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The Present Status of the Bacon-Shakespeare Controversy  
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by

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## Foreword

This study is an attempt to set forth the contentions in the Bacon-Shakespeare Controversy and to determine the present status of the theory. The principal object has been to state accurately the condition of the so-called controversy in America today. In order that the reader may secure a comprehensive view of the entire subject, however, it seemed necessary to devote much space to the first two sections, which attempt to explain the method and summarize the history of this pseudo-literary discussion.

## The Present Status of the Bacon-Shakespeare Controversy.

During the past eighty years, the question of the authorship of the works attributed to William Shakespeare, of Stratford-on-Avon, has been the basis of an interesting literary controversy. Initiated in 1848, by a merely questionable reference, this controversy has expanded to such proportions that the books and articles extant upon the subject, at the present time, would form a small library.

The Bacon-Shakespeare struggle is in some respects similar to the classic controversy, over the authorship of the Iliad and the Odyssey. In the present dispute, however, a few specific facts are known. A collection of thirty-seven plays, two long poems and a hundred fifty-four sonnets, the greatest literary works ever produced, are attributed to an unknown and probably untutored actor. The problem lies in the attempt to reconcile the facts in the life of this actor, with the character of the author reflected from the works.

The purpose of this paper is threefold: first, to give a brief account of the history of the controversy; second, to summarize the arguments on both sides of the question; third, to indicate the present status of the controversy in literary circles.

The idea that Shakespeare did not write the works attributed to him, did not occur to the mind of man until about the middle of the nineteenth century. For two and a quarter centuries both Shakespeare and Bacon had slept peacefully in their graves before the slightest whisper of questionable

authorship was heard. Not even the ghost of a tradition or the vaguest gossip concerning this subject survives from Elizabethan times. That there had been, however, some question concerning the authorship of Shakespeare's works, even in the minds of orthodox Shakespearean scholars, is evidenced by the attitude of Charles Knight in his biographical study included in The Pictorial Shakespeare (London 1842). Throughout the work he assumes a "defensive position in behalf of the Bard."<sup>1</sup> A first attempt at a biography of Shakespeare, in fact, was not seriously undertaken before 1709, when Nicholas Rowe published a life of the poet. The scarcity of facts made this work very inadequate as a biography, but these facts have not been materially increased since that time. Scholars during the past century have made systematic efforts to fill in the gaps in our knowledge of Shakespeare's personal history, but their results have yielded little substantial increase in information. Their success has been chiefly in throwing new light upon society, customs, and conditions in England during Queen Elizabeth's reign.<sup>2</sup>

The first recorded doubts upon the subject are found in a work by Mr. Joseph C. Hart, (United States Consul at Santa Cruz. D. 1855), entitled Romance of Yachting, published in 1848.

1. Bjorkman, E:- "Shakespeare?" Bookman Vol. 51:678
2. Boas--Shakespeare and His Predecessors P. 92

The following year there appeared the article, 'Who wrote Shakespeare', in Chambers' Journal, August 7, 1852. The movement proper, is usually considered to begin with an article contributed by Miss Delia Bacon to Putman's Monthly Magazine, January 1856. In 1857 Miss Bacon published The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded, with a neutral preface by Nathaniel Hawthorne. (London and Boston 1857).

William Henry Smith, an Englishman, launched the theory definitely in 1856 by suggesting the Bacon hypothesis in a letter, addressed to Lord Ellesmer, upon the subject, 'Was Lord Bacon the Author of the Shakespeare Plays?' The substance of this letter was expanded and reprinted in book form in 1857, under the title, Bacon and Shakespeare.

There appeared in 1866 the work, The Authorship of the Plays Attributed to Shakespeare (N. Y. 1866.), by Judge Nathaniel Holmes, who was probably the most learned exponent of the theory in America in his day. During this same year, Dr. W. H. Furness, the eminent American scholar, wrote to Nathaniel Holmes in a letter dated October 29. "I am one of the many who have never been able to bring the life of William Shakespeare and the plays of Shakespeare within planetary space of each other. Are there any two things in the world more incongruous? Had the plays come down to us anonymously, had the labor of discovering the author been imposed upon after generations, I think that we could

have found no one of that day but F. Bacon to whom to assign the crown. In this case it would have been resting now on his head by almost common consent." <sup>1.</sup>

A new fashion was introduced among the Baconians by the publication of Mrs. Henry Potts' edition of Bacon's Promus of Formulances and Elegances. (London 1883.) The Promus, first published in 1594, is a collection of fifteen hundred sixty phrases, poetical expressions and proverbs from various languages, evidently set down by Bacon for future reference in literary composition. These extracts are found scattered throughout the Shakespeare Plays and Bacon's philosophical works, especially after 1594. Mrs. Pott succeeded in pointing out over two thousand so-called parallelisms between the acknowledged works of Bacon and the Shakespeare Plays.

