a fool's rattle or bauble. On the left side of the globe facing the philosopher Bacon who touches Fame with his right hand, is another figure of Bacon who holds the handle of a spear stopping the revolution of Fame's wheel, while an actor shaking the handle of the spear with his right hand, touches the globe with his left and wears a spur (Shaxpur) on his left boot.

Sir Edwin next demolishes the six so-called signatures of Shakespeare and proves to his own satisfaction—with the authority of Magdalene Thumm-Kintzel—that not one of them could have been written by anyone else than the law-clerks who prepared the documents. He then declares that the number 53 was selected by Bacon as the key to the mystery of his authorship and sure enough on various pages numbered 53, or which should have been 53 if they had been numbered at all—the lack of a number not being the printer's fault but a part of a deep-laid plot—one finds the letters H, O, G or P, I, G or S, O, W, or even the word “hang-hog” which of course is Bacon, or the phrase “Gammon of Bacon.” (Here the non-Rosicrucian is inclined to say Gammon!). In the third edition of Shakespeare's plays are found two pages folioed 53 and on each of these occurs the name St. Albans—which is significant, since Bacon was Viscount St. Albans.

Sir Edwin reproduces in modern script folio 1 of the Northumberland manuscript which he is confident was written by Bacon. On this occurs the name of Bacon written again and again, also the words “By Mr'fraunces William Shakespeare” over the names “Richard the Second” and “Richard the Third.” Then lower down “William Shakespeare” written at least half a dozen times not counting tentative efforts. We also find the word honorificabilitudine which instantly suggests Shakespeare's honorificabilitudinitatibus and the mysterious phrase “revealing day through every crany peepes.”

Sir Edwin, like all Baconians, writes most enthusiastically and with perfect assurance. He fully believes that Shakespeare, a man so illiterate that he could not write and probably not even read, was paid a thousand pounds to allow his name to be put on the title-page of the plays. He argues that it strains credulity to the breaking
point to believe that this ignoramus, who never earned more than
a few shillings a week, should have composed the works of Shake-
peare which contain fifteen thousand words, or almost four times
as many as are at the disposal of the average well-educated person,
almost twice as many as Milton used. Sir Edwin goes even further.
He thinks he has good proof that Bacon not only wrote the plays
but also the Introduction to the King James version of the English
Bible and besides that edited and unified it.

The "Promus of Formularies," now in the British Museum,
the Northumberland manuscripts, and much interesting evidence,
undoubtedly work together to constitute a tremendously strong case
in favor of Bacon's interest in the Shakespearean plays. Whether
it is philosophically possible that a mind so intensely analytic as
Bacon's works show him to have been could also have been so in-
tensely synthetic as was the author of the plays, is a difficult ques-
tion. It seems also impossible to believe that the known examples
of Bacon's verse which are prosaic and woodenly to the last degree
could have proceeded from the same fountain as the sonnets and
the immortal lines in the Midsummer Night's Dream.

Is it not, rather, more likely that Shakespeare, as a clever stage-
manager, may have enlisted for his theater a syndicate of play-
wrights and have also utilized the brains of Bacon, who was chron-
ically hard up, who was notoriously interested in the drama? Bacon
may have furnished the raw material, as it seems likely from the
Promus he did, and Marlowe who was a poet of high degree may
have put them into poetic shape, while Shakespeare himself, know-
ing the demands of the stage, may have had the genius to combine
all the materials into their present unity. We must remember that
there were ten years of Shakespeare's life which are an absolute
blank. What may he not have accomplished in the way of experience
and even education in that decade?

The thorough-going Shakespearean thinks that the advocate
of the Baconian theory is afflicted with literary measles or mumps
and is certain to recover from that comparatively harmless disease.
Nevertheless there is apparently a constantly increasing number of
people, too old to have the measles or the mumps, who find it diffi-
cult to conceive the possibility of Shakespeare's having been the
author of the plays. The opposite horn of the dilemma is almost as
inconceivable. The theory here broached for the first time in print
that the plays were syndicated and that Lord Bacon was the most
important member of the syndicate seems to reconcile the two con-
tentions and is at least worthy of being offered for discussion,