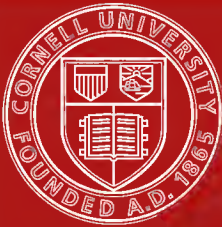


PR
2971
G5M19



Cornell University Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

Cornell University Library
PR 2971.G5H19

Curiosities of modern Shaksperian critic



3 1924 013 155 993

oh

*Prof. Craik
from the
Author.*

CURIOSITIES OF MODERN
SHAKSPERIAN CRITICISM.

BY

J. O. HALLIWELL, ESQ. F.R.S. &c.

LONDON:

JOHN RUSSELL SMITH, 36, SOHO SQUARE.

MDCCCLIII.

CURIOSITIES OF MODERN
SHAKSPERIAN CRITICISM.

BY

J. O. HALLIWELL, ESQ. F.R.S. &c.

LONDON :

JOHN RUSSELL SMITH, 36, SOHO SQUARE.

MDCCCLIII.

LONDON: E. TUCKER, PRINTER, FERRY'S PLACE, OXFORD STREET.

CURIOSITIES, ETC.

THE judgment of contemporary criticism, with respect to the merits of works of learning and research, has scarcely a perceptible influence on the opinions of those for whom they are chiefly designed; and its effect even on the general reader is of a very ephemeral character, for whenever a work possesses valuable information peculiar to itself, there is a certainty that it will be appreciated in time, in opposition to all adverse testimonies. To be convinced of the truth of this, it is sufficient to refer to the older reviews, to their angry denunciations of books which have outlived even the names of the critics, or lavish praises of others long since forgotten, and to the well-established fact that scarcely ever, even by accident, does a contemporaneous critic assign to a work the exact place that it occupies in the estimation of posterity. It is hardly requisite to refer to examples, which will occur to almost every reader; yet there may be selected one as peculiarly bearing on the subject of the present pamphlet—Douce's *Illustrations*—a work which now holds so distinguished and standard a place in Shaksperian literature, but which was so unfairly attacked on its first publication, its too sensitive author never subjected himself to a similar assault, and the other results of his vast reading are unfortunately

reserved for the benefit of a future age—one of the many lamented consequences arising from the license conventionally permitted to the periodical critics.

Deeply impressed with the slight importance, in regard to the work itself, to be attached to the angry denunciations of the weekly reviewers, I was fully prepared for the opinion of my friends that any reply to a rancorous attack on my folio edition of the Works of Shakespeare, which appeared in the *Athenæum*, would be unnecessary for the sake of any readers of the work itself, and would, in fact, be giving the assault a character of greater importance than could reasonably be attached to it. And such an opinion would, under ordinary circumstances, have been most sound. Had the reviewers, for example, merely ridiculed the design of the work, expressed their contempt for its archæological commentaries, disagreed with all its criticisms, and exercised their severity in any other way that might by possibility have been conscientious,—not a word would have been extracted from me in reply. I should have been well contented to have allowed the work to have awaited the opinion of the student. But the *Athenæum* reviewers have gone further than this, although they have not given expression to so sweeping a condemnation: they have done worse, though the effects of their criticism will certainly be ultimately more innocuous. In despair of injuring the work by fair means, they have descended to *misrepresent facts* for the sake of establishing a censure against its editor. It is for the public to decide whether they will accept this mode of criticism—whether, in short, they will in future give credence to reviewers, who, rather than forego an attack on a work against which they are

prejudiced, will assert circumstances not at all warranted by facts.

It is not my intention to bandy words with the reviewers—I shall confine myself most exclusively to bare matters of fact, that are capable of proof. I entreat the reader to look into the subject for himself, and decide *on facts alone*, not allowing his judgment to be influenced by subtle reasoning, which convinces only by words;—and I shall not be afraid of the result. The reviewers, having the command of circulation, and addressing chiefly those who will not take the trouble to examine for themselves, may persuade the indifferent to adopt almost any view they may please to support; but there will still be a few, who will eventually exercise an important influence on the opinions of the many, and will give an impartial judgment derived from the real facts. I will now, without further preface, give the reviewers' own words, and conclusively demonstrate to every unbiassed reader that I have been subjected to the unfairest kind of criticism.

1. The reviewers, after observing the work “contains a multitude of pretty little illustrations by Fairholt and facsimiles by Netherclift, all which have been worked most carefully, and show to great advantage on stout paper manufactured by Dickinson,” proceed to say,—“*The illustrations of Stratford scenery and objects have all been borrowed from other works of Mr. Halliwell and Mr. Fairholt; but they tell well in their present places, and enable Mr. Halliwell to make a great display in his first volume. Certainly, if Mr. Halliwell is able to borrow as many illustrations for his subsequent volumes,*

and shall carry out his scheme with anything like the spirit of this beginning, the subscribers will have good reason to congratulate themselves on possessing a handsome-looking set of books which can be in the hands of only very few people."