The controversy, from this time forward, gained rapidly in popularity in America. Ignatius Donnelly, an energetic popularist leader of the middle west, now became the champion of the Bacon cause. The 'wildest manifestation' of this new interest is his work, in two ponderous volumes, entitled, The Great Cryptogram : Francis Bacon's Cipher in the so-called Shakespeare Plays. (Chicago 1888.) In this work, for the first time, the astounding claim is advanced that letters, on the first pages of the 1623 Folio edition, picked out in

accordance with certain (flexible) rules, would reveal a message from Francis Bacon to posterity. This work, though itself soon rejected by the supporters of Bacon, became the progenator of a most prolific offspring.

Dr. Orville W. Owens advanced a second and more imaginative cipher theory in Sir Francis Bacon's Cipher Story Discovered and Deciphered (Detroit 1893-95.) Owens' cipher is a word system which by mysterious and elastic rules culled out phrases from twenty or thirty plays and joined them together in a strange mosaic. He most obligingly discredited his theory, for us, by failing to find Bacon's documents at the bottom of the Wye, where his cipher declared that they were hidden and where he had excavated at great expense. <sup>1.</sup>

Mrs. Elizabeth Wells Gallup's book, Bi-Literal Cipher of Francis Bacon, (1900, Detroit and London.), continued the fashion introduced by Donnelly. "The advocates of this cipher contend that two fronts of type were used by the printers of the first Folio, that one front, no matter what letter of the alphabet, represents a dot, and the other front, a dash in a type of morse code. The dots and dashes corresponding to the kinds of type are divided into groups of five, each group standing for some letter of the alphabet, according to the arrangements of dots and dashes, thus the hidden message can be read off like a telegram." <sup>2.</sup>

1. "Bacon Against Shakespeare" F. E. Pierce      Yale Review  
6:170--84      16
2. Pierce, F. E.: "Bacon Against Shakespeare"      Yale Review  
6:170--84

No one outside of the initiated, unfortunately, can distinguish a dot from a dash front letter.

Evidence based largely upon this Bi-Literal cipher was responsible for a most notorious court decision in 1916. Judge Richard S. Tuthill of the Chicago Circuit Court, made a decision, ruling that from the evidence, the facts and the circumstances contained in the vast bibliography of the controversy and the proofs submitted, the court is convinced that Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon was unable to write,<sup>1.</sup> and that Francis Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare. Lord Penzance, a famous lawyer of the early twentieth century, whose support of the Bacon theory may be found in his Judicial Summing-up (published 1902) expressly states that "the attempts to establish a cipher have totally failed; there was not indeed a semblance of a cipher."<sup>2.</sup>

In 1909 another cipher attempt appeared in Some Acrostic Signatures of Francis Bacon (Boston 1909), by W. T. Booth. This so-called string cipher attempted to read Francis Bacon's name on the initial words of the pages of the first Folio. This cipher, if used with equally flexible rules, is said to work just as well on any freshman composition book.

A saner and more reasonable approach to the problem is given by Mr. G. Greenwood in The Shakespeare Problem Re-stated (1908). In 1901, never-the-less, another cryptogram

1. "The Baconian Shakespearians" editorial  
Jour. of Education, Vol. 83:511--12 May '16
2. Encyclopedia Britannica  
11th edition, Vol. 24 P: 786

theory was advanced. Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence in Bacon is Shakespeare attempted a new approach, selecting the long word Heronificabilitudininitibus, found in Love's Labour Lost Act V, Scene I, line 151, as a key word. He proceeds to discover a mathematical reason for the author's placement of the word ~~were~~ in its exact location. The word seems to be thrown, unnecessarily, into the play, adding nothing whatever to the scene. He demonstrates that these letters transposed according to certain rules will produce the following perfect (?) Latin hexameter--

Hi Ludi F. Baconis Nati Tuiti Orbi-- "These 'plays' (dramas) as opposed to circus productions) F. Bacon's offspring, preserved for the world."<sup>1.</sup>

With this 'key word' and a mathematical formula he proceeds to juggle curiously with the lines on the page of the 1623 Folio containing this word. He finds that he may be able to work out a long message.<sup>2.</sup> He further goes to the trouble to confirm his theory by counting the letters in Ben Jonson's verses "To the Reader" describing the Droeshout portrait in the first Folio. Finding them to be 287, (taking each "w" as two "v's") he concludes by adding 287 to 1623, (the date of the first Folio) that Bacon intended to reveal himself as the author in the year 1910.

