

The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Critics Versus Shakspere

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: The Critics Versus Shakspere

Author: Francis Asbury Smith

Release date: December 10, 2008 [eBook #27485]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Marilynda Fraser-Cunliffe, Carla Foust and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net> (This file was made using scans of public domain works from the University of Michigan Digital Libraries.)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CRITICS VERSUS SHAKSPERE ***

Transcriber's note

Archaic and variable spelling has been preserved. Minor punctuation errors have been changed without notice. Printer errors have been corrected, and they are indicated with a mouse-hover and listed at the [end of this book](#).

THE CRITICS

Versus

SHAKSPERE

A BRIEF FOR THE DEFENDANT

By

FRANCIS A. SMITH

The Knickerbocker Press

New York

1907

COPYRIGHT, 1907

BY

FRANCIS A. SMITH

CRITICS*versus***SHAKSPERE**

By

FRANCIS A. SMITH,

of Counsel.

Many years ago, I was retained in the great case of THE CRITICS AGAINST SHAKSPERE, the most celebrated on the calendar of history during three centuries. Unlike other cases, it has been repeatedly decided, and as often reopened and reheard before the most eminent judges, who have again and again non-suited the plaintiffs. Appeals have availed nothing to reverse those decisions. New actions have been brought on the ground of newly discovered evidence; counsel have summed up the testimony from all lands, from whole libraries and literatures, and the great jury of mankind have uniformly rendered a verdict of no cause of action. [2]

Ben Jonson said that Shakspeare "wanted art"; the highest appellate court decided that "Lear" was a greater work than Euripides or Sophocles ever produced. Voltaire, the presiding Justice in the court of French criticism, decided that Shakspeare was "votre bizarre sauvage;" the world has reversed his decision, and everywhere, except perhaps in France, the "Henriade" is neglected for "Hamlet."

During the seventeenth century, English criticism sought to put Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Otway, Wycherly, Congreve, Cowley, Dryden, and even the madman Lee, above Shakspeare. Denham in 1667 sings an obituary to the memory of the "immortal" Cowley,—

"By Shakspeare's, Jonson's, Fletcher's lines,
Our stage's lustre Rome's outshines.

Old Mother Wit and Nature gave
Shakspeare and Fletcher all they have;
In Spencer and in Jonson, art
Of slower Nature got the start.
But both in him so equal are,
None knows which bears the happiest share."

One knows not which to admire most, the beauty of the poetry or the justice of the encomium. [3]

James Shirly, whom Shakspeare has not yet been accused of imitating, said in 1640 that he had few friends, and Tateham, an obscure versifier, in 1652, that he was the "plebeian driller."

Philipps, the pupil of Milton, refers to Shakspeare's "unfiled expressions, his rambling and undigested fancies, the laughter of the critical." Dryden "regretted that Shakspeare did not know or rarely observed the Aristotelian laws of the three unities," but was good enough to express his surprise at the powerful effect of his plays. "He is many times flat, insipid, his comic wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling, into bombast."

Thomas Rymer, another disciple of the unities, in 1693, declared "Othello" to be a "bloody farce without salt or savor," and says that "in the neighing of a horse or the growling of a mastiff there is a meaning, there is a lively expression, and ... more humanity, than many times in the tragical flights of Shakspeare." How much humanity may be shown in the neighing of a horse or the growling of a mastiff may be left to the impartial judgment of the jockey or the dog fancier, but the world has got beyond the criticism of Rymer. In his view, "almost everything in Shakspeare's plays is so wretched that he is surprised how critics could condescend to honor so wretched a poet with critical discussions." [4]

John Dennis and Charles Gildon, whose books are forgotten under the dust of more than two centuries, in 1693 and 1694 denied that Shakspeare's plays had any excellence, any wealth in profound sentences or truth to nature, any originality, force or beauty of diction; and placed him far below the ancients in all essential points,—in composition, invention, characterization. [5]

Dennis says Shakspeare paid no heed to poetic justice ... "the good and bad perishing promiscuously in the best of his tragedies, so that there can be either none or very weak instruction in them." Gildon sums up his opinion by the sententious remark that "his beauties are buried beneath a heap of ashes, isolated and fragmentary like the ruins of a temple, so that there is no harmony in them."

Against all this arraignment by the imitators of the French drama, we have that loving tribute of the great Milton:—

"Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy Name.
Thou, in our wonder and astonishment,
Hast built thyself a live-long monument."

Pope could not resist the charm of his unacknowledged master. But Pope praises Dryden, Denham, and Waller,—never a word of commendation for Shakspeare: "he is not correct, not classic; he has almost as many defects as beauties; his dramas want plan, are defective and irregular in construction; he keeps the tragic and comic as little apart as he does the different epochs and nations in which the scenes of his plays are laid; the unity of action, of place, and of time is violated in every scene." [6]

The eighteenth century was notable for its corrections and remodellings, reducing the grandeur of the originals to the levels of the critics. Lord Lansdowne degraded Shylock into the clown of the play; it was "furnished with music and other ornamentation, enriched with a musical masque, 'Peleus and Thetis,' and with a banqueting scene in which the Jew," dining apart from the rest, drinks to his God, Money. Gildon mangled "Measure for Measure" and provided it with "musical entertainments." The Duke of Buckingham divided "Julius Cæsar" into two tragedies with choruses. Worsdale reduced "The Taming of the Shrew" to a vaudeville, and Lampe "trimmed 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' into an opera." Garrick adapted "Romeo and Juliet" to the stage of his time, by allowing Juliet to awake before Romeo had died of the poison, "The Tempest" by furnishing it with songs, "The Taming of the Shrew" by cutting it down to a farce in three acts. [7]

Even the great Samuel Johnson said that Shakspeare "sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct that he seems to write without any moral purpose." ... "His plots are often so loosely formed that a very slight consideration may improve them, and so carelessly pursued that he seems not always fully to comprehend his own design."