This statement is not correct, there being no fewer than thirty-eight new engravings and facsimiles relating to Stratford, and to the Shakespeares in connection with Stratford; Mr. Fairholt having accompanied me again over the localities which connect themselves with the history of the poet and his family, and examined anew the entire series of church books and corporation papers that in any way relate thereto, for the purpose of completing facsimiles of the entire series. Even in the account of the birth-place in Henley Street, in respect to which I have necessarily used for the most part previous engravings, and where one would have thought new artistic material impossible of access, there are two interesting objects never previously engraved in any work on the subject, viz. the garret over the room in which Shakespeare was born, and the lower room in John Shakespeare's house, both of which are important as conveying a clear idea of the original state of the house. The reviewers may have been misled in some respect by several of the new woodcuts being necessarily very similar to other engravings of the same objects, but they should have examined them more minutely before they inferred that they had all been borrowed. I can truly say I have not spared, on account of the expense, a single engraving I thought might be interesting or valuable.

2. "*The first part is a reprint, with some few alterations,*

of Mr. Halliwell's '*Life of Shakespeare*,' published in one volume, octavo, 1848.* This occupies half of the volume, running from p. 1 to p. 263." So far from this being the case, the biography has been almost entirely re-written, and nearly one half is additional matter, not to be found in the octavo edition. There are several newly-discovered papers respecting John Shakespeare, and no fewer than six new documents respecting Shakespeare himself, besides the three very curious notices of the poet at p. 223, which contain the last mention of him previous to his death. The whole biography has been corrected, added to, and materially altered in every respect, as might be ascertained by any one making even a cursory examination of the two works; and it is altogether unfair to call it a "reprint, with some few alterations." Throughout this portion of my work, I did not rely even on what I had previously published, but again examined every document, wherever it was located, and devoted a month at Stratford to the most minute collation of the important papers there. I can conscientiously say, that I spared neither labour nor expense in my examinations; and all matters which I had previously taken on

* A very curious instance of the reviewers' accuracy occurs in their notice of this work, in which they accuse me of omitting an "important portion" of the passage in Dugdale's '*Diary*' respecting the monumental bust at Stratford. Having quoted the whole of the passage with literal accuracy, it was very long before I discovered the probable cause of such a singular mis-statement; but I have since found the account in Dugdale quoted altogether incorrectly, *with the interpolation of several words from another document*, in Mr. Cunningham's *Hand-book of London*. Because, therefore, I did not repeat this oversight, I am accused of omitting a passage in Dugdale which no one but Mr. Cunningham has been fortunate enough to find.

trust, I took great pains to examine for myself: I was rewarded by saving myself from the error of again quoting the Bridgewater papers as genuine.

3. "*There are now published two or three facsimiles of formal legal documents relating to the Henley Street house.*" This merely shows how carelessly the reviewers have examined the work, there being only one facsimile of the kind—and a very important one it is, being the only early document of the slightest value in showing the probability that Shakespeare was born in the house now shown as the birth-place. It exhibits the slight attention paid by reviewers to these subjects, to find that with one exception—which occurred in an able Shaksperian article in the *Times*—not a single critic has observed the real importance of this deed. One would have thought that the leading members of a Committee that gave so large a sum for the house, would have adopted with avidity the only evidence yet discovered that will justify their zeal. The copy of it was procured by me at the cost of great trouble and expense.

4. "*A gentleman, who is very sharp on the blunders of other people, should be a little more accurate himself. Mistakes which Mr. Halliwell sets down as evidences of the ignorance of the scrivener, are shown by these facsimiles to be mere mis-readings by himself.*" This is a curious specimen of the haphazard sort of criticism indulged in by the reviewers. In the first place, I am not aware that there is a single instance in my work in which I have been "very sharp"—to use the reviewers' phrasology—on the blunders of

other people. In the second, it is a positive fact, that the only mistake pointed out by me as an error of the scrivener, *cum pertinentiis jacentium*, in the documentary evidence alluded to, viz., that respecting the house in Henley Street, is to be found in the facsimile! What can one say to criticism of this kind?

5. "*The Essay on the formation of the text is perhaps the best of Mr. Halliwell's additions to Shakespeare criticism. It has, however, but slender claims to originality. It is an enlargement of a paper printed in the first volume of the old Variorum, entitled 'Essay on the Phraseology and Metre of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries.'*" This is an excessive exaggeration, and can only, I fear, be considered as a wilful mis-statement. The Essay alluded to will be found in vol. i, pp. 507-585, of Malone's Shakespeare, ed. Boswell, 8vo, 1821, and I do not think any one will openly say that mine is a mere enlargement of it:—there is scarcely indeed, any similarity to be traced between the two. The Essay in Boswell is chiefly on the metre, and the observations on the phraseology are restricted to a few peculiarities of diction; while the Essay in my work—I do not see why I should affect reserve in such a matter—chiefly consists of an elaborate inquiry into Elizabethan idiom, which, with the exception of a very small proportion of the examples, is entirely original.