1. Bacon is Shakespeare P. 89-107
2. Encyclopedia Britannica Vol. 24--P. 786

Such ingenuous manipulation and painstaking labor are characteristic of the Baconian methods of attack. Some ciphers have been produced which give as many as nineteen different ways of reading one passage. The very number of the cipher messages developed disproves their validity. Lawrence's work is of some value, never-the-less, in demonstrating the impossibility of proving the authenticity of any Shakespeare portrait or any scrap of handwriting.

James Phinney Baxter published in 1915, The Greatest of Literary Problems. This work is a most careful summary of the history, discoveries, and inventions of the Bacon supporters up to that date. Since a few books of importance have been published. One of the more recent works on the subject is W. S. Booth's book, Subtle Shining Secrets Writ in the Margents of Books. (1925) This work adds substantially nothing to the controversy. Of all of the works written upon the subject since 1915, only ten were in print January 1, 1928<sup>1</sup>.

A Bacon Society was founded in London in 1885, to develop and promulgate the Bacon theory of authorship. This society publishes a magazine called (since May 1893) Baconian. A quarterly periodical by the same name was established in Chicago in 1892. The Bacon Society and its publications exist today, but their cause seems to be on the decline. Since 1916 the Baconians have been fighting a losing battle. The attitude of those interested in the question of authorship

1. United States Catalogue.

of the plays today, seems to be a position of doubt toward both Shakespeare and Bacon. This tendency will be discussed at greater length under the third division of this paper.

A rapid survey at this point of the arguments advanced by the Baconians and the answers to these by Shakespearean Scholars is necessary in order that one may understand the dispute in the light of present knowledge. The scarcity of actual facts concerning the Stratford actor and the negative attitude which he took toward the works attributed to him probably first suggested the idea that the author of the plays wished to shroud his identity in mystery. That the author of the plays possessed an almost unlimited knowledge of human nature, law, classics, history and ~~sc~~ sc duce, is evident to careful students of these works. It is also a matter of common knowledge that it is by no means certain that Shakespeare of Stratford attended even a grammar school. Scholars agree, moreover, that William Shakespeare's father and mother were most illiterate, and that Shakespeare's own daughter could not write her name.

No scrap of the poet's handwriting, which can be proved to be authentic, survives. Most careful evidence, for this fact is presented by Baxter, in The Greatest of Literary Problems<sup>1</sup>. If this evidence be accepted there is grave doubt that the Stratford Shakespeare could even write. To assume that the author of these masterpieces was handicapped by

1. Pages 269--295.

such a trivial physical hinderance as the inability to write, is absurd; to attempt to prove that the signatures on the Will could be the handwriting of the author of the plays is preposterous.

Nothing definite is known of the years succeeding Shakespeare's schooldays (?). There was a love affair, an apprenticeship, a marriage and a sudden departure. (or did he leave Stratford?). No one knows when he went to London.

Assuming that he did reach London, passed through a stage apprenticeship and began writing plays, why did he take a purely passive attitude in respect to the publication of works under his name? The same negative silence is most rigidly observed when either his own or the plays of another were published in his name. There is, also, the greatest uncertainty concerning the extent of his sojourn in London. During the most active period of composition and publication, (1600-1605), the Stratford records show that Shakespeare carried on a large number of business transactions there. There seems to be a strong probability that he was living in Stratford at this time.

