

Literary Notices.

BACON *versus* SHAKSPERE: A Plea for the Defendant. By Thomas D. King. Lovell Printing and Publishing Company.

Some months ago we gave in an article copied from *Scribner's Monthly*, a well-written statement of the arguments for and against the theory that Shakspeare's dramas were really written by Bacon. The theory is upon its face so absurd that it is difficult to believe that there are any who really credit it. It has, however, been argued very ably by several contestants, and for the satisfaction of the poet's admirers it is necessary that these arguments should be disposed of. The volume before us, while it does not pretend to be an exhaustive defence of Shakspeare, takes up the question in a very able manner, and gives us many reasons for continuing to believe in the Bard of Avon.

After bringing up various passages to prove that Shakspeare's contemporaries and the great writers of his own and the immediately succeeding age believed in him, and that much that Shakspeare wrote was inconsistent with Bacon's character, Mr. King makes a strong point of the following:

Bacon's desire for posthumous fame is best expressed in his own words:

"I account the use that a man should seek of the publishing of his own writings before his death to be but an untimely anticipation of that which is proper to follow a man, and not to go along with him."

In a letter to Mr. Toby Matthew in 1623, (the year of Heminge & Condell's Folio edition of Shakspeare), he writes:

"It is true my labours are now most set to have those works which I have formerly pub-

lished, as that of 'Advancement of Learning, that of Henry VII., that of the Essays, being retractate and made more perfect, well translated into Latin by the help of some good pens which forsake me not. For these modern languages will, at one time or other, play the bankrupt with books; and since I have lost much time with this age, I would be glad to recover it with posterity."

In his dedication of the 1625 edition he says: "I do now publish my Essays, which of all my other works have been most current. For that, as it seems, they come to men's business and bosoms. I have enlarged them both in number and weight; so that indeed they are a new work. I thought it, therefore, agreeable to my affection and obligation to your Grace, to prefix your name before them, both in English and Latin. For I do conceive that the Latin volume of them (*being in the universal language*) may last as long as books last."

Would that the author of the plays called Shakspeare's, and which, despite the "Theorists," will, unless they can get better evidence to the contrary, ever be considered his, had during his lifetime made a collection of his works, and rescued those that were published in 1623 from the depravations that obscure them; thereby securing for them a better destiny by giving them to the world in their genuine state. Would he had been as jealous of his literary reputation as the author of the "Essays," there would have been an end, or rather no beginning, of the jargon that has been written about them; for as Samuel Taylor Coleridge felicitously remarks: "If all that has been written upon Shakspeare by Englishmen were burned in the want of candles, merely to enable us to read one-half of what our Dramatist produced we should be gainers. Providence has given England the greatest man that ever put on and off Mortality, and has thrown a sop to the envy of other nations by inflicting upon his native country the most incompetent critics."

True, Coleridge—true—but alas! Shakspeare had no desire for fame—"that glorious immortality of true greatness

"That lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all judging Jove."

I cannot see why Bacon, if he was a poet, could have objected to be found in company with Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and Sir Thomas Wyatt, who have been reputed "the two chief lanterns of light to all others that have since employed their pens upon English poesie;" or with Edward Vere, Earl of Oxford; or Fulke