6. The reviewer, after giving a slight note of the principal features of my introduction to the *Tempest*, and absolutely mentioning the history of the Dead Indian, observes, —"*In all this—and these subjects comprise everything of*

importance in the Introduction—there is nothing new.” Now it is difficult to imagine a greater mis-statement than this. The account of the Dead Indian is almost entirely new—I may mention especially the curious notices now for the first time collected from records of the time, furnishing a connected history of the Indian, and the exceedingly curious drawing from a MS. in Canterbury Cathedral, the examination of which entailed the trouble of a journey to Mr. Fairholt and myself, that we thought was amply repaid by the acquisition of one of the most interesting pictorial illustrations of Shakespeare ever discovered. In addition to these, I may mention the account of the exhibition of a ‘strange fish,’ from the singular broadside in Mr. Daniel’s collection, as quite new; and the notice of Ayrer’s play is given at greater length than in any other publication. In fact, the Introduction to this play is full of new information and original reasoning; and, as the impression of the work is so limited, it may not be amiss to draw attention to an important supplementary notice at pp. 504-6, which shows clearly who was the historical prototype of Prospero. The conclusion of the Italian extract indicates, for the first time, the real foundation of one of the chief incidents of the *Tempest*.

7. “*What Mr. Halliwell has written about Ayrer’s play, although he undervalues its importance when excusing himself for not saying more, is really of sufficient interest to stimulate fresh inquiry on the subject. But where is this play to be seen? Whence did Mr. Halliwell derive his knowledge of it? If from an account by Mr. Thoms, where is that to be found? Information of this kind ought never*

to be omitted. Editors should remember that they do not write for those who know, but for those who do not,—and that their judgments are valueless unless they give the most distinct opportunity of going to their authorities.” But for their own confession, I should have thought it incredible that the reviewers have so little knowledge of the commonest works of dramatic criticism, as not to know that Ayzer’s play is to be found in one of Tieck’s best known publications; but the reviewers again misrepresent me, as I have distinctly stated that the play alluded to was reprinted by Tieck, observing that the similarities to be traced between that production and the *Tempest* are of so insignificant a character, that its repetition in my work was altogether unnecessary. It may well be asked, as the reviewers have never seen Ayzer’s play, how is it possible for them to know that I have undervalued its importance? Is not this an evidence of the reviewers’ mere guess-work in their opinions on such subjects? I have given as full an account of those parts of Ayzer’s play which are analogous to incidents in the *Tempest*, as they at all deserve; an account derived from a perusal of the play itself.

8. “*He (Mr. Halliwell) describes how it was customary to dress ancient magicians on the stage; and he gives Inigo Jones’s representation of an ‘aery spirit;’ but without any hint of where he got it from.*” The reviewers must have examined the work very hastily, because I distinctly state, in the text, that the representation is taken from Inigo’s sketches for his masques; and in the List of Illustrations, the most conspicuous part of the book, I describe it as, “the figure of an ‘aery spirit’ from the illustrations

to Inigo Jones's Masques, published by the Shakespeare Society." Surely these are sufficient references to a work so exceedingly well known.

9. "*Mr. Halliwell's text of 'the Tempest' differs but little from that of the old Variorum.*" So far from this being the case, it differs in nearly every page, and, in some respects, very materially. It is, indeed, scarcely credible that the reviewers, having made this sweeping statement, should confess, only a few lines afterwards,—"*We do not pretend to have gone through the play; but we have dipped into it here and there.*" If so, how could the reviewers honestly state that my text differs but little from that of the old Variorum? It would be difficult to imagine a more striking example than this affords of the reviewers' own confession of their absolute unfairness.

10. "*All the difficulties in the text remain entirely untouched by Mr. Halliwell; not one of them—so far as we have noticed—is got rid of, or even lightened.*" The "difficulties" in the text of this play are not numerous, but there is scarcely one on which I have not thrown some new light. The reader will remember that an absolute explanation of the few words in Shakespeare not *at all* understood, can only be recovered by vast labour and reading: nevertheless, even in this well-known play, the peculiar use of the term *Amen*—perhaps the greatest stumbling-block to the critics—is unravelled for the first time by two extracts quoted in my edition. On the other difficulties—such as *scamels, trash, Butt, deck'd, busy-least, twilled, the hair line, and rack*—there is always some novelty to be found in my notes;

and, with respect to the last, I find I have arrived, by a different line of reading, to the opinion given by Mr. Dyce in his excellent *Few Notes*, which was published after (though written before) the appearance of my edition of the play. In fact, with one trifling exception, Mr. Dyce has adopted the same views as myself in his notes on the readings of this drama.

11. *Mr. Halliwell gives, p. 474, "three extracts to prove that vanity was used for the physical or mental affection designated by light-headedness,—that, however, being admitted not to be the sense in which Shakespeare uses the word."* This conveys a misrepresentation of my note, which runs thus,—"*Vanity*, delusion, illusion. A person, who was light-headed, was formerly said to have the *vanity in his head*," where the word *vanity* of course stands for *delusion* or *illusion*. The three extracts show clearly that such was the meaning of the term, *not that the word vanity, by itself, was ever used for light-headedness.*

12. Perhaps the reviewers have reached the climax of misrepresentation, when they boldly state that, "*much of it (the annotation on the play) is derived from the old Variorum.*" Any reader, who will take the trouble to compare the two editions, will find how small a portion is derived from the latter work; and how much is original. Such an accusation is so obviously contrary to fact, that it scarcely deserves contradiction; were it not that there are always persons to be found who will not be at the pains to examine for themselves. For the sake of these, it may be well to observe that out of *one hundred and eight* folio pages of notes, only *sixteen*

pages are derived from the Variorum, and even those few chiefly consist of extracts re-collated at the cost of great labour and trouble.