Of Shakespeare's doings in London, nothing is known. There is, even, a strange mystery overhanging the surroundings of his place of residence. Except for Greene's attack and Chettle's apology, Shakespeare is ignored for years by his contemporaries. Only after 1598, when the first play appeared with W. Shakespeare's name attached, does the public

hear his name. During this year he is mentioned as a dramatist by Francis Meres, but as an actor or a personality, he is unknown. Orthodox Shakespearean Scholars reject the only anecdote told about him. This in itself is sufficient to confirm the belief that as a person he was unknown. The only correspondence extant which refers to him deals wholly with money matters. Edmund Spenser ignores him entirely. Although the company to which he is believed to have been attached made continued tours in the provinces, the name Shakespeare is not mentioned in the records. There is no contemporary reference to his appearance in a "Shakespeare" play. Rumor assigns to him only minor parts as an actor, such as the Ghost in Hamlet, and Adam in As You Like It. His name, while associated in the capacity of an actor with two of Ben Jonson's plays, is not mentioned in the records which contain the names of the other actors. He is supposed to have been attached to the Lord Chamberlain's Company, but his name does not appear in (a) the records of the proceedings respecting the Essex Rebellion and the Company; (b) the Company's attendance upon the Spanish Ambassador in 1604; (c) references to the burning of the Globe Theatre, and the Company's participation in the installation of the Prince of Wales.

Nothing definite is known concerning the date of the composition of any of the plays, if a few internal references

to contemporary events be disregarded. It is true that Francis Meres, in 1598, mentioned ten plays which he attributed to W. Shakespeare, but Meres in the same passage, speaks of Ben Jonson as "one of our best in tragedy", while we are unaware of any tragedies completed by Jonson up to this time.<sup>1.</sup>

The theory that Francis Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare may have been suggested first by a statement found in a letter written to Francis Bacon (as Viscount St. Albans) from Sir Tobie Matthewe, January 1621. "The most prodigious wit that ever I knew of my nation and of this side of the sea is of your Lordship's name, though he be known by another." The sentence is suggestive, but it evidently has reference to some other Englishman whose name was Bacon,----probably to Father Thomas Southwall, a Jesuite priest, whose real surname was Bacon.<sup>2.</sup>

Both Durning-Lawrence and Baxter have demonstrated fairly conclusively that authentic Shakespeare portraits are myths and that the present monument bust over Shakespeare's tomb is entirely different from that formerly placed over the grave. The Droeshout portrait, the only picture of Shakespeare accepted by critics, was included in the Folio edition of 1623. Droeshout, the painter, was a well

1. Bjorkman, H: Shakespeare? :: Bookman, Vol. 51:677-82
2. C. J. Birch, Letters of Bacon. (1763) P. 392  
Neilson and Thorndyke, Facts about Shakespeare. (1913) P.166
3. Bacon is Shakespeare : Pages 1-36
4. The Greatest of Literary Problems P. 224-64

known engraver of the period succeeding Shakespeare's death, but in 1616, he was only a boy of sixteen. By a careful method of comparison on mathematical principles it has been shown that this so-called portrait is not an actual picture, but a mask; the face being a copy of Francis Bacon's portrait by Passe. The body is composed of a left shoulder and arm front view, with a left shoulder and arm rear view serving in the place of a right shoulder and arm. A careful study of the picture will reveal these facts to anyone.

Francis Bacon, in his own day, was acknowledged to be a poet,--indeed, the greatest of poets--in a work published anonymously in the 1590s. This work entitled The Great Assises Holden in Parnassus by Apollo and his Assensours is ascribed, at the present time, to George Withers. Bacon, as Lord Verulam, in this work is placed first and designated "Chancellor of Parnassus," the poet of poets.

Shakespeare's Sonnets have for years been a puzzle to both Shakespearean and Baconian scholars. Mystery is most certainly evident here. Are these sonnets to be taken as autobiographical, or were they written with some purpose in view? Orthodox scholars usually consider the sonnets as autobiographical, but fail to explain their significance. Those afflicted with the Bacon mania, however, feel that in the Sonnets Shakespeare chose to reveal his identity. Notice especially sonnets 78 to 83. The Shakespeare supporters say that the poet had some rival bard in mind when he penned these lines. The Baconians insist, in their turn, that

the author took occasion in these five sonnets to reveal that he was writing under a pseudonym. They say: 'Would one poet write against a rival in this manner'--

"Your name from hence immortal life shall have  
Though I (once gone) to all the world must dye"

or

"The Earth can yield me but a common grave  
While you intombed in men's eyes shall lye"  
and then declare against his rival--

"Your monument shall be my gentle verse."

