

SHAKESPEARE DOCUMENTS.

BY THE EDITOR.

ASSUREDLY not the least important discoveries of facts that are apt to throw light on the question of Shakespeare's identity, or perhaps will add to the prevailing confusion, have been made by Dr. Charles William Wallace of the University of Nebraska, who when searching in the Public Record Office of London found several documents in which the name Shakespeare occurs.¹ There is first a decree in a chancery suit of *Bendesh vs. Bacon* in which Shakespeare is involved as a defendant. Further, in the suit "*Osteler vs. Heminges*" Shakespeare's name is mentioned in the testimony with reference to the value of his holdings in the stock of the Black Friars and Globe theaters from which we may approximately calculate the income he derived from his theatrical interests. Thirdly, however, there is an account of the Taylor-Heminges litigation in which the same holdings of Shakespeare are concerned. But the fourth discovery is the most perplexing to the current conception of Shakespeare traditions, for it proves that in 1612 and thereabouts Shakespeare was an apparently permanent lodger with a Huguenot wig-maker, Christopher Mountjoye. Here Shakespeare figures as a witness in a suit between Mountjoye's son-in-law Belott, also a wig-maker or, as one said in those days, a tire-maker. His testimony proves that years before 1612, Mountjoye's lodger Shakespeare made a successful go-between for the match on the side of the bride's father. At that time our tire-maker promised his prospective son-in-law a dower of 50 pounds, but he never paid them. Nevertheless so long as the mother-in-law was living the relations of the family seemed to have continued friendly. But according to the parish register Madame Mountjoye died in Oc-

¹ In this condensation of the facts we follow *New Shakesperiana*, IX, Nos. 1-3, May--September, 1910. The documents are reprinted in the same periodical, pages 34-40.

tober, 1608. Belott and his wife left the paternal household and stayed at an inn belonging to George Wilkins, who has been identified by Dr. Williams as the dramatist with whom Shakespeare is believed to have collaborated. The house in which the Mountjoyes and their son-in-law lived is standing at the corner of Silver and Mugwell (now Monkwell) streets which is situated (as one authority states) "within three or four minutes" walk of the residence of Hemings and Condell, editors of the folio of 1623, and within a short distance of the houses of Ben Jonson and Thomas Dekker. In the document itself the witness is spoken of as "William Shakespeare of Stratford *super* Avon in the County of Warwick, gentleman, of the age of forty-eight or thereabouts."

His profession is not mentioned. He is simply styled "gentleman," which at any rate does not exclude his being a playwright and would make his birth year 1566, two years later than that of William Shakespeare of New Place. However the addition "thereabouts" renders the identity of the two not impossible. The signature of the document is abbreviated to "Willm. Shaks.," but within the document itself the name is always plainly spelled out "Shakespeare" in the form used by the poet himself who sometimes even inserted a hyphen in the middle of the word so as to insure the pronunciation of the long *a* in place of the common traditional and etymologically correct form "Shaksper," for we must remember that the name means *Jacques' Pierre*, that is, Jack's son Peter. Hence even the spelling "Shaxper" prevailed until the poet chose to follow his own romantic etymology, a knight shaking his spear, and so relegated the former interpretation to oblivion.

Nothing is known of how the Belott-Mountjoye suit ended except that the court appointed as a referee the pastor of the French Huguenot church of which the litigants were members.

There is a similarity between the signature "Willm. Shaks." and those of the will, but there is also a similarity between Shakespeare's signature and the handwriting of the clerk. These similarities are not sufficient to prove that they are all of the same hand, for they bear traces of the style of writing of their age. Especially the capital S is the common form of writing of those days, and it would be venturesome to derive any conclusion from this similarity. But the main fact is that there was a certain William Shakespeare living as a lodger at the corner of Silver and Mugwell streets in the vicinity of well-known friends of the poet Shakespeare, while according to tradition the playwright had his home in New Place. It is not impossible that this London lodging may have been a tem-

porary city residence because if the traditional view be correct, business must have called him frequently to London.

* * *

Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence has published a little pamphlet entitled *The Shakespeare Myth*, of which one chapter is on "The Shakespeare Signatures" and contains statements of general interest. Whatever the truth may be with regard to the playwright Shakespeare's personality, we have certain documents, such as the will and papers of real estate transactions, which have played an important part in solving the Shakespeare riddle. We take pleasure in publishing what Sir Edwin has to say on this subject, quoting literally from his pamphlet, pp. 16-18.

"The next (so-called) signatures in order of date are upon the purchase deed now in the London Guildhall Library, and upon the mortgage deed of the same property, which is in the British Museum. The purchase deed is dated March 11, 1613, but at that period, as at the present time, when part of the purchase money is left on mortgage, the mortgage deed was always dated one day after the purchase deed, and always signed one moment before it, because the owner cannot part with his property before he receives both the cash and the mortgage deed. About twenty-five years ago, I succeeded in persuading the city authorities to carry the purchase deed to the British Museum, where by appointment we met the officials, who took the mortgage deed out of the show-case and placed it side by side with the purchase deed from Guildhall. After a long and careful examination of the two deeds, some dozen or twenty officials standing around, every one agreed that neither of the names of William Shakespeare upon the deeds could be supposed to be signatures. Recently one of the higher officials of the British Museum wrote to me about the matter, and in reply I wrote to him and also to the new librarian of Guildhall that it would be impossible to discover a scoundrel who would venture to swear that it was even remotely possible that these two supposed signatures of William Shakespeare could have been written at the same time, in the same place, with the same pen, and the same ink, by the same hand. They are widely different, one having been written by the law clerk of the seller, the other by the law clerk of the purchaser. One of the so-called signatures is evidently written by an old man, the other is written by a young man. The deeds are not stated to be signed but only to be sealed.

