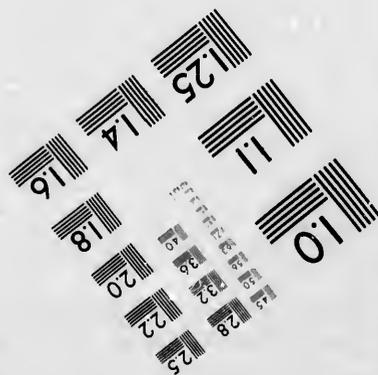
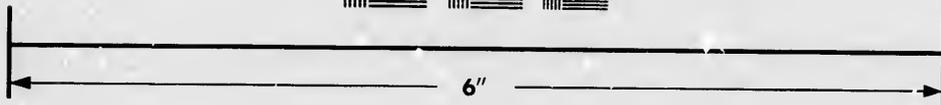
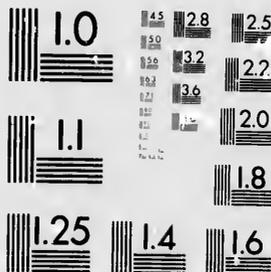


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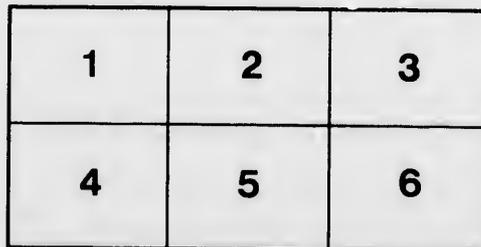
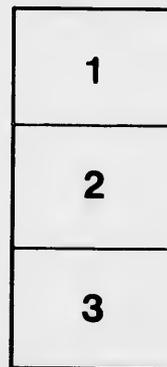
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SHALL WE OPEN SHAKESPEARE'S GRAVE?

NO.

A REPLY

JOSEPH POPE

BY

THOS. D. KING,

(MEMBER OF THE MONTREAL SHAKESPEARE CLUB)

TO THE QUESTION PUT BY

MR. J. PARKER NORRIS,

IN THE JULY NUMBER OF THE "MANHATTAN."

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SEPTEMBER, 1884.

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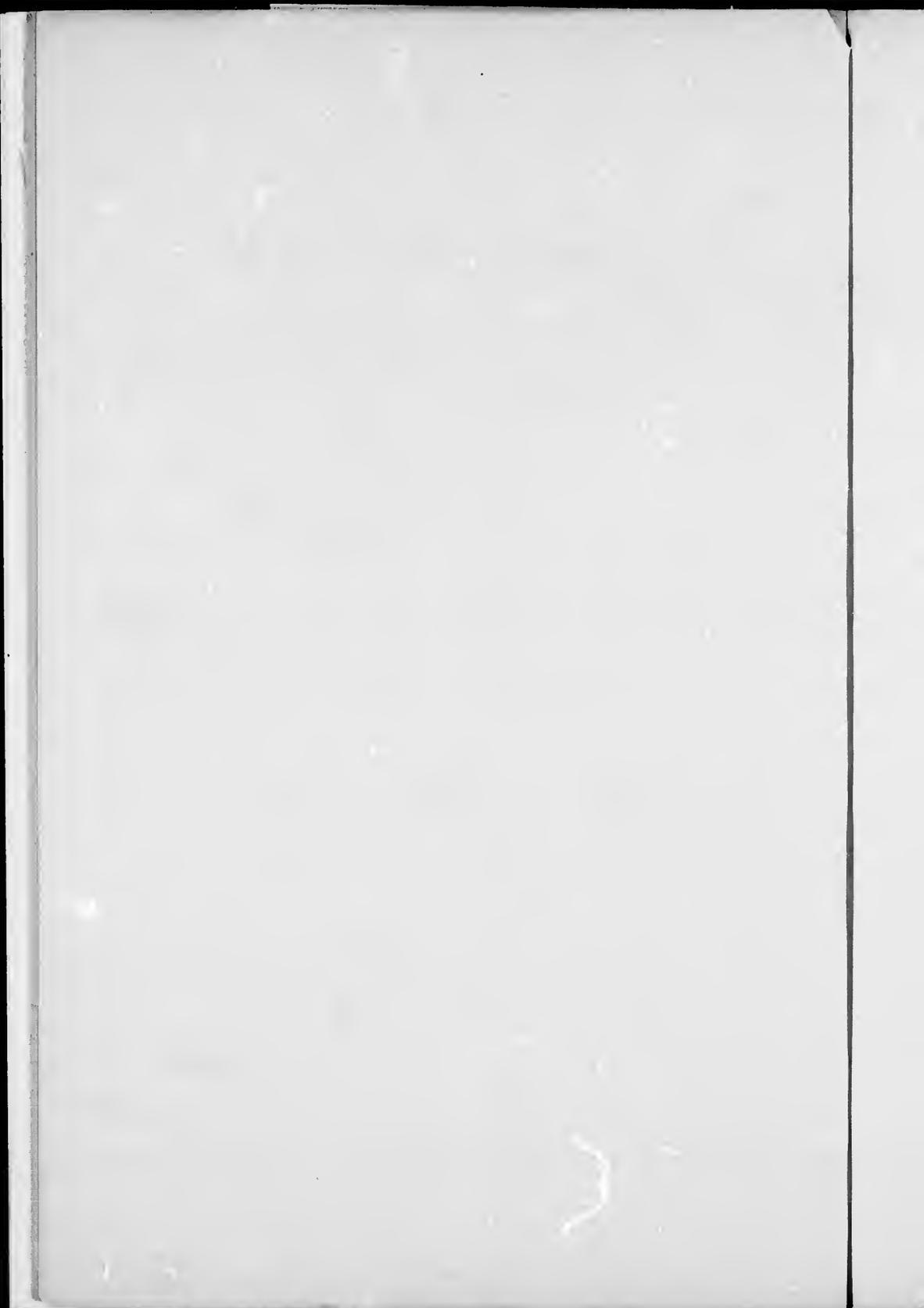
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## SHALL WE OPEN SHAKESPEARE'S GRAVE?