"It may be observed that in many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected. When he found himself near the end of his work, and in view of his reward, he shortened the labor to snatch the profit. He therefore remits his efforts where he should most vigorously exert them, and his catastrophe is improbably produced and imperfectly represented."

And so it may be said that in England, after Shakspeare's death, the Drama was devoted to the imitators of ancient models, under the leadership of Ben Jonson, and later, beyond the middle of the seventeenth century, to the imitators of French taste, for the amusement of Charles the Second, "Defender of the Faith," and the correct Nell Gwynn. Under the guidance of such imitators, from Davenant to Cibber, many of Shakspeare's plays were reconstructed for the stage, until *The Tatler* quotes lines from Davenant's mangled version of "Macbeth," and N. Tate, in his edition of "Lear" "revived with alterations, as acted at the Duke's Theatre," refers to the original play as "an old piece with which he had become acquainted through a friend." Davenant and Dryden in 1670 improved "The Tempest"; Davenant corrected the errors of "Measure for Measure" and "Much Ado" in 1673; Sedley cut out the immorality from "Antony" in 1677; Shadwell, in the following year, reformed the character of "Timon"; Tate restored "Lear" to his kingdom and Cordelia to life, and even made "Henry VI.," "Richard II.," and "Coriolanus" conform to the rules of dramatic art which Shakspeare had so defiantly violated. Durfey corrected the imperfect plot, characterization, and diction of "Cymbeline," and administered just punishment to Iachimo; and finally, Betterton and Cibber, in 1710, added elegance to the wit of Falstaff and refinement to the bloody cunning of Richard. [8]

"All these versions," as Ulrici says, "were essentially the same in character; as a rule, only such passages as were most effective on the stage were left unaltered, but in all cases the editors endeavored to expunge the supposed harshnesses of language and versification; powerful passages were tamed down and diluted, elegant passages embellished, tender passages made more tender; the comic scenes were provided with additional indelicacies, and it was further endeavored to make the aim of the action more correct by the removal of some supposed excrescences, or by the alteration of the scenic arrangement and the course of the action." [10]

Yet, in spite of all these distortions of the great originals, in conformity with the taste of corrupt courts, the love and admiration of the English people for the dramas as Shakspeare wrote them was attested by more than twenty complete and critical editions of his works before the end of the eighteenth century; and the high estimate of his genius during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was never questioned until 1904, when Professor Barrett Wendell, in his "Temper of the Seventeenth Century in English Literature," discovered and revealed to the world that Shakspeare, except as a "phrase-maker" and except as the inventor of "historical fiction" in "Henry IV." and "Henry V.," was "the most skilful and instinctive imitator among the early Elizabethan dramatists," and "remained till the end an instinctively imitative follower of fashions set by others."

It had taken nearly three centuries of time and the researches of countless scholars to make the discovery, and they had all failed except Professor Wendell. During Shakspeare's life and after his death, none of his contemporaries ever accused him of imitating "fashions set by others"; none of them, except the profligate Greene, of "beautifying himself with others' feathers." [11]

Edmund Malone, by what may be called digital criticism, undertook to prove that Shakspeare, in the second and third parts of "Henry VI.," stole 1771 lines from the "Contention," originally written by another hand, remodelled 2373 lines, and added 1899 of his own; but even Malone did not charge that Shakspeare imitated the author of the "Contention"; his argument, if it had not been conclusively answered again and again, would prove that Shakspeare was "the most unblushing plagiarist that ever put pen to paper."

But long before Malone came Lessing, who in 1759 led the successful attack upon the pseudo-classicism of the French dramatists, proved that the three unities were but the articles of an [12]

outworn creed, and in 1758, that Shakspeare was something more than a successful playwright, more than the successful rival of Marlowe and Kyd and Dekker and Beaumont and Fletcher, more than "the master of the revels to mankind," and led critical opinion to the conclusion that he was the foremost man of his time and of all time, with power to search the secrets of all hearts, to measure the abysses of all passion, to portray the weakness of all human foibles, to create characters who act and speak and are as much alive to us as the men and women we daily meet, to teach mankind the profoundest philosophy, the littleness of the great, the greatness of humility and truth, and to inculcate by immortal examples the highest and purest morality.