"Next we come to the three supposed signatures upon the will, dated March 25, 1616. Twenty or twenty-five years ago, on several

occasions I examined with powerful glasses Shakespeare's will at Somerset House, where for my convenience it was placed in a strong light, and I arrived at the only possible conclusion, viz., that the supposed signatures were all written by the law clerk who wrote the body of the will, and who wrote also the names of the witnesses, all of which, excepting his own which is written in a neat modern looking hand, are in the same handwriting as the will itself.

"The fact that Shakespeare's name is written by the law clerk has been conclusively proved by Magdalene Thumm-Kintzel in the Leipsic magazine, *Der Menschenkenner*, of January, 1909, in which photo reproductions of certain letters in the body of the will and in the so-called signatures are placed side by side, and the evidence is conclusive that they are written by the same hand. Moreover, the will was originally drawn to be sealed, because the solicitor must have known that the illiterate householder of Stratford was unable to write his name. Subsequently, however, the word 'seale' appears to have been struck out and the word 'hand' written over it. People unacquainted with the rules of law are generally not aware that any one can, by request, 'sign' any person's name to any legal document, and that if such person touch it and acknowledge it, any one can sign as witness to his signature. Moreover the will is not stated to be signed, but only stated to be 'published.'

"In putting the name of William Shakespeare three times to the will the law clerk seems to have taken considerable care to show that they were not real signatures. They are all written in law script, and the three 'W's' of 'William' are made in the three totally different forms in which 'W's' were written in the law script of that period. Excepting the 'W' the whole of the first so-called signature is almost illegible, but the other two are quite clear, and show that the clerk has purposefully formed each and every letter in the two names 'Shakespeare' in a different manner one from the other. It is, therefore, impossible for any one to suppose that the three names upon the will are 'signatures.'

"I should perhaps add that all the six so-called signatures were written by law clerks who were excellent penmen, and that the notion that the so-called signatures are badly written has only arisen from the fact that the general public, and even many educated persons, are totally ignorant of the appearance of the law script of the period. The first of the so-called signatures, viz., that at the Record Office, London, is written with extreme ease and rapidity."

Another document of great interest which Sir Edwin makes

use of in the interest of the Baconian cause is the scribbling on the cover of the Northumberland manuscript.

Nevill

Mr. Francis Bacon
of Tribute or giving what is due

Nevill

By Christ religio fons refusing
of them
By your religion your selves
refusing as in Christ
most refusings of any &
favour most refusings of any &
ne vile velis all
ne vile velis Anthony Complot
and consorts
refreshing y heart
By Mr. Francis Thomas
Thomas
By Mr. Francis Bacon of Gr
Thomas
By Mr. Francis Bacon of Gr
Thomas
Gris Inn in the
Philip against monieur
revealed
Earle of Arundells letter to the Queen
from your service
Speaches for my Lord of Essex at the tyll
Speech for my Lord of Sussex til
more than externally
Loycesters Common Wealth
Inver to aulore
By
Adam
Orations at Graues Inne revells
By Ducenes Plate many
By Mr. Francis Bacon Bacon
Earle of A. By Mr.
By Mr.
Essays by the same author printed
By Mr. Francis William Shakespeare
Richard the second Shakespeare
Richard the third Shakespeare
Bacon end of the Asmund and Cornelius Thomas
Somund and Cornelia He of Pops format Thom Thom
revealing every crany by Thomas Nashe superior pliers
peices and see of William Shakespeare your Thomas
Shak sh Shak Shakespeare
Shak Shak Shak
Shak Shak
William Shakespeare
"William Shakespeare" Wm Wm
Will Shakye
William Shakespeare
Shakespeare

The Duke of Northumberland possesses a collection of manuscripts discovered at Northumberland House in London in the year 1867, the cover of which shows much scribbling without any ap-

parent connection or sense. In a book entitled *A Conference of Pleasure* (1870) Mr. James Spedding publishes a full size facsimile of this cover, and Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence reproduces a transcription of it in a more legible modern script in his *Shakespeare Myth* (Gay and Hancock Ltd., 1912). We here reproduce the same because this page of scribbling promises possibly to become of some significance in the Shakespeare problem.

Having no clue as to the origin and meaning of the scribbling nor knowing anything about the writer we cannot say whether the many repetitions of the names of both Bacon and Shakespeare is accidental, and we are at the same time puzzled to find the word "honorificabilitudine" which recalls at once that grotesque word "honorificabilitudinitatibus" mentioned in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act V, Scene 1, in ridicule as an example of a ponderous word formation. Strange though this scribbling may appear it does not prove anything beyond the fact that the writer was a man who took an interest in both Shakespeare and Bacon.