NO.

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All that was mortal of Shakespeare rests in the Chancel of Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-on-Avon. His body was deposited there on the 25th of April, 1616.

Over his grave is a flat stone bearing this inscription:—

“ Good friend for JESUS' sake forbear  
To digg the dust enclosed here :  
Bleste be the man that spares thes stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.”<sup>1</sup>

There is a religious solicitude in the lines. There is a feeling about them to which all classes of Christians are more or less alive; and although they are not savoured with the genius of the author of *The Tempest*, yet, in the historical play of *King John*, Arthur, after he leaps from the walls of the Castle, exclaims:—

“ O me ! my uncle's spirit is in these stones,  
Heaven take my soul, and England keep my bones ! ”

Though it has been doubted whether Shakespeare either wrote or dictated these lines—by some called a “doggerel epitaph”—yet the injunction

which the lines convey has been hitherto obeyed. The advocates for the opening of the grave have no doubt in the matter, as is shown by their inquisitiveness and anxiousness to recover Shakespeare's skull; therefore it is "passing strange" that Mr. Norris should officiously insinuate that the opposition of the Mayor and Corporation of Stratford to "the project of examining the tomb" of the Poet arose from their knowledge that the tomb had been already opened and the skull stolen.

It is useless to discuss the "why and wherefore" of the "lame and halting verses," they are significant enough to warrant us in believing that they are the express will, not only of Shakespeare, himself, but of his wife and family, and being so, the injunction or adjuration ought to be, and must be respected.

The adjuration is in accord with Shakespeare's sympathies and affinities—respect and veneration for the dead, and for the rites of Christian burial—in accord with his writings, which treat not only religion but all things human with the purest spirit of reverence—writings, in which there is "no severity but for vice, no slavery but for baseness, no unforgiveness but for calculating wickedness."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Norris suggests that the adjuration was placed over the grave by some member of the Poet's family to prevent the removal of his body to the old Charnel house—a most ghastly and repulsive chamber contiguous to the Chancel of Holy Trinity Church. But as the Poet was buried within the

precincts of the altar, it is not probable that such a fear was entertained by his family, or that his chapless skull would be knocked about by the spade of a gravedigger, and irreverently jowled to the ground as if it were "Cain's jaw-bone that did the first murder."

Is it possible that the adjuration arose from the apprehension that the Puritans, who were at the time fast rising into power, and made dramatic representations the special object of their indignation, may in their fanaticism rifle the grave of the actor and playwright, who with his fellow-servants to the Rt.-Hon. the Lord Chamberlain, had to petition the Lords of the Privy Council, in 1596, in order that they might be allowed to repair, enlarge and improve the Blackfriars Theatre "to make the same more convenient for the entertainment of the auditories coming thereto?"<sup>3</sup>

The iconoclastic spirit, then latent, broke out in 1642, when Richard Culmer (Blue Dick) "rattled down proud Becket's glassie bones," by destroying a part of the great window of the north transept of Canterbury Cathedral, the gift of Edward IV. and his Queen, in the centre of which was Becket himself at full length, robed and mitred. The iconoclast narrowly escaped martyrdom at the hands of a "malignant fellow-townsman, who threw a stone with so good a will that if Saint Richard Culmer had not ducked, he might have laid his own bones among the rubbish."

The remembrance of Culmer's narrow escape

from martyrdom will, I hope, act as a deterrent to any intending desecrator of the Poet's grave, even if he is utterly indifferent to the inscribed malediction.

No matter who wrote or suggested the adjuration, "For JESUS' sake forbear," it has been for nearly three hundred years religiously respected and regarded, and I most fervently hope, in common with thousands of readers and students of the works of Shakespeare, that his bones may not be disturbed before Time dissolves the Stratford monument.

Could the anathema, "Curst be he that moves my bones," be as sudden in effect as the "mandrake's groan," he must be a very bold man that would either counsel or attempt the exhumation of the Poet's bones.