Presuming that from this indication of mystery they have evidence for seeking the author of the plays and sonnets in some hidden or obscure place the Baconians set about to establish ciphers, cryptograms and the like. "Truth," they say "was ever distasteful to despotism, hence men of that day who realized the mental barrenness which prevailed in the world and desired to enrich it, were obliged to veil their eyes from those in power. This is the reason why Rosicrucianism flourished"<sup>1.</sup> Bacon it would seem, from their point of view, was very much aware of the existing state of 'mental barrenness' for he 'veils his eyes' behind symbols, ciphers, watermarks, cryptograms, anagrams, etc. It is, indeed, strange that if the statements made above referring to 'truth and despotism' were true, that Bacon could successfully produce under his own name, his great philosophical

works. This is, in brief, a summary of the logic of the Baconians.

A critical survey of the contentions above advanced by the supporters of the Bacon theory, reveals that they may be grouped roughly into five arguments or lines of attack. First, there is not external evidence or contemporary reference connecting Shakespeare of Stratford with the picture of the author as read from the plays. There is no reliable contemporary mention of Shakespeare, the actor, and Shakespeare, the author as the same man, therefore, it is logical to conclude that Shakespeare is a non de plume.

The following are facts which favor Shakespeare as the author. Ben Jonson, the most learned of the Elizabethan playwrights, was an intimate friend of both authors. He comments upon both in a brief notebook, published shortly after his death under the title, Timber or Discoveries Made Upon Men and Matter. Shakespeare is mentioned once, Bacon four times. Jonson, also, wrote two poems to Shakespeare and one to Bacon. In his prose references to Shakespeare, Jonson is most critical, especially in those matters in which he himself excelled. In the seven passages referring to Bacon, on the other hand, there is not a touch of criticism. Jonson says of Shakespeare, "I loved the man and do honor his memory on this side of idolatry, as much as any." He admired Shakespeare partially, Bacon wholly unqualifiedly. Ben Jonson

L. Johnson, A. H.-Falstaff and Other Shakespearean Topics.  
p. 83

in speaking of the author of the plays in poems "To the Reader" prefixed to the first Folio edition of 1623, refers to him as the "sweet swan of Avon." This may be considered as a reliable contemporary reference.

The theorists, in the second place, attempt to establish so-called parallelisms in thought and phraseology between the work of Bacon and the plays of Shakespeare. The method of establishing these parallelisms is notoriously naïve, indeed, a violation of all of the rules of scholarship. Choosing carefully those phrases and thoughts which fit their purpose, they judiciously discard the remaining material just as a small boy does when explaining the reasons why he was worsted in a fight. Where parallelisms do occur they refer to either commonplace thoughts or to phrases and proverbs familiar to all classes at that period.

The Baconians contend, in the third place, that no man of Shakespeare's limited opportunities, no matter how prodigious a genius, could have written works so replete with profound knowledge, especially of law. No actor whose life was as busy as Shakespeare's is pictured to have been, could have had the opportunity to acquire such an enormous vocabulary or such a depth of classical learning. In order to establish such an argument the Baconians must prove three things: (1) Legal and classic references are often used with professional accuracy; (2) should such usage be found, that it proves a profound knowledge of law and of the classics; (3) that

Shakespeare had no opportunity to acquire such knowledge. Genius alone can account for the enormous vocabulary. The Baconians have thus far, been unable to prove any one of these three arguments.

They fail to realize, moreover, that the works of either Bacon or Shakespeare alone are more than any but a most superior genius could produce. Combine the works of the two men, then consider how absurd it is to ascribe the bulk of the best Elizabethan literature and thought to one man. The Baconians can not understand how a youth with the limited advantages of Shakespeare, of Stratford, could produce such masterpieces of literature as Hamlet or Lear, yet they readily accept the idea that a single brain produced the combined works of Shakespeare and Bacon. Truly, "they strain at a gnat and swallow a camel."

The Baconians have often objected that Shakespeare was illiterate. Aubrey, a well known antiquarian of the later seventeenth century, says this of Shakespeare: "Though as Ben Jonson says, of him, that he knew little Latin and less Greek, he understood Latin pretty well, for he had been in his younger years a school master in the country." In the margin Aubrey indicates that his information came "from Mr. <sup>Beeston</sup> ~~Beeston~~." The William Beeston whom Aubrey knew was the son of Christopher Beeston, who was a member of Shakespeare's

company and knew him well. Professor Adams in his Life of Shakespeare<sup>1.</sup> accepts this statement of Aubrey as reliable.