It is unnecessary to pursue the subject further. If, in a short notice of little more than two pages, the *Athenæum* reviewers can condescend to misrepresentations of so obvious and unfair a nature, their animus towards the Editor of the work they are criticising is too apparent to require further exposure. I am perfectly contented to leave the matter to the judgment of the public, begging them again and again to derive that judgment from "facts," and not from "opinions."

It may, however, be worth while to ascertain, how far the *Athenæum* reviewers, who venture to pronounce so arrogant a judgment on my edition of the *Tempest*, minutely understand the text of Shakespeare; and again I will adhere to subjects that are undoubted matters of fact, not mentioning those that depend for their determination on critical opinions, in respect to which there is naturally so much room for disagreement. In the second scene of the third act, where Ariel creates confusion between Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo,—

Ste. Didst thou not say he lied?

Ari. Thou liest!

Ste. Do I so? take thou that [*strikes him*]. As you like this, give me the lie another time.

Trin. I did not give thee the lie;

the reviewers, observing that the introduction of *thee* in the last line is "entirely unnecessary and wrong"—an opinion

at all events open to question—say, “*what can be said in defence of this, we cannot conjecture.*” But this reading, ignored by the reviewers, is positively to be found in one of the folios, being one of the best of the few emendations made by the editor of 1685! How is it possible to argue on these subjects with those who are unprovided with the simple knowledge absolutely necessary to render any discussion profitable?

In the preparation of the text I have, for reasons given in my essay on Elizabethan phraseology, considered the singulars and plurals, in certain cases, to be interchangeable; and the variations hence introduced are alone very numerous, but they are generally too simple and obvious to require in all cases separate notification. Thus, in Ferdinand’s speech, at the commencement of the third act,—

—— I forget :

But these sweet thoughts do even refresh my *labours*,
Most busy-less when I do *it*.

According to the principles on which I have worked, we must either alter *labours* to *labour*, or *it* to *them*; and I have adopted the former alteration as the most simple and obvious. The amiable reviewers, however, attribute the alteration to “*mere carelessness*,” not observing the necessity of any change—a question I shall be well contented to leave to be determined by any reader’s common sense. The reviewers misquote me when they make me say that the passage, as above, is “*unquestionably corrupt.*” I regard in that light the reading of the first folio, *most busy least*, but consider that Theobald has restored the author’s true language by his admirable suggestion of *busy-less*.

In the reading last mentioned, as in all instances of the kind where the old text is corrupt, I have selected the best conjectural emendation that has been suggested. The *Athenæum* reviewers recommend me to “strive to amend obvious corruptions by entering into the author’s spirit,” a recommendation in itself sufficiently obvious; but it is easy to see, from their late criticisms, that the taste of these reviewers evidently inclines to violent alterations in the text, in passages that mostly require only a little attention to be perfectly intelligible as they stand in the original. If it were fair to select examples from their criticisms on the whole of the plays, I could indeed produce a singular testimony as to their want of knowledge and judgment; but I will adhere to the single play of the *Tempest*, and, even from their few notices of that play alone, I shall be enabled to exhibit instances of the incompetency of the reviewers to comprehend some of the simplest passages in the text. I will take, for example, the speech of CERES, in the fourth act,—

Earth’s increase, foison plenty,
 Barns and garners never empty;
 Vines, with clust’ring bunches growing;
 Plants, with goodly burden bowing:
Spring come to you, at the farthest,
In the very end of harvest!
 Scarcity and want shall shun you;
 Ceres’ blessing so is on you.

Where the meaning of the two lines printed in Italics is so exceedingly obvious—Let Spring come to you, at latest, at the end of harvest, so that no Winter shall intervene—that not even one of the much abused commentators thought they

needed any explanation.* It is, indeed, scarcely credible that any men, professing to understand the spirit of Shakespeare's language, should now propose to read,—

Rain come to you, at the farthest,
In the very end of harvest !

or that the *Athenæum* reviewers should select this strange corruption as one of the alterations which "recommend themselves to adoption by that surest of all criticisms, the judgment of common sense!" Surely, if the judgment of common sense is to decide these questions, they should be referred to the common sense of those who understand something more of the author's meanings.

The reviewers have scarcely committed a less error in recommending the new reading which is based on the incorrect supposition that the term *fote* was not a genuine English word; but I will pass to another instance, appreciable by every reader, in which the reviewers again are wanting in a knowledge of Shakespeare's common mode of expression. It occurs in the fifth act, in Prospero's speech, where he says, addressing the fairies—

—— you demy-puppets, that
By moonshine do the *green-sour* ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites ;

* The note on the passage in my folio edition was in print before the appearance of the comments of Mr. Knight and Mr. Smibert on the same lines. Both these critics adopt in effect the same interpretation, and, indeed, it is impossible two opinions can be entertained on the subject. "But for the evidence of eyesight," observes Mr. Smibert, "I should scarcely have believed it possible for any one to have proposed the reading of *rain* for *spring*. The mere agricultural absurdity is huge, inasmuch as Ceres would be thus absolutely desiring the destruction of all husbandry, and assigning the blessing of rains only when the fields were bared, and showers unneeded."

where the reviewers, not aware that compound adjectives abound in Shakespeare, and losing sight of the second epithet being required by the sense of the following line, approve of the substitution *green-sward*. The meaning of the original is obvious, the fairy-rings being dark green in colour, and the grass of which they are composed, rank. It may be well to add a few examples of similar compounds for the reviewers' information :—

The *white-cold* virgin snow upon my heart
Abates the ardour of my liver.