Last year Dr. Ingleby addressed a pamphlet to the Mayor and individual members of the Corporation of Stratford-on-Avon, advocating the opening of Shakespeare's grave, which is said to be well written, ably considered and favourably concluded; yet, despite these three qualifications, it raised such storms of indignation, torrents of hard speeches, vehement letters, and whirlwinds of passionate invective throughout England, that I should have thought no one would have been hardy enough to again renew the question

"SHALL WE OPEN SHAKESPEARE'S GRAVE?"

The proposal was styled "a desecration both useless and indecent; and revolting to a truly reve-

rent mind;"—"an atrocious design;"—"an outrageous act of sacrilege suggested by a depraved mind;"—"an impious and odious proposal and wanton act of vandalism;"—"an act insane in itself, and to indulge even at the best an idle and prurient curiosity;"—"an impudent and wanton act of vandalism;"—"a desecration of that sacred spot dear to the heart of every human being in any way connected or acquainted with the revered Poet."

No man "was never so bethump'd with words" as Dr. Ingleby. Letters from all parts of Great Britain, from Denmark, Canada, and other distant places were sent to the Mayor of Stratford-on-Avon reprehending the proposition. In consequence of these earnest expressions of opinion, a meeting of the Town Council of Stratford was held in the month of October, 1883, when the subject, despite some strong expressions against Dr. Ingleby, was temperately discussed, and the following resolution was unanimously adopted:—"That a record be made upon the minutes of this meeting of the most entire and emphatic disapproval of this Corporation to any proposition or project for interfering in any way with, or disturbance of, the grave, tombstone, and monument of Shakespeare in the Chancel of Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-on-Avon."

I copy an extract from a somewhat tangled speech by Mr. Alderman Gibbs upon the occasion, as it not only gives a partial answer to the *cui bono* of the question, but it insinuates that there was something in Dr. Ingleby's desire to get temporary

possession of Shakespeare's skull more potent, yet covert, than a laudable curiosity for "testing the Droeshout print and every one of the half-dozen portraits-in-oil which pass as presentments of Shakespeare's face at different periods of his life."

\* \* \* \* "It was strange that many having the advantage of intellect and knowledge could, for the sake of gain, and to gratify their morbid curiosity, reconcile their consciences to their attempts to set afloat projects of false theory which in their heart of hearts they really despised. As in this case, which I consider one in point,—to exhume the remains of Shakespeare, which could not possibly add to our knowledge, or serve any good purpose, or solve any problem as to the sort of man our Shakespeare was. For it is quite clear to all physiologists or phrenologists that the brain of a Shakespeare must be enclosed in the skull of a fully developed-man, the structure of whose whole head must be similar to that shown by the bust in the chancel, erected so soon after his death, and with which most of the so-called portraits were in keeping, showing the high forehead; it being quite certain that the development of a man's head to write as our Shakespeare did must have a full forehead. A low-browed man never portrayed all the workings, passions, and foibles of our natures, nor possessed such a brilliant imagination as our immortal bard. Then to exhume Shakespeare's remains was simply to see the formation of his skull divested of the flesh, the absurdity of which pro-

ceeding must be quite clear to all rational and honest people, whose opinion, if pronounced, must be either that the project covered some sinister design, or it savoured of the wasteful folly of idiots. *Photographs of Shakespeare's skull would, doubtless, have a large sale all over the world.*"<sup>5</sup>

The *Saturday Review*, London, September 8th, 1883, said, in reference to Dr. Ingleby's proposal :

"We object to it because, by the nature of the human mind, feelings of reverence and affection gather round the last resting places of those whose words or deeds have made them leaders and benefactors of mankind. It is of much more importance that these feelings should be respected than that the claims of a trivial and purposeless curiosity should be gratified. To attain some end of serious importance, no one would object to the exhumation of any body so long as it was done decently and in order. But that, to gain the idle object of Dr. Ingleby's search, *the last prayer* of one to whom every cultivated Englishman owes a personal debt of gratitude should be wantonly rejected is a wholly different matter. It would needlessly disgust and offend thousands of people ; it would bring deserved opprobrium on the country in the eyes of other nations ; and it would go far to stimulate the vice of morbid and impertinent curiosity, which needs no encouragement, but rather every check that can be applied to it."

The London *Daily News*, Sept. 1st, 1883, said :—  
"There is absolutely no excuse for the proposal.

For the bust in question was erected within ten years of his death, and must be an immeasurably better guide to his personal appearance than the skull of the Poet who has been dead more than two centuries and a half. But Shakespeare's insight into the follies of mankind is shown, if he did indeed write the inscription for his tomb, to have been no more confined than were his other gifts to the circumstances of his own age."