And so England found at last the greatness of her greatest son in the "father of German literature," and the nineteenth century affirmed the judgment of Lessing. Among Germans, it needs only to name Wieland, Herder, Goethe, Schiller, Ulrici, and Gervinus; among Englishmen, Coleridge, who said, "No one has ever yet produced one scene conceived and expressed in the Shakspearean idiom"; and Charles Knight, who has exploded the traditions of Rowe and Stevens about the deer stealing, the wife desertion and the testamentary insult, and conclusively shown that "the theory of Shakspeare's first employment in repairing the plays of others is altogether untenable, supported only by a very narrow view of the great essentials of a dramatic work, and by verbal criticism which, when carefully examined, fails even in its own petty assumptions." [13]

But English criticism is not conclusive for us without the indorsement of American scholars. Let me quote what Emerson says:—"He is the father of German literature. Now, literature, philosophy, and thought are Shakspearean. His mind is the horizon beyond which we at present do not see. Our ears are educated to music by his rhythm. He cannot step from his tripod, and give us anecdotes of his inspiration. He is inconceivably wise; the others conceivably. A good reader can, in a sort, nestle into Plato's brain and think from thence, but not into Shakspeare's." [14]

And Lowell has uttered what seemed the final estimate:—"Those magnificent crystallizations of feeling and phrase, basaltic masses, molten and interfused by the primal fires of passion, are not to be reproduced by the slow experiments of the laboratory striving to parody creation with artifice.... Among the most alien races he is as solidly at home as a mountain seen from many sides by many lands, itself superbly solitary, yet the companion of all thoughts and domesticated in all imaginations."

All this weight of opinion has not served to settle the question of the sovereignty of Shakspeare. It is hardly needful to mention the action brought by Ignatius Donnelly to prove that Francis Bacon was the author of work which excels the "Novum Organum," for that action was laughed out of court by judge, jury, and audience. It might as well be claimed that Job wrote "Hamlet"; for, whatever doubt may be raised as to his personal history, the folio of 1623 and the testimony of his contemporaries have shown as clearly that Shakspeare wrote the dramas bearing his name as that Macaulay wrote a history of the Revolution of 1688. [15]

But here come Barrett Wendell, Professor of English Literature at Harvard, and his pupil and disciple, Ashley H. Thorndike, Assistant Professor of English at the Western Reserve University, with a new case, or a new brief on the old one, maintaining, with laborious industry and mutual sympathy, that Shakspeare was only an Elizabethan playwright, who found the London stage in possession of chronicle plays, and at once seized the opportunity of using and adapting their material in the histories of King John and the rest; that he learned the organ music of his blank verse from Kit Marlowe; that his tragedies are in the manner of Kyd or some other forgotten failure; that his comedies are but adaptations from Greene or Boccaccio; that "Cymbeline" is but an imitation of "Philaster"; in short that, finding some style of drama made popular by some contemporary of more original power, he immediately imitated his style and plot, surpassed him in phrase-making, and so coined sterling money to build and decorate his house at Stratford. [16]

If not the most formidable, this is the latest attack of the critics. It should seem from our brief review of former efforts, that this has been fully answered. But if apology is needful for further defence, let it be found in this, that when men of eminent position as the instructors of youth, whose word in these days of careless and superficial reading is likely to be taken as final, undertake to change the opinion of the civilized world as to the genius and character of its supreme mind, their assertions should be supported by something more substantial than references to each other as authority, more reliable than dramatic chronology, which they themselves admit to be uncertain, more tangible than the effort to count the lines of "Henry VIII." written by Fletcher. [17]

The position of Professor Wendell can be most fairly stated in his own words. After a hasty review of the early drama, he says of Shakspeare:—

"The better one knows his surroundings, the more clearly one begins to perceive that his chief peculiarity, when compared with his contemporaries, was a somewhat sluggish avoidance of needless invention. When anyone else had done a popular thing, Shakspeare was pretty sure to imitate him and do it better. But he hardly ever did anything first. To his contemporaries he must have seemed deficient in originality, at least as compared with Lilly, or Marlowe, or Ben Jonson, or Beaumont and Fletcher. He was the most obviously imitative dramatist of all, following rather than leading superficial fashion."

Professor Wendell proceeds to give what he is pleased to call examples of Shakspeare's "lack of superficial originality," whatever that may mean, and assumes that he "had certainly done years of work as a dramatic hack-writer" before the appearance of "Venus and Adonis." There is no [18]

proof, not even the doubtful authority of tradition, that he was ever a hack-writer, or ever revised or revamped the dramatic work of another.

Professor Wendell asserts, upon the authority of Mr. Sidney Lee, that Shakspeare came to London in 1586,—that is, when he was twenty-two. Aubry, his oldest biographer, says in 1680 that "this William, being naturally inclined to poetry and acting, came to London, I guess about eighteen (i.e., in 1582), and was an actor at one of the playhouses, and did act exceeding well." "He began early to make essays at dramatic poetry, and his plays took well." The date is important, as will soon be seen.

Professor Wendell proceeds:—"Love's Labour's Lost' is obviously in the manner of Lilly. 'Henry VI.,' certainly collaborative, is a chronicle history of the earlier kind. Greene and Peele were the chief makers of such plays until Marlowe developed the type into his almost masterly 'Edward II.' 'Titus Andronicus' ... is a tragedy of blood much in the manner of Kyd. 'The Comedy of Errors' adapts for popular presentation a familiar kind of Latin comedy." [19]

We may differ with some of these assertions because dissent is supported by the highest authority, both German and English. Ulrici says that "Lilly's works in fact contain nothing but witty words; the actual wit of comic characters, situations, actions, and incidents is almost entirely wanting. Accordingly, his wit is devoid of dramatic power, his conception of comedy still not distinct from the ludicrous, which is always attached to one object; he has no idea of a comic whole." "Love's Labour's Lost" is assigned by the best authority to 1591-92, after the appearance of "Pericles," "Titus Andronicus," the two parts of the "Contention," "The Comedy of Errors," and "The Two Gentlemen of Verona." Professor Wendell admits that in "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" Shakspeare did work of his own. After that, it is not quite "obvious" that "Love's Labour's Lost" is in the style of Lilly, however clear to the critic may be its "tedious length." [20]

Lilly wrote "Endymion, or The Man in the Moon," first published in 1591; it is "one great and elaborate piece of flattery addressed to 'Elizabeth Cynthia'," that is, the Queen; she instructs her ladies in Morals and Pythagoras in Philosophy. "Her kiss breaks the spell" which put Endymion into his forty-years sleep, upon which, and upon his deliverance from which, "the action principally turns within the space of forty years." Can any impartial reader trace this "manner of Lilly" in "Love's Labour's Lost"?

