

really settled by Farmer's famous essay of 1767, before the Baconian problem ever arose. According to the Anti-Shakespeareans Shakespeare was an ignorant yokel. Some of them even deny that he could write his name! It is obviously impossible, they say, that this man could have possessed the scholarship and knowledge, especially of Greece and Rome, which the plays manifest. How could he create the witty court ladies and gentlemen of the comedies, or know that in Venice there was a place called the Rialto, or a common ferry called the Traneet? How did he obtain an intimate knowledge of the castle of Elsinore? The Anti-Shakespeareans dwell on the general ignorance pervading the town of Stratford; on the fact that Shakespeare's father, wife, and daughter made their marks in place of signing; on the absence of any proof that the boy was ever at Stratford grammar school.

Now the extreme Baconians obviously go too far. If Shakespeare was a mere ignorant yokel, it would have been impossible for him not only to have written the plays, but even to have passed himself off on his contemporaries as their author. But a further question arises. Is the knowledge shown in the plays so great, is the scholarship so accurate, that we must go to someone like Bacon for the authorship? By no means. Exact scholarship is just what we do not find. Shakespeare pronounces *Postumus* with the long *u*, and *Andronicus* with the short *i*, mistakes which Bacon certainly would never have made. Nor would Bacon have made *Menenius* refer to *Galen*, and *Ulysses* quote from *Plato*; nor would he have placed *Aristotle* before the Trojan war. Shakespeare, like *Gallio*, cared for none of these things. In "*The Winter's Tale*" he calls *Delphi*, *Delphos*; makes the place an island; and places there the oracle of *Apollo*. He is obviously confusing the island *Delos* with *Delphi*, which was no island, but which was famous for its oracle of

Apollo. Contemporary with this oracle at *Delphos*, according to Shakespeare, was the artist *Giulio Romano* who flourished in the 16th century, A.D.! Scott played some queer pranks with history in "*Ivanhoe*" and "*Kenilworth*", but nothing to this!

Shakespeare's knowledge and scholarship, in short, are exactly what we should expect from a very intelligent youth who had been educated in such a free grammar school as existed at Stratford; who left school early, and got most of his knowledge of the classics out of translations; though able at need to render a page or so of Latin; and perhaps even, though with more difficulty, of Greek. We know that Shakespeare used translations—a translation of *Plutarch*, for instance. Bacon would have gone to the original, not to an English translation of a French translation of the original. Moreover, a knowledge of Latin was much more current in the world in Shakespeare's day than now; and all the dramatic writers were steeped in the classics. Whoever wrote the plays of Shakespeare was evidently an omnivorous reader. "No doubt," says Sir *Walter Raleigh*, in his delightful little book, "*Shakespeare ranged up and down the book-stalls of Paul's churchyard, browsing among the innumerable sorts of English books and infinite fardels of printed pamphlets, wherewith, according to a contemporary, 'this country is pestered, all shops stuffed, and every study furnished'*" Shakespeare was one of those swift and masterly readers who know what they want of a book; they scorn nothing that is dressed in print, but turn over the pages with a quick discernment of all that brings them new information, or jumps with their thought, or tickles their fancy. Such a reader will perhaps have done with a volume in a few minutes, yet what he has taken from it he keeps for years. He is at times wrongly judged by slower wits to be a learned man."