It was with pleasure I read the opinions of the *Saturday Review* and the *Daily News*, as I had written two letters upon the subject to the *Montreal Herald* prior to seeing those papers; in my first, I said:—It is to be fervently hoped that such a sacrilege is not seriously entertained—any man who can be guilty of such an act ought to receive the most exemplary and condign punishment—I raise my voice against the contemplated act, and against the rifling the graves of any of the great men who have adorned their country's name, whether as poets, statesmen, philosophers and warriors, for if those we reverently bury should hereafter have their bodies exhumed by ill-conditioned clergymen or unfeeling churchwardens, let our monuments in future be "The Maws of Kites."

In my second, I said:—I cannot think that such men as the authors of the *Bridgwater Treatises* on the power and wisdom of God in the creation; or such men as Davy, Faraday, and Dalton, Tyn-dall, Spencer, and Huxley would attach any importance to the examination of Shakespeare's

skull for the sake of anatomically comparing its configuration with the skulls of other men who have been the flower and glory of our race.

The idea was not original as far as Dr. Ingleby is concerned. In the Shakespeare Tercentenary Number of Chamber's Journal published April 23rd 1864, page 20, there occurs this passage:—\* \* \* \*  
 "persons have not been wanting to assert that in *the interests of science, physical and moral*, the relics of the great Shakespeare ought to be subjected to a thorough examination." Eight years ago Mr. J. Parker Norris of Philadelphia, U.S., whose contributions to and knowledge of Shakesperian Literature are wide and thorough, and whose veneration and admiration for the Poet's writings are generally admitted, suggested the advisibility of opening Shakespeare's grave and reverently examining his remains. The suggestion was the means whereby its author had opprobrious epithets heaped upon his head, and got well abused and jeered at by the critics who were opposed to what they thought would be an act of desecration. In this thought his critics are not peculiar. As I have neither seen nor read Mr. Norris' first suggestion, nor the criticisms of his opponents, who are charged with losing sight of the real merits of the suggestion or proposal, I must pass both by, and confine myself to a few remarks upon the second suggestion "Shall we open Shakespeare's Grave"? which appeared in the July number of *The Manhattan*.

Mr. Norris opens his argument with some doubt as to the ultimate end and result of his and Dr. Ingleby's pleadings for the exhumation of the Poet's bones ; and expresses the hope that "*the advancement of scientific accuracy may yet conquer mere sentiment.*"

There is an ambiguity in the sentence which I have italicized. Are we to understand by the term "*scientific accuracy*" that the knowledge of phrenology, physiognomy, physiology, pathology and natural philosophy will be enhanced if we found in Shakespear's grave a skull with an unequalled altitude of forehead, a globe-like cranium,

"—the front of Jove himself" ;

or, a skull with a combination of forms and general proportions rarely seen in living man ; or a skull in contour and measurement agreeing either with the Kesselstadt Death-Mask, or the Stratford Bust ; or if we found the body entire, dressed at all points, cap-a-pie, "in his habit as he lived" ?

Such a discovery may conquer and ought to conquer *mere* sentiment, if mere sentiment is to be confounded with that false, lachrymose, snivelling sentiment which is so much the fashion with those who delight in the "virtuous oratory" of a Joseph Surface. But, I emphatically ask, would those who have conscientious scruples about the adjuration, and consider that the rifling of Shakespeare's grave would be a sacrilegious act, and regard the "For JESUS' sake forbear" as the dying testament,—the last wish of the Poet—be satisfied to relinquish

their sentiment—a sentiment, resulting from their capacity to feel, and produced from the liveliness of their affections, and their feelings of reverence for the last resting place of “the unquestionable legislator of modern literary art”—for the hope that his skull would furnish positive evidence of the Stratford Bust being a true and faithful effigy? I do not think so. Those possessed with such sentiments have faith in the bust being like Shakespeare, they accept it as an authentic likeness. I could as readily imagine a pious Jew of the Tribe of Levi searching for the grave of Moses, and if found, exhuming the body to satisfy himself whether the immortal and incomparable master piece of Michael Angelo, on the tomb of Julius II, is a correct interpretation of the great Law Giver, who first proclaimed the equality of man before the Law.

“*Thou shalt not*”; being equally binding upon Kings, Prophets, Warriors, and Priests, Dives and Lazarus.

The adjuration, with its anathema, on the grave stone—Shakespeare’s *Thou shalt not*; being equally binding upon all conditions of Englishmen and their descendants from one generation to another.

I consider the adjuration a solemn injunction, as much so as the Poet’s last will and testament relative to the disposition of his property. The adjuration is, as it were, the dying speech of the Poet, it is as much a commandment to Shakespeare’s posterity as that of Joseph to his people, when he said:—

“ God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.”

I ask Mr. Norris:—Was it a sentiment that caused the Children of Israel to take the bones of the Patriarch out of Egypt to bury them in Schechem? Was it a sentiment that made Joseph regard Jacob's behest to bury him in the land of Canaan? The bones of Joseph were considered as a sacred deposit by the Children of Israel. In like manner, the bones of Shakespeare have been considered as a sacred deposit by the English people during three centuries.

Is it only a sentiment that has kept them from being dishonoured? No,—it is *reverence*. That kind of reverence which is “ extorted from men with a kindly violence ” for the memory of all those who have shed a lustre upon their country's honour and fame.