Lilly's "Pleasant conceited Comedy," called "Mother Bombie," appeared in 1594, his "Midas" in 1592, and his "Most Excellent Comedie of Alexander, Campaspe, and Diogenes" in 1584. "Mother Bombie" represents four servants, treated partly as English, partly as Roman slaves, who deceive their respective masters in an "equally clumsy, unlikely, and un-motived manner." It is difficult to see how "Love's Labour's Lost," produced in 1592, could have imitated "Mother Bombie," produced in 1594. "Alexander and Campaspe" is "taken from the well known story of the magnanimity and self-command with which Alexander curbs his passionate love for his beautiful Theban captive, and withdraws in favor of her lover Apelles." The most important comic scenes afford Diogenes the opportunity of emerging from his tub and silencing all comers by his cynical speeches. [21]

Lilly's most ambitious work was his "Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit, very pleasant for all Gentlemen to read," "probably printed as early as 1579." Long before Shakspeare's time, all "Gentlemen" had read it, and it had introduced to the fashionable world a new language which nobody but the high-born could understand. [22]

If "Love's Labour's Lost" is "in the manner of Lilly," it is not so in Professor Wendell's sense, but only as it ridicules with unsparing satire Lilly's conceits and puns.

The statement that "Henry VI." is "certainly collaborative" is unwarranted, because it has been successfully challenged and disproved by the eminent critics Hermann Ulrici and Charles Knight; it is supported only by the guesswork of Clark, Wright, Halliwell and others who assume to find a divided authorship from assumed divergencies of style. The result shows the futility of the method. What Shakspeare is assumed not to have written is assigned to Marlowe, Greene, Peele or Lodge. If style cannot determine between them, what warrant is there for the conclusion that "Henry VI." is "certainly collaborative"?

The second and third parts of "Henry VI." are the final form of "The First Part of the Contention between the Houses of York and Lancaster," and "The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York." Greene, in his savage attack upon Shakspeare, quotes a line which appears in the "Third Part" and also in "The True Tragedy." His attack proves the sole authorship of both by the man he maligns, to whom Chettle apologized within a year. [23]

The argument of Knight has been before the critical world for many years, and its careful arrangement of facts and its logical conclusions from them, have well-nigh overcome the prejudices of English scholars who for many years after the appearance of Malone's "Dissertation" adopted his theory that the two parts of the "Contention" contained nothing from Shakspeare's hand. But because American writers are constantly seeking reputation for learning by repeating Malone's argument, it will be useful, in the interest of truth, to state Knight's answer.

He first takes up Malone's assumption that the two parts of the "Contention" were not written by the author of the "First Part of Henry VI.," and proves the identity of authorship by the intimate connection and unity of action and characterization, and by the identity of manner, making the three plays one integral whole. In the "First Part of Henry VI." and in the "First Part of the [24]

Contention," Suffolk is the same man, Margaret the same woman. In both plays, Gloster and Beaufort speak the same scorn and defiance in the same tongue. The garden scene, with its red and white roses, is the prologue to the "Contention" and indissolubly links together the three parts of "Henry VI." as one drama by the same hand.

Malone's first assumption was therefore without foundation. Even Collier only claims that "it is *plausibly conjectured*" that Shakspeare did not write the "First Part of Henry VI." but that it is an old play most likely written about 1589. Who did write it, was before Knight and Ulrici the theme of endless debate. Hallam was "sometimes inclined to assign it to Greene." Gervinus in his "Commentaries," took the same view, but subsequently changed it. Knight has shown that the three parts of "Henry VI." are "in the strictest sense" Shakspeare's own, and Ulrici agrees with Knight. [25]

It is worthy of note that the "First Part" was acted thirteen times in the spring of 1592 by Lord Strange's men, under the title "Henry VI." Greene lived until the 2d of September in that year, and yet in his "Groatsworth of Wit" he made no claim that the "First Part" was any portion of his "feathers."