The Tempest, act iv.

Turns into yellow gold his *salt-green* streams.

A Midsummer Night's Dream, act iii.

If thou didst put this *sour-cold* habit on,
To castigate thy pride, 'twere well.

Timon of Athens, act iv.

The above examples the reviewers' criticisms are selected from their brief notice of one play alone, and I would confidently ask any impartial reader whether critics, who are thus proved to understand so little of Shakespeare's meaning and language, are competent to pass a censure on the labours of others? I have shown indisputably that they reject readings as worthless and unauthorised, without taking the trouble to refer even to the first four folios; and that they do not comprehend some of the simplest passages in the poet's works. The public will hardly surrender their judgment to men thus convicted of incompetency, though the latter may be concealed for a time from the unreflecting by the extreme arrogance with which their opinions are promulgated.

It is still more extraordinary that the reviewers should

inconsiderately accuse me of being severe on the errors of others, because there is not a single passage in the work that can be produced in which I have used any language that can by possibility be contorted into a semblance of discourtesy; and it is unjust on their part in the extreme that they should lead the public to infer I have acted differently. With respect to the new annotations, instead of dismissing them "very contemptuously," as the reviewers assert, I have calmly discussed in the notes every one of the slightest importance; and on examining my remarks upon them, I cannot find any that are expressed in other than the fairest language. The nearest approach made to censure is calling the new reading—"most busy, blest"—*a very unhappy conjecture*, my sincere opinion still, and most certainly given without any intention of being uncourteous. If, indeed, this be language too severe, what must be said of Mr. Dyce's, who, coming after me, styles the emendation "forced and awkward in the very extreme," and a "scarcely intelligible alteration?" So far from treating any critic "contemptuously," I am one of those who firmly believe that such and so vast is the compass of knowledge comprehended in the works of Shakespeare, there is scarcely an individual to be found who could not, in one way or other, add to our knowledge of his meanings; and, in this spirit, I have despised no sources of information, but have dispassionately examined all that were accessible, with the sole object of the determination of accuracy and truth. The new folio edition of Shakespeare is, I venture to assert, the first comprehensive edition yet published which aims at the accumulation of useful information, entirely free from the squabbles and controversies

of opposing critics; and when the reviewers assert my "commentator-like propensity to pick holes in the labours of other men," they have committed themselves to a serious misrepresentation, which I am perfectly satisfied will impair their character for fairness in the estimation of every impartial reader of the work itself.

I now pass to one of the most important subjects animadverted upon by the reviewers—the spuriousness of the celebrated Bridgewater MSS.—and here, as it seems to me, the reviewers of the *Athenæum* may well be considered to have revealed one reason of their animosity towards the work. If I am correct in thinking that the whole of the Shakesperian MSS. in the possession of the Earl of Ellesmere are modern forgeries,—that an important letter, discovered at Dulwich College, has been misinterpreted,—or, that some remarkable ballads are compositions of comparatively recent date—it is unnecessary to say that the chief of the far-famed Shakesperian discoveries of Mr. Collier are of small value indeed; and Mr. Collier is generally understood to be one of the *Athenæum* reviewers! On the subject of these MSS. I shall again request the reader's attention to facts, reprinting in the first place the following observations on the subject from the first volume of my folio edition:—

“It is much to be regretted that it now seems necessary to pass, for a time, from the consideration of the authentic records on which the account of Shakespeare's personal history is founded. They have not, it is true, furnished as much as could be wished of that description of information which is chiefly of use to the moralist or philosopher; but what little has been laboriously collected from the ancient manuscripts of Stratford, London, and Worcester, is certainly not to be despised. It has, at least, the merit of perfect authenticity; for, aware of the lamentable attempts that have been made to deceive the world in all that relates to the great

dramatist, I was determined, at the risk of encountering a vast labour which can only find its reward in the future appreciation of the authority of the work, to make a personal inspection and examination of every document of the slightest importance respecting the history of Shakespeare and his family. It appeared to be more advisable to hazard the possibility of rejecting a genuine paper by an excess of caution, than to impair the value of the biography by the insertion of any that were subject to the expression of the slightest doubt; and in the prosecution of these enquiries, I have been aided by the judgment of Mr. W. H. Black, an assistant-keeper of Her Majesty's records, and well known as one of the most accomplished palæographers of the day, whose advice has been always most kindly and generously afforded. The reader may, therefore, be assured that every care has been taken to avoid the possibility of deception; and that all the evidences here printed have been submitted to the minutest examination, and the most anxious scrutiny.