From the adjuration we are forced to believe that Shakespeare did not wish to have his bones disturbed by the rude hands of man, but that he did wish that they should remain in the Chancel of Holy Trinity Church till the great globe itself shall dissolve.

The Pope in 1542 could give permission to the Bishop of Bayeux to open the narrow tomb in the Church of St. Stephen, Caen, where the body of William the Conqueror was laid, dressed in his royal robes, but without a coffin;—George IV., when Prince Regent, in 1813, could order Sir Henry Halford to open the grave of Charles I., and, with

questionable taste, could be present with a number of noblemen at the exhumation, and allow the head of the martyr-King to be held up to view; and could permit at the same time the examination of the remains of Henry VIII.; and, again, in 1817, could suffer the opening of the tomb of Mary, a daughter of Edward IV., upon which occasion the irreverent relic hunters and curiosity mongers slyly took away some curly hair from the skull, even while it was crumbling into dust; but, I have no doubt that Queen Victoria and the Archbishop of Canterbury will not give permission, under any pretext, to any "scientist," or any sentimentalist to open Shakespeare's grave.

With these wanton openings of Royal graves in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, public sentiment had no voice; but it has been vociferant, as I have already shown, against the opening of the grave of Shakespeare, because the majority of the intellectual people of England do not believe it will, to use the words of the Stratford Alderman—"add to our Knowledge,<sup>6</sup> or serve any good purpose, or solve any problem as to the sort of man our Shakespeare was."

What had public opinion to do with the opening of the vault which contained the remains of Schiller? Nothing. Goethe, whose intimacy with, and profound friendship for Schiller is well known, (the latter giving a stimulus to their literary activity), and whose dying thoughts, though incoherent, were connected with Schiller, desired to place the

remains of his brother dramatist in a sarcophagus, a more honourable sepulchre than a vault common to the remains of others. The careful examination of Schiller's bones and skull was secondary, and perhaps more from curiosity than from reverential sentiment.

The opening of the grave of Ben Jonson was the result of accident, not of deliberation. It was attended with no good result, as "Mr. Buckland was convinced that the skull which he had taken such care of was not Ben Jonson's at all."

The opening of the grave of Burns in 1815 was for the purpose of raising his coffin from its original resting place that it might be deposited in a Mausoleum erected by public subscription; and we are informed that the instant the workmen inserted a shell beneath the original coffin the head separated from the body, and the whole of the remains with the exception of the bones crumbled into dust. The opening of the grave for a second time in 1854 was in obedience to a well-honoured custom from the time when Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah in the cave of Machpelah. Neither public sentiment nor scientific accuracy had anything to do with the opening of the graves of Ben Jonson and Robert Burns.

True it is, that at the opening of the Mausoleum for the interment of the body of Mrs. Burns, it was resolved by some citizens of Dumfries,—with *the consent* of the Poet's relatives—to obtain a cast of the skull of Burns, which was successfully done. The

only advantage or gain to Science being the projection by Mr. George Combe, a "vaticinator upon heads," of a phrenological chart showing the development of the thirty-five organs from Amativeness to Causality; and the proving that the portrait of Burns, by Nasmyth, was, though flattering, an imaginative one—the force of truth sacrificed for prettiness.

Mr. Norris, perhaps, from prudential reasons, omitted to mention the disinterment of the body of John Hampden, the patriot, nearly two centuries after his death, as Lord Nugent, who was about to write the biography of Hampden, after examining the body, in a letter on the subject to Mr. Murray, says:—"I did see, in 1828, while the pavement of the Chancel of Hampden Church was undergoing repair, a skeleton, which I have many reasons for believing was not John Hampden's, but that of some gentleman or *lady* who probably died a quiet death in bed, certainly with no wound in the wrist."

I think that the results from the disinterment of the bodies of celebrated historical and literary personages, and the additions to science accruing therefrom, are not sufficient to warrant the opening of Shakespeare's grave for the sake of analyzing the Poet's skull, even supposing that the authorized custodians of the grave should relent, and give permission to Dr. Ingleby to carry out his proposal.

My conviction is that the skull, if found in a comparative state of preservation, would crumble into dust before accurate drawings could be made of

it, and the vexed question of the Poet's portraiture be determined.

Mr. Norris says much can be said as to the probability of finding anything but dust in Shakespeare's grave, and assumes that because the Poet and his family were persons of importance, their bodies being laid immediately in front of the rail separating the altar from the remainder of the chancel, that the Poet was buried in an hermetically-sealed leaden coffin and placed in a regular brick or stone vault, properly cemented. Here, again, is conjecture—something as hypothetical as the current stories of the Poet's life and death, of which we know comparatively nothing, though every muniment room, every public and private library in Great Britain has been almost microscopically examined to get materials for his biography. His last words are not recorded, his dying wishes are unknown.