The next point made is that the two parts of the "Contention" were written by the author of "Richard III." Malone studiously avoided any comparison between them, and yet it is entirely clear that with the "first Part of Henry VI." they form one drama. "'Richard III.' stands at the end of the series as the avowed completion of a long tragic history. The scenes of that drama are as intimately blended with the scenes of the other dramas as the scenes that belong to the separate dramas are blended among themselves. Its story not only naturally grows out of the previous story,—its characters are not only, wherever possible, the same characters as in the preceding dramas,—but it is even more palpably linked with them by constant retrospection to the events which they had exhibited." [26]

In "Richard III." Margaret is still the same "she-wolf of France" as in the three previous plays. If Shakspeare wrote those terrible lines in "Richard III.," as all scholars admit,—

"From forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept
A hell-hound, that doth hunt us all to death;
That dog, that had his teeth before his eyes,
To worry lambs, and lap their gentle blood;

O upright, just and true disposing God,
How do I thank thee, that this carnal cur
Preys on the issue of his mother's body,

Bear with me, I am hungry for revenge"—

if Shakspeare wrote those lines, he wrote those like them from the same lips, in the second part of the "Contention"— [27]

"Or, where's that valiant crook-backed prodigy,
Dicky, your boy, that with his grumbling voice
Was wont to cheer his dad in mutinies?
Or, 'mongst the rest, where is your darling Rutland?
Look, York, I dipped this napkin in the blood
That valiant Clifford, with his rapier's point,
Made issue from the bosom of thy boy."

The two parts of the "Contention" are admitted to be by the same hand.

Margaret, Edward IV., Elizabeth his Queen, Clarence and Gloster appear in the "Second Part" and in "Richard III."

And here, the unity of action and of characterization conclusively shows the common authorship, precisely as the same resemblance unites the first part of "Henry VI." and the "Contention."

The "Second Part of the Contention" ends thus:—

"And now what rests but that we spend the time
With stately triumphs and mirthful comic shows,
Such as befit the pleasures of the court?"

"Richard III." begins with a continuation of the triumphant strain:— [28]

"Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures."

In "Richard III." are repeated references to events in the "Second Part"; to the murder of Rutland by the "black-faced Clifford"; to the crowning of York with paper, and the mocking offer of a "clout steeped in the faultless blood of pretty Rutland." It must not be forgotten that these striking likenesses, references, unities, are not between "Richard III." and the portion of the "Contention" assigned to Shakspeare, but between the unquestioned author of "Richard" and that part of the "Contention" assigned by Malone and his disciples to somebody else, named only by conjecture.

But the most striking identity of character in these three plays, showing conclusively the identity of authorship, appears in Richard himself: Knight justly and forcibly says: "It seems the most extraordinary marvel that the world, for more than half a century, should have consented to believe that the man who absolutely created that most wonderful character, in all its essential lineaments, in the 'Second Part of the Contention,' was not the man who continued it in 'Richard III.'" [29]

To prove the point, it is only necessary to permit Richard to describe himself.

This picture is from the "Contention":—

"I will go clad my body in gay garments,
And lull myself within a lady's lap,
And witch sweet ladies with my words and looks.
Oh monstrous man, to harbour such a thought!
Why, love did scorn me in my mother's womb;
And, for I should not deal in her affairs,
She did corrupt frail nature in the flesh,
And plac'd an envious mountain on my back,
Where sits deformity to mock my body;
To dry mine arm up like a wither'd shrimp;
To make my legs of an unequal size.
And am I then a man to be beloved?
Easier for me to compass twenty crowns. [30]
Tut, I can smile, and murder when I smile;
I cry content to that which grieves me most;
I can add colours to the chameleon;
And for a need change shapes with Proteus,
And set the aspiring Cataline to school.
Can I do this, and cannot get the crown?
Tush, were it ten times higher, I'll pull it down."

And here is the companion portrait from "Richard III.":—

"But I, that am not shap'd for sporting tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
I, that am rudely stamped, and want love's majesty,
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;—
I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them;—
Why I, in this weak, piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time,
Unless to see my shadow in the sun,
And descant on mine own deformity.
And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair, well-spoken days, [31]
I am determinèd to prove a villain,
And hate the idle pleasure of these days.
Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams,
To set my brother Clarence and the King
In deadly hate the one against the other;
And, if King Edward be as true and just
As I am subtle, false and treacherous,
This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up."

The pictures that Hamlet showed his mother were not more unlike than these are like. But Malone's examination was microscopic, and he used so powerful an instrument that he could not distinguish resemblance or difference beyond its field of vision. The result is that he counts among the lines mended by Shakspeare those that differ from those in the "Contention" only by a particle or a conjunction. By this "capricious arithmetic," only six lines in the scenes with Jack Cade in the "Second Part of Henry VI." are credited to Shakspeare, and we are asked to believe that the man who was to fix the price of bread at "seven half-penny loaves for a penny," to give the "three-hooped pot ten hoops," to "make it felony to drink small beer," was portrayed by [32]

Marlowe, or Greene, or Peele, or Lilly, or Kyd, or Nash, or somebody else still more completely forgotten.

If, then, "Henry VI." is "certainly collaborative," a "chronicle history of the earlier kind," as Professor Wendell expressly asserts, it ought to be shown for our certain instruction who was Shakspeare's collaborator in the three parts of that drama. This neither he nor any other critic has yet done. Malone says it was Greene or Peele, but, in spite of the established fact that we have abundant remains of both, he cannot determine between them from style, or rhythm, or other peculiarities; Collier "supposes" it was Greene; Dyce "conjectures" it was Marlowe.

