

BACON VS. SHAKESPEARE.

Owing to the lively interest which, at the present time, is manifested in the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy, a brief and concise contribution advocating the Baconian authorship may not be inopportune.

The doubts as to Shakespeare's authorship have arisen from the difficulty of reconciling the facts of his life with the literature which has been attributed to him. "In every case," says Mrs. Potts, "the conviction that Francis Bacon was the real poet has grown out of a knowledge of the prose works, legal, scientific, and literary, and the plays and poems which include every peculiarity of Baconian language, science, philosophy, and belief." If there be strong reason to doubt that Shakespeare wrote plays which he himself never claimed, and which none of his relations ever claimed for him, surely there is no reason why we should not seek the real author. This latter, indeed, through the evidence as to life, circumstances, and studies, is, on the other hand, clearly shown to be none other than Francis Bacon himself.

Baconians, in adducing their proofs, generally make use of both internal and external evidence.

With respect to external evidence:—

That Bacon was strongly addicted to the theatre is seen from the active part he took in theatrical performances at Gray's Inn, and elsewhere; also, from the fact that we have three pieces known to have been written by him, viz., "The Conference of Pleasure," "The Gesta Gregorum," and "The Masque of the Indian Prince." The plays attributed to Shakespeare were courtly pieces, intended not for the playhouses, but for private representation before Elizabeth, and were performed at the houses of Bacon's personal friends, such as the Earls of Leicester and Essex, and particularly at Wilton, the seat of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, Bacon's life-long friend. Many of the plays were first produced in the Middle Temple and Gray's Inn, where Bacon enjoyed the reputation of being the chief wit of the day.

In attempting to arrange the plays chronologically, it has, of course, been the aim of Shakespeareans to assume that they were all written before 1616 (the date of Shakespeare's death), yet nine of these plays were never heard of before the publication of the first folio, 1623.

Again, it seems to be little known that seven plays, published before 1598, did not have the author's name on the title page. Besides these, six editions of *Venus and Adonis*, and four of *Lucrece*, were also anonymously published. Is it not then strange that a man like Shakespeare, at that time in the most abject poverty, should act in this way, when he would necessarily be desirous of making a name and fame for himself, and thus become more opulent?

In addition to these external evidences already set forth, might be included one whose significance has been by no means fully appreciated. But a single author, within the compass of a few pages, has endeavoured to give it lucid exposition. I refer to the autograph of William Shakespeare. No handwriting of Shakespeare has ever been discovered except five autographs, of which three occur in his will. Every-

one of these strongly suggests that the writer was extremely illiterate and unaccustomed to the use of his pen. The mere fact that 56 ways of spelling his name have been discovered, furnishes abundant testimony of the truth of this statement. It may be said, however, that illegible signatures are characteristic of many eminent men. While this may be true, yet none are so destitute of character, so labored and indecisive, as that of Shakespeare. On the contrary, his autograph betrays puerility in the formation of every letter.

Now, had Shakespeare written these plays, they would only have presented a bewildering mass of confusion, and we would be unable to distinguish one word from another. Yet, we have an excellent and universally accepted copy, containing but few disputed words. As an illustration of his defect, might be cited the conclusions at which two different critics arrived in their endeavour to decipher a phrase (beneath the signature of his will), which was found capable of being read to mean either "By me," or "25th March." The meagre means which Shakespeare possessed exclude the supposition that he ever employed the services of an amanuensis. Thus, the conclusion must of necessity follow, from external evidence, that Shakespeare could not have written those plays attributed to him. C.

(To be continued.)

GLEANINGS.

It often happens that men come to regard their own wills as subsidiary providences for the moral government of the community. A year or two ago a graduating class, with something of this tendency, embodied their opinion in a memorial to the Faculty on the vexed question of supervision in examination. The Faculty at the time resented the implication that it was unfit to discharge its own special function, but now it acknowledges that some additional precaution is necessary.

There are two ways of securing the utmost fairness in examinations. So long as any system of espionage is followed, be it ever so manly, it is only a question of keenness of vision on one side, and evasive skill on the other, and no examiners can be omnipresent. If, instead of arraying against them native ingenuity, and running counter to that first law of preservation, which even the most delinquent student possesses in common with other "locomotor organisms," the examiners were to approach the question, having on their side the honor that is born of confidence, they would be reaching a difficult end in an easy and natural manner. As it is, the open lines, the labyrinth of promenades, the watch-towers, impress the student that there is somewhere a low conception of moral virtue and of the dignity connected with reasonable beings.

Every man should know some one thing so well that if an Emperor were to stand between him and