Of the solemnities and ceremonies attendant upon his funeral we are ignorant; there may have been "no hatchment o'er his bones, no noble rite nor formal ostentation;"—My Lords Southampton, Pembroke, and Leicester may not have sent their equerries or representatives to attend his solemn obsequies, in company with those of Sir Knights Raleigh, Lucy, and Clopton; but the Mayor and Corporation may have walked in state from New Place, passing the Chapel of the Guild and the Grammar School, and thence through the Lime Avenue or pleached alley leading to the northern entrance of Holy Trinity Church; Drayton, Jonson,

and Donne, Heminges, Condell, and Burbage may have been pall-bearers; Corbet, the witty Poet-Bishop of Oxford, may have pronounced the funeral oration; and Daniel the Master of the King's Revels may have sent either the Children of Windsor, or the Children of Paul's to sing a requiem in the chancel, which was hung with black, and adorned with a banner of arms and a coat of arms in gold; the coffin covered with a "herse cloth" of black velvet and a cross of crimson velvet down to the ground. Or, which is more probable, the Poet's body was placed in an ordinary wooden coffin and borne upon the shoulders of, or carried on a litter by six stout yeomen, followed by his affectionate wife, his family, relations, and his loving neighbours to the Church, where it was consigned to the grave with no other ceremony than the reading of that most beautiful, sublime, and solemn Liturgy, The Order for the Burial of the Dead in the Book of Common Prayer, according to the use of the Church of England—the chief mourner's comfort being that Heaven would take his soul, and that one, who had in his writings meted out judgment and righteousness to his fellow men with a terrible impartiality, would assuredly take part in the resurrection to eternal life.

When we consider that Shakespeare died from virulent fever, and somewhat suddenly; and only forty-eight hours, perhaps less, intervened his death and burial, there would have been no time for any funereal preparations beyond those of a simple

character ; there would have been no time to get a leaden-coffin or the suitable materials for one, that is lead of sufficient substance or thickness, from the neighbouring borough of Worcester or Warwick or Coventry, as it is very doubtful whether such material was purchasable in the year 1616 at Stratford, or that there was a plumber or artificer therein capable of making a leaden coffin at a few hours notice. For we must take into consideration the mode of home travelling and the conveyance of goods at the time, pillions,<sup>8</sup> pad-nags, and pack-horses, coaches being only used by the nobility and landed-gentry ; the condition of the roads, the time occupied in a journey from London to Oxford from Oxford to Coventry or Warwick ; the condition of the people in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. History informs us that "the greatest part of our buildings in the cities and good towns of England consisteth only of timber, cast over with thick clay to keep out the wind." London, in the reign of James, was almost entirely built of wood. The houses of the nobility and wealthy landed-proprietors, lords of the manor, throughout the city and country were built of brick and stone ; these were the exceptions — lead would not be in demand at Stratford for cisterns, roofings, parapets, porticos, dairies and other purposes to which it is now applied. As the probability is that thick sheet lead was not obtainable on the 24th day of April, 1616, in Stratford, the probability, also, is that the body of the Poet was placed in a wooden coffin, not impervious to the air ; and it is also probable, very

probable, there being no crypt to the Church of Holy Trinity, the grave was dug out of the soil upon which the floor of the chancel is laid. If the Poet was thus buried, the request or adjuration: "for-beare to digg the dust enclosed heare" obtains a force which would be lost if his body had been "enclosed" in a leaden-coffin hermetically sealed, and consigned to such a durable habitation for the dead, as a sepulchre hewn out of stone, or a brick-vaulted chamber.—The absence of a vault may account for his wife not occupying with him the same tomb.

Mr. Norris cites the case of Schiller, who was buried in the year 1805, and his body exhumed in 1826, when his bones and skull were carefully examined; the presumption being that the flesh had been consumed; the "emperors for diet" having destroyed the body. After *eight* years burial (case of Peter Mawer, exhumed at Boston,) Dr. Taylor found a body in fragments, the soft parts being loosely adherent to the bones—the features were entirely destroyed and the bones of a dark colour. (The body in this case had been buried in a damp grave, and the coffin had water in it, which contained animal matter, together with ammoniac sulphate and phosphate.)<sup>10</sup>

It is usually supposed that in an ordinary grave a body becomes skeletonized in about ten years. Admitting this to be substantially accurate, there are not a few cases where, on the one hand, all the soft parts have been destroyed in a far less time,

and, on the other hand, where they have been preserved for a much longer period.

I have cited the case of Peter Mawer to show Shakespeare's knowledge of the time ordinarily taken in the decomposition of the human body. Graves situated in low ground—as in a valley—and in a damp swampy soil promote the process of putrefaction in the bodies interred in them. The course of the River Avon is generally through flat meadows in the immediate neighbourhood of Stratford, and its banks or boundaries being very little above the surface of the river, are often overflowed like the banks of the Thames near Runnymede. The earth in the churchyard of Holy Trinity is not of a dry gravelly nature, but the reverse, a cold wet lias land.