On the contrary, it may be conclusively shown that Shakspeare is constantly quoting from the "First Part of Henry VI." and the "Contention," as from himself,—adjectives, figures of speech, sentences, phrases. The cardinal in "Henry VI." is called a "scarlet hypocrite," in "Henry VIII." a "scarlet sin." In one play the sentence "I am but shadow of myself" becomes in the other "I am the shadow of poor Buckingham." "My book of memory" in "Henry" is changed to "the table of my memory" in "Hamlet." "Who now is girded with a waist of iron" is repeated in "King John"—"That as a waist do girdle you about." More striking still is the close resemblance between the line in the "First Part"—"Tis but the short'ning of my life one day" and the line in "Henry V."—"Heaven shorten Harry's happy life one day." [33]

In the "First Part of the Contention" the character described "bears a duke's whole revenue on her back." In "Henry VIII." this is recalled by the line,—they "have broke their backs with laying manors on them"; and in "King John"—"bearing their birthrights proudly on their backs." In "Macbeth" the sentence "Infected minds to their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets" is but a repetition of the line from the "Contention" in which Duke Humphrey's assassin "whispers to his pillow as to him." [34]

"You have no children, devils," is the language of the "Contention"; "he has no children" of "Macbeth."

"Bring forth that fatal screech owl to our house,
That nothing sung but blood and death"

are the words of the "Contention";

"Out on you, owls, nothing but songs of death,"

of "Richard III."

Malone suppresses the obvious resemblance between these passages and others like them, and is guilty of the same uncritical conduct in disregarding the classical allusions in the "Second and Third Parts of Henry VI." which he admits were added by Shakspeare,—allusions as numerous and striking as those in the "First Part." [35]

Mr. Richard Grant White, after reviewing the argument of Knight, reaches the conclusion that he "demolished Malone's theory," and this conclusion is a sufficient answer to Professor Wendell's unsupported assertion that "Henry VI." is "certainly collaborative."

But Professor Wendell further says that "Greene and Peele were the chief makers of such plays until Marlowe developed the type into his almost masterly 'Edward II.'" We are therefore asked to believe that Shakspeare, in the historical plays bearing his name, imitated them or one of them. Examination of the record will best show whether this latest critic has discovered any evidence to support his new charge, that Shakspeare "was the most obviously imitative dramatist of all, following rather than leading superficial fashion."

Malone, in his "Chronological Order," says: "'The First Part of King Henry VI.,' which I imagine was formerly known by the name of the 'Historical Play of King Henry VI.,' had, I suspect, been a very popular piece for *some* years, before 1592, and perhaps was first exhibited in 1588 or 1589." Collier states "that it is merely the *old* play on the early events of that reign, which was most likely written in 1589." Knight concludes that "there can be no doubt that the composition of this play preceded that of the two parts of the 'Contention.'" That these had been upon the stage before Greene died in 1592 is proven beyond dispute by Greene's savage attack, at that time Shakspeare was twenty-eight years old and for at least three years had been a shareholder in the Blackfriars Theatre, and, if Mr. Sidney Lee is right, had been in London six years; if old Aubry was better informed, he had been "acting exceeding well" and making "essays at dramatic poetry which took well" for ten years. [36]

The theory of "imitation" rests upon the assumption that Shakspeare did not begin to write for the stage before 1592; Collier asserts, without the slightest support from known facts, and against the hostile testimony of Greene, that he wrote the "tiger's heart lines" before September, 1592, that "the 'History of Henry VI.,' the 'First Part of the Whole Contention,' and the 'True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York,' were all three in being before Shakspeare began to write for the stage"; and Mr. Hallam says, more cautiously, that "it seems probable that the old plays of the 'Contention' ... were in great part by Marlowe." [37]

And so, we find Shakspeare in London, from six to ten years connected with its principal theatre, but writing nothing for its stage, not even as a "hack-writer." We respectfully dissent from this conclusion because it lacks support either in fact or probability. The man who, from utter penury, had in 1589 won his way to a lucrative share in the theatre he made illustrious, and who wrote

"Romeo and Juliet," which first appeared, according to Ulrici's investigation, in 1592, was more capable of writing, and more likely to have written, the three original pieces than Greene or Marlowe, to one of whom, or to some other writer, the authorship is assigned by mere conjecture, from a fancied but confused and indeterminate likeness of style or metre or classical quotation. [38]

Marlowe was killed in a brawl with one Francis Archer, at Deptford, on the first day of June, 1593. The only dramas that can be certainly called his are the "Two Parts of Tamburlaine," "The Massacre of Paris," "Faustus," the "Jew of Malta" and "Edward II." His merits and his faults have been discussed by many scholars; his style is characterized as the "mighty line"; he is said by many to have invented and introduced blank verse as the vehicle of the drama, although "Gorboduc," acted before the Queen in 1561 and published in 1565, Gascogne's "Jocasta," played in 1566, and Whetstone's "Promos and Cassandra," printed in 1578, were wholly or partly in blank verse. But it is admitted by all editors and critics that Marlowe's only historical plays are "The Massacre" and "the almost masterly Edward II.," as Professor Wendell somewhat ambiguously calls it. The "Massacre" ends with the death of Henry III. of France, who was assassinated on the 1st of August, 1589; "it cannot, therefore, have been written earlier than about 1590." Whatever its true date, it is not claimed to bear any likeness to either part of the "Contention." On the contrary, "it was a subject in which Marlowe would naturally revel; for in the progress of the action, blood could be made to flow as freely as water." The resemblance is sought in his Edward II., which, as all the facts tend to show, was his latest work, written after the "Massacre" and certainly not published in his lifetime. It was entered at Stationer's Hall in July, 1593, a little more than a month after Marlowe's death. But here stands the "Contention" with a fixed date, proved to have been in existence "in or close upon the first half of the decade commencing in 1585," and the admission of all scholars that it preceded Marlowe's "Edward II." If, therefore, Marlowe wrote one or both parts of the "Contention," the extravagant assumption must be made "that his mind was so thoroughly disciplined at the period when he produced 'Tamburlaine,' 'Faustus' and the 'Jew of Malta' that he was able to lay aside every element, whether of thought or expression, by which those plays are characterized, adopt essentially different principles for the dramatic conduct of a story, copy his characters from living and breathing models of actual men; come down from his pomp and extravagance of language, not to reject poetry, but to ally poetry with familiar and natural thoughts; and delineate crime not with the glaring and fantastic pencil that makes demons spout forth fire and blood ... but with a severe portraiture of men who walk in broad daylight upon the common earth, rendering the ordinary passions of their fellows,—pride, and envy, and ambition, and revenge,—most fearful, from their alliance with stupendous intellect and unconquerable energy. This was what Marlowe must have done before he could have conducted a single sustained scene of either part of the 'Contention'; before he could have depicted the fierce hatreds of Beaufort and Gloster, the never-subdued ambition of Margaret and York, the patient suffering, amidst taunting friends and reviling enemies, of Henry, and, above all, the courage, the activity, the tenacity, the self-possession, the intellectual supremacy and the passionless ferocity of Richard." [39] [40] [41]