“Having adopted these severe regulations for the guidance of my researches, it was inevitably essential that the remarkable papers which were discovered by Mr. Collier in the archives of the Earl of Ellesmere, and published by him in the year 1835, should be carefully examined. There was, in fact, a special necessity for these documents, beyond all others, being critically scrutinized, for they were the only records that of late years have found a place in the biographies of Shakespeare, the genuineness of which has been questioned. There is nothing in the account of their discovery to suggest a doubt. ‘They were derived,’ observes Mr. Collier, ‘from the manuscripts of Lord Ellesmere, whose name is of course well known to every reader of our history, as Keeper of the Great Seal to Queen Elizabeth, and Lord Chancellor to James I. They are preserved at Bridgewater House; and Lord Francis Egerton gave me instant and unrestrained access to them, with permission to make use of any literary or historical information I could discover. The Rev. H. J. Todd had been there before me, and had classed some of the documents and correspondence; *but large bundles of papers, ranging in point of date between 1581, when Lord Ellesmere was made Solicitor-General, and 1616, when he retired from the office of Lord Chancellor, remained unexplored, and it was evident that many of them had never been opened from the time when, perhaps, his own hands tied them together.*’ It was amongst these latter that the Shakespeare manuscripts were dis-

covered ; and if, as is possible, a fabricator had inserted them in those bundles, a more recent enquirer, investigating the collection under the impression it had not been examined for upwards of two centuries, would be inclined to receive every paper as genuine, and as not requiring any minute investigation for the establishment of its authority. Suspicion would be disarmed, and it is possible that in this way Mr. Collier has been deceived.

“When I came to make a personal inspection of these interesting papers, facilities for which were kindly granted by their noble owner, grave doubts were at once created as to their authenticity. The most important of all, the certificate from the players of the Blackfriars’ Theatre to the Privy Council in 1589, instead of being either the original or a contemporary copy, is evidently at best merely a late transcript, if it be not altogether a recent fabrication.

“The question naturally arises, for what purpose could a document of this description have been copied in the seventeenth century, presuming it to belong to so early a period? It is comparatively of recent times that the slightest literary interest has been taken in the history of our early theatres, or even in the biography of Shakespeare; and, unless it was apparent that papers of this kind were transcribed for some legal or other special purpose, there should be great hesitation in accepting the evidence on any other but contemporary authority. The suspicious appearance of this certificate is of itself sufficient to justify great difficulties in its reception; but the doubt thus induced as to the integrity of the collection was considerably increased by an examination of a paper in the same volume, purporting to be a warrant appointing Daborne, Shakespeare, Field, and Kirkham, instructors of the Children of the Queen’s Revels, which unquestionably appears to be a modern forgery. This document is styled by Mr. Collier ‘a draft either for a Patent or a Privy Seal.’ It is not a draft, for the lines are written book-wise, and it is also dated; neither is it a copy of a patent, as appears from the direction, ‘Right trustie and welbeloved;’ but, if genuine, it must be considered an abridged transcript of a warrant, under the sign-manual and signet, for a patent to be issued. Now if it be shown that the letters patent to ‘Daborne and others’ were granted on the same day on which Lord Ellesmere’s paper is dated; and if it be further proved that the contents of the latter are altogether inconsistent with the circumstances detailed

in the real patent, it will, I think, be conceded that no genuine draft or transcript, of the nature of that printed by Mr. Collier, can possibly exist.

“It appears that the following note occurs in an entry-book of patents that passed the Great Seal while it was in the hands of Lord Ellesmere in 7 James I. :—‘A Warrant for Robert Daborne and others, the Queenes Servants, to bring up and practise Children in Plaies by the name of the Children of the Queen’s Revells, for the pleasure of her Majestie, 4^o Januarii, anno septimo Jacobi.’ This entry may have suggested the fabrication, the date of the questionable MS. corresponding with that here given ; though it is capable of proof that, if it were authentic, it must have been dated previously, for the books of the Signet Office show that the authority for Daborne’s warrant was obtained by the influence of Sir Thomas Munson in the previous December, and they also inform us that it was granted ‘to Robert Daborne, and other Servauntes to the Queene, from time to time to provide and bring up a convenient number of Children to practize in the quality of playing, by the name of the Children of the Revells to the Queene, in the *White Fryers, London*, or any other convenient place where he shall thinke fit.’ The enrolment of the instrument, which was issued in the form of letters patent under the Great Seal, recites, ‘Whereas the Quene, our deerest wyfe, hath for hir pleasure and recreacion, when shee shall thinke it fitt to have any playes or shewes, appoynted hir servantes Robert Daborne, Phillippe Rosseter, John Tarbock, Richard Jones, and Robert Browne, to provide and bring upp a convenient number of children, whoe shalbe called Children of hir Revelles, Know ye that wee have appoynted and authorised, and by theis presentes do authorize and appoynte the said Robert Daborne, &c., from tyme to tyme, to provide, keepe, and bring upp a convenient number of children, and them to practice and exercise in the quality of playing, by the name of Children of the Revells to the Queene, within the *White Fryers* in the suburbs of our City of London, or in any other convenyent place where they shall thinke fitt for that purpose.’ This patent is dated January 4th, 7 Jac. I., 1609-10, so that any draft, or projected warrant, exhibiting other names than the above, could not possibly have had this exact date. It will be observed that the names, with the exception of that of Daborne, are entirely different in the two documents, and this company of children was to play at the Whitefriars, not at the Blackfriars. The fabricator

seems to have relied on the supposition that the entry relative to "Daborne and others" referred to the latter theatre; and consequently inserted the name of Edward Kirkham, who is known to have been one of the instructors to the Children of the Revels at the Blackfriars in the year 1604. There is, in fact, no reasonable supposition on which the Ellesmere paper can be regarded as authentic. Had no date been attached to it, it might have been said that the whole related merely to some contemplated arrangement which was afterwards altered; although, even in that case, the form of the copy would alone have been a serious reason against its reception. In its present state, it is clearly impossible to reconcile it with the contents of the enrolment just quoted. Fortunately for the interests of truth, indications of forgery are detected in trifling circumstances that are almost invariably neglected by the inventor, however ingeniously the deception be contrived. Were it not for this, the search for historical truth would yield results sufficiently uncertain to deter the most enthusiastic enquirer from pursuing the investigation.