During the plague which desolated Stratford in 1564, the Church yard (God's acre) of Holy Trinity must have been pressed for room to contain the bodies of those who died during that awful visitation. To make room for the bodies of those buried during the second and third acts of his progress through life, the Poet may have witnessed the exhumation of some of those buried during the plague, and been satisfied that their skulls, as the grave digger threw them from their "pit of clay," were in many instances chapless; and I can fancy Shakespeare moralizing, as he looked on, after Hamlet's fashion:—To what base uses we may return! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a beer-barrel? or the dust of Imperious

Cæsar "stopping a hole to keep the wind away"? or "patching a wall to expel the winter's flaw?"

If it were even probable to find the Poet's bones intact, would there not be something ignoble in taking his skull from the coffin and placing it in position,—posing it after the manner of a photographer, with the altar cloth for a background, to get the light to fall upon it at the proper angle of incidence—which no sooner done, when lo! the skull crumbles into dust before the camera is properly adjusted?

Does Mr. Norris imagine that the skull of Shakespeare will be found in such a durable condition that he will be enabled to measure with scientific accuracy the angles both of the facial line, and of the line intermediate between the cranium and the face, by poising it upon a perpendicular rod, and passing the point through the foramen magnum into the interior of the skull, so that the upper part of the cranium will rest on the point: and by shifting the skull till the rod is exactly betwixt the condyles of the occipital bone, and in the centre of the foramen magnum, that he will procure a facial line which has reference to the whole form and proportion of the head? <sup>11</sup>

Stands it within the prospect of belief that the skull will be found in such a condition that a plaster mould of it may be taken with perfect success? True, that such an operation was performed with the skull of Raphael, but then his coffin was hermetically sealed, and immediately after sepulture, *walled in*.<sup>12</sup>

Mr. Norris, who has lately been much exercising his mind upon the various portraits of Shakespeare, and doing a good service by completing the work commenced by James Boaden in 1824, followed by Abraham Wivell in 1827, continued by J. Hain Friswell in 1864, and William Page in 1876, has not, I hope, allowed his enthusiasm to affect or afflict his judgment. I can sympathise with his bewilderment in trying to solve the question: "Are any of the so-called portraits of Shakespeare authentic?" I would much rather see him in company with Mr. J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps than in the company of Dr. C. M. Ingleby. The one considering that the forehead and the formation of the head of the Stratford Bust should alone be decisive evidences in favour of its authenticity; and that there is, in truth, a convincing and a mental likeness in it that grows upon us by contemplation and makes us unwilling to accept any other resemblance.—The other characterizing the bust as "coarse and clownish, suggesting to the beholder a countryman crunching a sour apple, or struck with amazement at some unpleasant spectacle;—an unintentional caricature."

I have had in my library for the past twenty-six years a mask of Shakespeare, taken direct from the Stratford Bust, with which I am so familiar that I regard it with as much affection as I do the portraits of dear friends. The question never occurs to my mind whether it is or is not an authentic portraiture; I admit that there is nothing delicate in its execution, and that in refinement, expression, character

and meditation it will not compare with the beautiful statue of Sir Isaac Newton by Roubilliac in the ante-chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge; and that it lacks the feeling of the monumental works of Rysbrack preserved in many of our English Churches; yet, with all its deficiencies as a work of art, my imagination supplies them—the contour of the mask is good—I am satisfied—it gives me pleasure to gaze on it—No aberration of my mind, or astigmatism of my vision will liken the mask to the vacuous-full-moon face of Costard, the clown, or to the quixotic countenance of Don Adriana de Armado!<sup>13</sup>

If I rightly remember, it is Hazlitt who says:—“An overstrained enthusiasm is more pardonable with respect to Shakespeare than the want of it; for our admiration cannot surpass his genius.” The majority of the admirers of the Poet who have seen and studied the Stratford Bust will, without any overstrained imagination, rather agree with the opinion of Mr. Phillipps than that of Dr. Ingleby. Mr. Britton the architect and archæologist says:—“The Bust appeals to our eyes and our understandings with all the force of truth. We view it as a family record; as a memorial raised by the affection and esteem of his relatives to keep alive the contemporary admiration, and to excite the glow of enthusiasm in posterity. This invaluable effigy is attested by tradition, consecrated by time, and preserved in the inviolability of its own simplicity and sacred station.” Chantry the eminent sculptor had the greatest faith in its truthfulness. Mr. Northcote,

R.A., one of the chief illustrators of Boydell's Shakespeare, has remarked:—"It is the countenance of a good man, and also the countenance of a great man, and such as I should conceive Shakespeare to have possessed." Mr. Fairholt, F.S.A., says:—"I believe the Stratford Bust to be a careful and accurate transcript of our greatest bard. I am strengthened in my reliance on this bust as the only portrait of Shakespeare to be implicately depended on, the more I study its details and contrast its claims with those of any other presumed likeness."

Having the Stratford Bust, fac-simile casts of its mask, and accurate drawings and photographs of the Bust, must it not be a diseased imagination that can induce any one to believe, nay, even to think that the skull of Shakespeare will be superior to them for giving us any trustworthy knowledge of the Poet's personal appearance when enjoying "the feast of reason and the flow of soul" with Ben Jonson and other literary heroes at the Mermaid? or when writing such plays as Macbeth, Othello, Lear and Hamlet?