Does it need more to show that Marlowe was not the author of the "Contention"? Here is the proof, and it does not rest upon conjecture, or inference from disputed facts, but upon records that have survived the waste of three centuries. The "First Part of the Contention" was printed by Thomas Creed, for Thomas Millington, in 1594; "The True Tragedy of Richard," the old name of the "Second Part of the Contention," by "P. S." for Thomas Millington, in 1595. The title page gives the name of no author for either play, and it is claimed by eminent authority that both were piratical editions; but if Marlowe was the unquestioned author, were not his friends and associates still living, three years after his death, to claim the honor of creating two dramas which immeasurably surpassed any other he ever wrote? If it be asked why Shakspeare's friends did not claim the authorship for him, it is answered that as soon as another edition appeared, they did. In 1619, three years after his death, a new edition of these very plays appeared, with Shakspeare's full name on the title page, and enlarged by additions from the second and third parts of "Henry VI." And this proof is further supported: In an entry in the Stationer's Registers under date of April 19, 1602, appears the following remark:—"Thom. Pavier: By assignment from Th. Millington *salvo jure cujuscunque*: the First and Second Parts of 'Henry VI.', two books." This entry refers to the two plays first published in 1594 and 1595, the first of which is always called "The First Part of the Contention," and both of which in the edition of 1619 were under the title of "The whole Contention between the two famous Houses of Lancaster and York," by the same Th. Pavier who had received them "by assignment" from the original publisher of the editions of 1594 and 1595,—*Thomas Millington*. Pavier knew in 1619, and therefore put his name on the title page of his edition, that Shakspeare was the author of the two parts of the "Contention," but instead of giving them the extended titles of the former editions, briefly and inaccurately designated them as "The First and Second Parts of Henry VI." It results from these facts, that when Malone was attempting to show that Shakspeare was imitating Marlowe's "Edward II." in the lines— [42] [43]

"Scorning that the lowly earth
Should drink his blood, mounts up to the air,"

and—

"Frown'st thou thereat, aspiring Lancaster?"

he forgot the important and established truth that Marlowe was imitating Shakspeare in the "Contention." [44]

For two centuries, until Malone's "Dissertation," nobody had claimed that Marlowe wrote any portion of the "Contention"; for nearly two centuries, the "Second and Third Parts of Henry VI." had appeared as the sole work of Shakspeare, embodying act for act, scene for scene, event for event and character for character, the whole "Contention," and nobody had claimed that he was not the sole author of both. We therefore respectfully submit that Professor Wendell has no warrant for his assertion that "to his contemporaries he must have seemed deficient in originality, as least as compared with Lilly or Marlowe." "Henry VI." was not "collaborative." Marlowe did not develop the type of chronicle history into his "almost masterly Edward II."

But Professor Wendell further asserts that "Greene and Peele were the chief makers of such plays" before Marlowe, and the implication is that Shakspeare, in his historical plays, "followed the superficial fashion" set by them. [45]

Of Greene's dramas, only two purport to have been his work,—"Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay" and "The Scottish History of James the Fourth." "Orlando Furioso," generally assigned to him, has no name on its title page; "Alphonsus, King of Aragon," is probably his, as it bears the initials "R. G."; "The Looking Glass for London and England" bears the joint names of Lodge and Greene; "The pleasant conceyted comedy of George-a-Green, the Pinner of Wakefield," sometimes assigned to him, is of doubtful authorship.

"Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay" is characterized by Knight as "the old story of the Brazen Head. There is here, unquestionably, more facility in the versification, much less of what we may distinguish by the name of fustian, and some approach to simplicity and even playfulness. But whenever Greene gets hold of a king, he invariably makes him talk in the right royal style which we have already seen; and our Henry III. does not condescend to discourse in a bit more simple English than the Soldan of Egypt or the King of Nineveh." [46]

This play was first printed in 1594.