As a fourth contention the Baconians profess to prove that Bacon was recognized as a great poet in his own day, and that the sonnets suggest that Shakespeare is a pseudonym. Such a problem as this "interests the minds of pen- literary people who are disturbed by profound shadows in their own minds."<sup>2.</sup> Dr. ten Brink is credited with saying that any sane, normal man who would read one page of Bacon's philosophical works, then, turn to one of the Shakespeare's Comedies, could see that it would be impossible for the author of one to produce the other if his life depended upon the task. The styles of the two writers are utterly different. Consider for a moment, could the man who drew such beautiful characters as Portia, Juliet and Desdemona, be at the same time a man who viewed women indifferently, marriage cynically and love coldly? When a Poe produces a 'Paradise Lost!, or Huckleberry Finn is ascribed to a Bunyan, then, and then only, can intelligent literary students believe that Bacon wrote Shakespeare's plays.

The fifth argument advanced by the advocates of Lord Bacon is based upon their so-called ciphers and cryptograms. Although authoritative bibliographers assent that no true ciphers exist, it is not necessary to take their word. The

1. Tolman-Falstaff and Other Shakespearean Topics.

P. 83

2. White, R. G.- Studies in Shakespeare P--

very number of the cipher stories proves that they are not valid. As already mentioned above, some ciphers have been manipulated to read the same passage as many as nineteen different ways. Even if a cipher could be demonstrated, it would not be sufficient to break down the evidence for Shakespeare's authorship found in plain English in the first Folio edition.

There are two other objections to cipher methods. They often assert that the impossible is the truth, for example, a certain cipher has revealed (so its exponents attest) this message a number of times,--- F. Bacon wrote Marlowe, Greene, Kyd, Shakespeare, Lily/plays, Spenser and Burton. This would be, indeed, hard to believe possible, even for our great author Francis Bacon. In the second place, these thrilling cipher messages invariably work out in the most atrocious grammar, grammar which would disgrace the most illiterate school boy, yet a few Bacon followers assert that Shakespeare was too uncultured to have been the author of Othello or Macbeth because of the 'horrid doggerel' ---

"Good friend for Jesus sake forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed here  
Blest be the man who spares these stones  
And curst be he who moves my bones."

placed upon his tombstone. Why should such a master of Ciphers, as Bacon must have been, transmit his message to posterity in such miserable English?

Upon these arguments the Bacon advocates rest their case at the present time. The Tercentury anniversary of Shakespeare's death, 1916, was a year of activity and conflict for the Baconians. During that year they won their case in the Chicago courts, as mentioned above. For a moment it seemed that they might have an opportunity for a fighting existence, but this faint gleam of hope has been steadily growing dimmer as the years have passed. Only ten of the books written upon the controversy between the years 1916-1928 were in print January 1, 1928. The few which have been written have not received a favorable hearing. The criticism directed against Mr. W. S. Booth's new work, Subtle Shining Secretaries Writ in the Margents of Books., (1925) By Mr. E. L. Pearson, <sup>1.</sup> in his review of it, is representative of the attitude of literary men toward the controversy today. The following sketch is a resume of the article.

The object of Mr. Booth's new book is to prove that "Shakespeare" is a pen name used by the real author of the plays, Francis Bacon. "There seems to be something spider-like and appalling in the patience with which students bitten with the Baconian mania set themselves to their task." Their industry is, indeed, a silent tribute to their master, the solemn judge, whom they contend was not only a great philosopher and the son of an English queen, but also a very great humorist, the world's greatest dramatist and its most

1. Outlook--Vol. 140: 301-2:: Je. 24-25

practical literary trickster. He so cleverly covered his footsteps, in fact, that it was fully two hundred years before any one was wise enough to penetrate his ruse.

Booth bases his arguments for the secrecy observed by Bacon in writing the 'plays' on the contention that they were written as a mere pastime, a diversion which so great a man as he, could not afford to acknowledge without disgrace, or at least, embarrassment. Once accept this and you will believe anything. Bacon, to stimulate his enjoyment and to leave something for posterity to work upon, worked into the plays a system of crossword puzzles, signs, symbols and the like by which future readers who took the trouble might discover his favorite "indoor sport."