To such believers and thinkers I commend the perusal of three engravings or prints taken from photographs of a cast of the skull of Robert Burns,<sup>14</sup> one of which, (No. 2) without writing profanely, is more like the dome of a Saracenic or Byzantine temple, than the dome of a human temple, containing the organs of intellect, thought, imagination and genius.

It is difficult to account for this doubt, this unquietude, this curiousness about the Stratford Bust by educated men who express no doubt that the Bust in the British Museum, known as the Townley, or the Bronze head in the Drugulin collection is a representation of Homer; that the Bust in the Capitoline Museum, Rome, is a "counterfeit presentment" of Sophocles; that the antique statue of Menander in the Vatican is a faithful image of his genius; and that the heads of Plato and Aristotle, drawn from the antique, are very characteristic.<sup>15</sup>

I will not inquire whether the Kesselstadt Death mask is genuine or not; "that most careful and learned writer, Dr. C. M. Ingleby in his chapter on the Portraiture of Shakespeare, published in Part I of his *Shakespeare: The Man and the Book*, London: 1877, p. 84, says of it:—"I must candidly say I am not able to spot a single suspicious fact in the brief history of this most curious relic."<sup>16</sup>

We may therefore presume that Dr. Ingleby believes in the genuineness of the Death Mask.—Mark what follows:—Mr. Norris in the same paper<sup>17</sup> I have just quoted from, says:—"Looking at the Bust, a faithful rendering of the Death mask, one sees how strong the likeness is to the Stratford Bust—let any unprejudiced and competent critic place this Bust alongside of a gray cast of the Stratford Bust and he will be struck with the resemblance between them."

If Dr. Ingleby and Mr. Norris, (*arcades ambo*), are mutually agreed that the Kesselstadt Death

Mask is taken from a wax mould of Shakespeare's face after death, and that it corresponds with the Stratford Bust; of what use is their asking permission to open Shakespeare's grave in order to determine his portraiture?

*Geo. D. King*

## NOTES.

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Page 3.—

<sup>1</sup> On not a few of the stones in that ancient place of Christian Sepulture—the Catacombs, Rome—Anathemas are pronounced against such impious men as shall dare disturb the sanctity of the Grave.

MALE PEREAT INSEPULTUS  
JACEAT NON RESURGAT  
CUM JUDA PARTEM HABEAT  
SI QUIS SEPULCRUM HUNC VIOLAVERIT.

“May he perish badly, and, deprived of Sepulture,  
may he lie dead, and never rise; may he share  
lots with Judas who violates this Sepulchre.”

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<sup>2</sup> See chapter viii, *William Shakespeare*, by Cardinal Wiseman.

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<sup>3</sup> See Collier's *Annals of the Stage*. Vol. I, Ed. 1831, pp. 297–300.

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<sup>4</sup> Henry VI., Part II., Act III., Sc. 2.; and *Romeo and Juliet*; Mr. Furness' Variorum Edition, p. 231.

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<sup>5</sup> Reported in the *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, October 5th, 1883.

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<sup>6</sup> i. e. Science, I presume, according to Locke's definition:—“The skill of rightly applying our own powers and actions for the attainment of things good and useful.”

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<sup>7</sup> See *The Book of Days*, by Robt. Chambers, Vol. II., pp. 97–99.

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<sup>8</sup> Queen Elizabeth<sup>1</sup> often used to ride on state occasions behind the Lord Chancellor or Lord Chamberlain on a pillion.

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<sup>9</sup> In Harrison's Description of England, printed in 1577 we learn "that in the open champaine countries they are enforced for want of stufte to use no studs at all, but onlie posts \* \* \* \* with here and there a girding, whereunto they fasten their splints or radels, and then cast it all over with claie to keepe out the wind which otherwise would annoie them."

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<sup>10</sup> See Legal Medicine, by Charles M. Tidy, M.B., F.C.S.E. Wm. Wood & Co., New York. 1882.

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<sup>11</sup> See The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression as connected with the Fine Arts, by Sir Chas. Bell, K.H. Fourth edition, 1847. John Murray, London. \*

<sup>12</sup> See Life of Raphael (Raffaello), by Quatremere De Quincy—David Bogue, London, 1846, pp. 416-419.

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<sup>13</sup> See Sir John Gilbert's illustrations to *Love's Labour Lost*, Staunton's Edition vol. 1, pp. 54-57.

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<sup>14</sup> See page LVI. Appendix. Life of Robert Burns, by P. Hatley Waddell, published by David Wilson, Glasgow, 1867.

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<sup>15</sup> See vols. I and IV, Portraits of the one hundred greatest men of History, London, Sampson, Low & Co., 1880.

<sup>16-17</sup> The Fifth Mask of Shakespeare, February number of *Shakespeariana*, 1884, by J. Parker Norris.