The remaining Shakesperian MSS. in the possession of the Earl of Ellesmere, consist of a letter of Daniel the poet mentioning the great dramatist as a candidate for the Mastership of the Queen's Revels; accounts in which a performance of *Othello* is stated to have taken place in the year 1602; a remarkable paper detailing the values of the shares held by Shakespeare and others in the Blackfriars' Theatre; and a presumed early copy of a letter signed "H. S.," supposed to have been written by Lord Southampton, and containing singular notices of Burbage and Shakespeare. The first two of these I have not seen, the volume including only a recent transcript of Daniel's letter; but the other two, which have been carefully inspected, present an appearance by no means satisfactory. Although the caligraphy is of a highly skilful character, and judging solely from a facsimile of the letter, I should certainly have accepted it as genuine, yet an examination of the original leads to a different judgment, the paper and ink not appearing to belong to so early a date. It is a suspicious circumstance that both these documents are written in an unusually large character on folio leaves of paper, *by the same hand*, and are evidently not contemporaneous copies. Again may the question be asked, why should transcripts of such papers have been made after the period to which the originals are supposed to refer? It is also curious that copies only of these important records should be preserved; and, on the whole, without offering a

decisive opinion as to the spuriousness of the two last mentioned, there is sufficient doubt respecting the whole collection to justify a reasonable hesitation for the present in admitting any of them as genuine. The interests of literature demand that these documents should be submitted to a careful and minute examination by the best record-readers of the day, by those who are continually engaged in the study of ancient manuscripts; such, for example, as are the Deputy and various Assistant-keepers of the Public Records, and the Keeper of the MSS. in the British Museum. Should such an investigation take place, the water-marks in the paper should be observed, and no minutæ omitted that are deserving of notice in such an enquiry."

In the above observations, I have endeavoured to put the matter in the clearest possible light, with the utmost fairness to Mr. Collier. I firmly believed in the genuineness of the papers till the day on which I examined the originals—and that my own convictions on the subject are sincere may be gathered from the fact that, on the evening of that day, I cancelled at the printer's that portion of the biography in which I had previously inserted copies of the documents, and I also omitted the fac-simile of the Southampton letter, the expense of lithographing which had already been incurred. *I am convinced that one paper, at least—the Daborne warrant—is a modern forgery, and so badly executed, that it will not even pass muster in a facsimile.* But fac-similes will not be sufficient to prove the authenticity of suspected papers. The documents themselves must be submitted to the scrutiny of the most competent judges, before the public can be satisfied on the matter. In the above statement, I have been careful not to express an opinion which is not at the same time an absolute conviction. It is, however, my opinion, gathered from the appearance

of the papers themselves, that all the Bridgewater Shaksperian MSS. which I have seen are forgeries.

The reviewers, in drawing the attention of the public to an opinion I had formerly expressed in favour of the authenticity of the documents, somewhat overlook the important distinction between an opinion given merely from internal evidence, and a conclusion derived from an inspection of the papers themselves. In admitting, as I have done, that I confided in their genuineness till the day on which I saw the originals, I have placed the matter in as fair a light as possible; and as the MSS. will most probably ere long be submitted to the consideration of competent judges, it is unnecessary to say I should hardly have incurred the risk of giving an adverse opinion so distinctly, were I not thoroughly convinced there were forcible reasons for entertaining it. I can have but one object in such a discussion—the discovery of the real truth, and the satisfaction of endeavouring to place the materials of Shaksperian criticism on a sound basis of authenticity. The paucity of interesting evidences respecting Shakespeare is so great, it would be a real source of congratulation to all of us could the Ellesmere MSS. ultimately be acknowledged to be genuine; but the determination must be obtained from the closest external scrutiny, as well as from internal evidence.

The reviewers act injudiciously in insinuating that Mr. Collier has been in the slightest degree contemptuously or unfairly treated in my work; and I will give an ample proof that, so far from this being the case, I have been actuated throughout by the sincerest feelings of kindness. It is, I feel sure, sufficient for me, in this respect, to quote the

observations I have made on the following misreading of the Dulwich College MS.