"If Mr. Booth sees the word 'Pigmies', his eagle gaze lights upon the first syllable, 'pig', and he assures you immediately that you cannot go far wrong if you smell--Bacon" Indeed, the method appears simple, take red ink, glance<sup>at</sup> the manuscript of a Shakespeare play and every time you can find a B, an a, a q, an o and an n, mark these. For example, Mr. Booth takes the title page of "King Richard III as it hath been publikely acted by, etc., and discovers that cond, of second, a of as and the b of by, are the first letters to begin the lines on that page. Very well, taking the b of by, the a of as, and the con of cond (omitting the d because it is not necessary) and you have "Bacon" Q. E. D."

Mr. Pearson continues his satire in this manner. Mr. Booth, strange to say, over looked some startling clues. He failed to notice that Shakespeare wrote many plays about a King named Henry. "What is the first syllable of Henry?--hen; and what do hens do? Lay eggs;--then what is the natural accompaniment of eggs---but---Bacon?" Not a few of the writers suffering from the 'Baconian disease' deserve like criticism.

A new tendency appeared in the controversy about 1918. Not satisfied with the results gained from pursuing the Bacon fantasy, a few bold Spirits began to explore for other possible candidates for the authorship of the Shakespeare plays. Some attribute the plays to a club of distinguished men, others to Sir Anthony Shirley or to the Earl of Rutland. Still others are content to assign the plays to an unknown author, preferring to view the authorship as an impossible mystery. In this connection, Mr. J. T. Looney's book, "Shakespeare" Identified (N. Y. 1920) deserves mention.

Mr. Looney attempts to identify Edward De Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, the brilliant and eccentric courtier of Elizabeth's court, with the author of the plays. Though the work contains much material similar in substance to the work of the Baconians, Mr. Looney has discovered a strange group of coincidents which explain curiously several literary puzzles, surviving from Elizabethan times. These puzzles seem to form a unified and intellegible whole if De Vere is taken as the author of the plays. Looney, however, had proved

nothings; he has advanced an interesting theory.

The most recent issue of the American Baconians<sup>1.</sup>  
(published by the Bacon Society of America) contains some  
interesting material which sheds light upon the method of  
attack directed against Shakespeare in the past year or two.

Dr. Appleton Morgan's article, "The 'Shakespearean Myth'  
50 Years After"<sup>2.</sup> is a special feature in this issue.

Dr. Morgan's work, Shakespearean Myth, which appeared in  
1877, was the first general discussion of the Baconian  
Theory,---Judge Nathaniel Holmes' work, Authorship of  
Shakespeare (1866) its only predecessor, having been only  
a presentation of the Baconian arguments from the Bacon  
point of view.

In this article published fifty years after his first  
work, Dr. Morgan retains his hopeful attitude, expressing  
it in this manner: "The time will come when those who accept  
the biographies of Shakespeare will perceive that these  
biographies do not depict any literary character, or any  
character familiar with libraries or the use of them, or with  
any book or a pen in his hand, or in consultation with any  
literary authority, and that the facts collected by such  
writings as I propose effectively dispose of the orthodox  
Shakespearean theory. If this course is pursued, it will  
eventually convince the world that whether Bacon or anybody  
else wrote the plays, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE OF STRATFORD DID NOT,

1. Vol. II No. 2:: 1927:: Pages, 129-53  
2. " 297-302

and that was what I started out to prove in my Shakespearean Myth of 50 years ago.<sup>1.</sup>

In this same article Dr. Morgan makes much of the attitude taken by orthodox Shakespeare scholars concerning the recent discoveries made by Professor J. W. Wallace. The facts revealed by Professor Wallace concerning Shakespeare's residence in London during the years 1601-1611 fail to harmonize well with the accepted orthodox views, consequently these facts, which are just as authentic as any of the facts accepted by the Shakespeare supporters, are not treated at great length by most biographers. He asserts, in fact, that this evidence is usually relegated to a foot-note. Dr. J. Q. Adams, in his Life of Shakespeare accepts the situation and offers a plausible explanation.

Dr. W. H. Prescott, one of the Vice-presidents of the Bacon Society of America, at the present time, in a personal letter dated March 25, 1929, to the present writer, made this statement concerning the Shakespeare-Bacon Controversy. "I should say there was at the present time a dearth of articles and books on the subject: of course there are societies which are all the time unearthing something of interest, but no list of such writings are known to us: we have been working on the subject for over thirty years, but have not published anything of late: then, the subject with us is not whether

1. American Baconiana: Vol. II: No. 2, Feb. 1928-2. 153  
Dictated statement made by Dr. Appleton Morgan at New York, N. Y., Dec. 25, 1927, to Geo. M. Batty, Jr., Secretary of the Bacon Society of America.

Bacon was the author of the Shakespeare Plays, but we are trying to find out what he did write." This final sentence indicates that the Baconians, themselves, are shifting their point of attack.

The most recent available article upon the subject is "Who Wrote Shakespeare's Plays?" by O. J. Todd.<sup>1</sup> In this article Mr. Todd uses the Baconian methods to prove that Shakespeare wrote his own plays. He selects the long word, often chosen by the Baconians as a key word, honorificabilitudinitatibus, Love's Labours Lost, Act V, i, 151., and submits the following, in brief.

Baconians have offered the following versions of the word in perfect(?) Latin hexameter.

(1) Hi ludi F. Baconis noti tuiti orbi. "These 'plays' F. Bacon's offspring, preserved for the world." The faults of this rendering are, the third declension name Baco, which Mr. Greenwood (L. C.) certifies as non Baconian; the mediaeval ludé (for fabulae), the highly metaphorical noti; the rare passive tuiti and the atrocious rhythm of the hexameter.

(2) "Huic Libro ii dant finis. A! tilubo." They are putting ends (I regret to say that the plural is inevitable) to this book. Ha! I stagger." This statement is supposed to prove that a censorship was established in 1597 ( or was it 1591 or 94), and that the board of censors was seriously hampering the author, if not checking his out-put entirely.

1. Mod. Language Notes. Vol. XLIII, Feb. '28--106

(3) "Hi sunt Iacobi filii; tu ibid R nota." These (ubri, presumable or shall we say ludi?) belong to James' son; you just observe the R (abbrev. for Rex) there." Here is argument for royal authorship, but who?-probably the literary James IV who covered his authorship everywhere. It is known that he published anonymously The True Law of Free Monarchie in 1598.

After inspecting these versions, Mr. Todd worked out a version which demonstrates that Shakespeare inserted this long word to prove that he was the author of the plays. This is his rendering:

Hastilia uibra; fini ibant dooti. "I Shake Speares; scholars will get to the root of the matter." "There you have it capped by a pun in Shakespeare's own manner." Manipulation plus a great aptitude for patience may prove anything.

In the light of present day developments it seems logical to conclude that as a literary struggle the controversy has been futile from the start. The combined opposition of the literary world has not been due to the results of the conclusions reached, but to the false methods and the low standards of scholarship which the Baconians have adopted. As Richard G. White has aptly pointed out, "the truth of the controversy affects in no manner the value of the plays, nor changes in any way their significance to the people of the ages."<sup>1.</sup>

The following statements from eminent American scholars made to the present writer demonstrate conclusively the status of this pseudo-literary discussion.

"There is no basis for serious discussion"

G. L. Kittredge

"Baconianism is dead. Don't try to revive it artificially."

Paul Kaufman

"In regard the Bacon contentions as nonsense."

A. H. Thornäike

"I should be unwilling to dignify by the name of controversy the preposterous notion that Bacon was the author of Shakespeare's plays."

Robert K. Root

"No Elizabethan scholar even half familiar with the well documented history of our early drama has ever held, or could possibly hold, that Francis Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare. The evidence, indeed, is so abundant and so conclusive that one finds no peg to hang the smallest doubt upon. Those persons unable or unwilling to master a detailed knowledge of Elizabethan theatrical history, need only compare the voluminous writings of Shakespeare and of Bacon; for the two intellects there revealed stand as far apart as the poles. In my opinion the so-called 'Bacon Theory' is a result of ignorance, or of mental aberration."

Joseph Quincy Adams

The statement made by Sidney Lee in his Life of Shakespeare, (1909) referring to the significance of the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy remains as true today as it was when he penned it. "The abundance of contemporary evidence attesting Shakespeare's responsibility for the works published under his name gives the Baconian theory no rational right to a hearing; while such authentic examples of Bacon's efforts to write verse as survive, prove beyond all possibility of contradiction that great as he was, as a prose writer and a philosopher, he was incapable of penning any of the poetry assigned to Shakespeare. Defective knowledge and illogical or casuistical argument alone render any other conclusion possible.<sup>1.</sup>

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