“It may here be observed that a notice which first appeared in Mr. Collier’s interesting *Memoirs of Edward Alleyn*, 1841, p. 63, apparently showing that Shakespeare was in London in the month of October, 1603, conveys an inaccurate reading of the original manuscript preserved at Dulwich College, and cannot, therefore, be received as evidence. The following,—

“Aboute a weeke agoe ther e a youthe who said he was Mr. Frauncis Chalo s man ld have borrow.d xs to have bought things for s Mr. t hym cominge without token d I would have I bene sur and inquire after the fellow, and said he had lent hym a horse. I feare me he gulled hym, though he gulled not us. The youthe was a prety youthe, and hansom in appayrell: we know not what became of hym. Mr. Bromffield commendes hym: he was heare yesterdaye. Nicke and Jeames be well, and commend them: so dothe Mr. Cooke and his weife in the kyndest sorte, and so once more in the hartiest manner farwell,”

is all that now remains of a postscript to a letter from Mrs. Alleyn to her husband, the celebrated actor, dated October 20th, 1603. This letter is written on a folio leaf of paper, the commencement of the above postscript being at the end of the first page, the top of the second page, which is perfect, beginning with the words, *and inquire*. The portion of the letter containing the first lines of our extract is in a very decayed state, the bottom of the leaf being rotten, and the writing not very easily to be understood; *but the accompanying facsimile, which was carefully traced from the original by Mr. Fairholt, proves that Mr. Collier’s interpretation cannot be correct, inasmuch as it is irreconcilable with the position of words that are clearly to be discovered in the remaining fragment.* The surpassing value of fac-simile copies is here apparent. It is so easy, in a laborious work like the one in which the above error occurs, to misread difficult writing, which even at a second glance, unless most carefully examined in a strong light, may be misinterpreted; the only safe resource,

in all difficult cases, is to substantiate the reading by obtaining the assistance of the artist. It would be bold to affirm, in opposition to Mr. Collier, that the whole has been misunderstood, and that the name of Shakespeare has taken the place of some other similar in form; but even admitting that it was originally to be found in the decayed fragment, a circumstance which appears to be extremely uncertain, it is beyond a doubt that the sentence in which it occurred has been printed erroneously, and that the true information the letter conveyed respecting the dramatist is now probably not to be recovered. The reader will bear in mind that the original investigator of a large collection of documents does not possess the advantages that attend those later enquirers, who are concentrating their attention to papers on a particular subject."

Mr. Fairholt's fac-simile of the passage, as it now remains, is here given; and the reader will distinctly observe that Mr. Collier's reading does not correspond with the fac-simile, and that his transcript must unquestionably be incorrect. I annex the copy of the MS., as given by Mr. Collier:—

"Aboute a weeke a goe there came a youthe who said he was Mr Frauncis Chaloner who would have borrowed x^{li} to have bought things for * * * and said he was known unto you, and M^r Shakespeare of the globe, who came * * * said he knewe hym not, onely he herde of hym that he was a roge * * * so he was glade we did not lend him the monney * * * Richard Johnes [went] to seeke and inquire after the fellow, and said he had lent hym a horse. I feare me he gulled hym, though he gulled not us. The youthe was a prety youthe, and hansom in appayrell: we knowe not what became of hym. M^r Benfield commendes hym; he was heare yesterdaye. Nicke and Jeames be well, and comend them: so doth M^r Cooke and his wiefe in the kyndest sorte, and so once more in the hartiest manner farwell."

Now is it not clear from this, compared with Mr. Fairholt's facsimile, that Mr. Collier has misinterpreted the

original? *otherwise we should discover in his copy the words that are to be found in the fac-simile.* The fact is, that Mr. Collier probably, in haste, took the words down without sufficient examination. At all events, the fac-simile is an evidence against the exact reception of the discovery.

In this, however, as in other questions, I am contented to appeal to facts, and leave the rest to the determination of the public. The reviewers are perfectly justified in not accepting my *opinion* as to the spuriousness of Lord Ellesmere's MSS.—I adhere to the facts that *prove* one of them not to be genuine, and appeal, as to the whole, to the judgment of those who are best informed in such matters. In the same way, with regard to the Dulwich College MS., instead of entering into an argument on the subject, I give a fac-simile, and scarcely express an opinion. The value of my work depends, and will depend, on the authenticity of its accumulated facts—facts, the importance of which are determinable by any one who studied the subject—and it is with that conviction I may be excused setting too great a value on the censures of the reviewers.

It is, indeed, far from being exclusively on my own account that I publish these few controversial pages. That I am personally nearly indifferent to the mere external acknowledgments of criticism, may be well gathered from the circumstance of my consenting to entomb the results of so many years' labour in so small an impression; a fact which also renders the greatest censure almost innocuous. But I have a far higher motive than any that could result in the hope of accomplishing a successful refutation of an adverse critic. I cannot but think a public service will be rendered

by the exposure of the incompetency and unfairness of a Journal, which, by its arrogance and subtlety, is calculated to impose on all but those who have paid peculiar attention to the subjects on which it ventures to decide. That I shall incur the well-known undying rancour entertained by its reviewers towards all who enter into conflict with them, is certain ; but the effect of their animosity will be lessened by the exposition now given of their animus towards the writer. An adversary need not be greatly feared, when his malevolence is generally known.

BRIXTON HILL, NEAR LONDON,

July, 1853.

NOTE.

THE Bridgewater MSS. being in private archives, and only used for literary purposes by the liberality of their noble and distinguished possessor, it may be well to observe, lest the strong opinions here expressed as to their want of authenticity be possibly thought to be in any way uncourteous, that the Earl of Ellesmere most generously gave the writer the amplest permission to express any doubts that may be entertained on the subject.