The old popular tradition of Friar Bacon and his magic arts is interwoven with the loves of Prince Edward and Earl Lacy. Legend and love story have nothing in common, and their connection is merely accidental. The Friar's design fails through the stupidity of his servant, but no explanation is given of the folly of entrusting such weighty matters to a fool. The love story turns upon the retirement from the amorous contest in favor of Lacy, but no reason is assigned for the resulting trials of the successful party. There is no glimpse of history or of historical chronicle in the piece. Of one thing we may be certain: With all his wonderful power, Shakspeare was incapable of imitating "The honorable Historie of Frier Bacon and Frier Bongay." [47]

"James the Fourth" appeared in print in 1598 under the title "The Scottish Historie of James the Fourth, slaine at Flodden, intermisted with a pleasant Comedie &c." Of this drama Ulrici says that "Greene, led astray perhaps by Marlowe, ventured upon a task quite beyond him. He as yet obviously had no idea of the dignity of history, of an historical spirit, of an historical conception of the subject, or of an historical form of the drama. History with him resolves itself into a romance." This opinion is fully sustained by the play itself; James falls in love with Ida, the daughter of the Countess of Arran, but in spite of his disloyalty, his Queen is faithful. James repents for the very good reason that Ida spurns him, but not until he has ordered the Queen to be killed. The murder is unsuccessfully attempted, and after her partial recovery, she rushes between the armies, disarms the hostility of her father, the English King, and wins back her husband's love. The chief characters are Oberon, King of Fairies, and Rohan, a "misanthropic recluse." Rohan has this veracious "history" enacted before Oberon, and so justifies himself for having withdrawn from a bad world. This is the "pleasant Comedie" which is connected with the main action by Slipper, Rohan's son, who plays the part of clown. It is not strange that the impartial critic summed up the review with the remark that "the atmosphere of history was evidently too pure and cool for Greene's taste." The play is a romance from beginning to end; it has no pretension to the character of an historical drama. Mr. Dyce says of it: "From what source our author derived the materials of this strange fiction I have not been able to discover; nor could Mr. David Laing of Edinburg, who is so profoundly versed in the ancient literature of his country, point out to me any Scottish chronicle or tract which might have afforded hints to the poet for its composition." [48]

The play originally called in 1599 "The Chronicle History of Alphonsus, King of Aragon" is based upon a semi-historical foundation, and yet, as the highest authority has pronounced, Greene "has erected such a romantic and fantastic structure upon this foundation, that it would be doing him an injustice to judge his work from the standpoint of an historical drama." [49]

It is plainly an imitation of "Tamburlaine." Alphonsus, singly and alone, conquers the crown of Aragon and half the world in addition, accompanied by monotonous noise and blood. The ghost of Mahomet is introduced as if to give variety to the scene, but fails utterly, and, nobody can guess why, refuses to give the required oracle, but finally, importuned by the attendant priests, gives a false one. Even the marriage of Alphonsus with Iphigenia fails to enliven the style of the poet. But the machinery that moves the action is all wonderful and striking and quite un-historical. Venus and the Muses recite the Prologue and act the dumb shows, representing at the beginning of each act a retrospection of the Past and a forecast of the Future. And Venus herself, with the help of Calliope, writes the play, "not with pen and ink, but with flesh and blood and living action." "This ... indicates the fundamental idea of the piece. Wherever the all-powerful goddess of love and beauty herself plans the actions and destinies of mortals, there extraordinary things come to pass with playful readiness and grace." [50]

"The Historie of Orlando Furioso," issued from the London press in 1594, is a light production hastily sketched for a Court Festival, based upon the great romance of Ariosto, "but the superstructure presents the most extravagant deviations from Ariosto's plan. The pomposity of the diction is not amiss in the mouths of such stately personages as the Emperor of Africa, the Soldan of Egypt, the Prince of Mexico, the King of the Isles and the mad Orlando."

[51]

It may not be amiss to quote an example:

"Discourteous woman, nature's fairest ill,
The woe of man, that first created curse,
Base female sex, sprung from black Ate's loins,
Proud, disdainful, cruel and unjust,
Whose words are shaded with enchanting wiles,
Worse than Medusa mateth all our minds;
And in their hearts sit shameless treachery,
Turning a truthless vile circumference!
O, could my fury paint their furies forth!
For hell's no hell, compared to their hearts,
Too simple devils to conceal their arts;
Born to be plagues unto the thoughts of men,
Brought for eternal pestilence to the world."

It is difficult to think of Shakspeare "bombasting out a blank verse" like this.

The dramatic characters recite passages from the classic authors; the enchantress Melissa gives a whole speech in Latin hexameters; Orlando bursts into Italian rhymes to utter his rage against Angelica,—a want of taste," says the commentator, "which brings the already unsuccessful scene, the centre of the whole action, down to the sphere of the ridiculous."

[52]

Nobody has been able to determine how much of the "Looking Glass for London and England" was written by Lodge, how much by Greene. Knight thinks the poetry should be assigned to Greene. The whole piece is made up of an extraordinary mixture of Kings of Nineveh, Crete, Cicilia, and Paphlagonia; of usurers, judges, lawyers, clowns, and ruffians; of angels, magi, sailors, lords, and "one clad in Devil's attire." The Prophet Hosea presides over the whole performance, with the exception of the first and last scenes,—a silent, invisible observer of the characters, for the purpose of uttering an exhortation to the people at the end of each scene, that they should take warning from Nineveh. There is a flash of lightning which kills two of the royal family, and then another which strikes the parasite, Radagon. Both admonitions are equally futile. At last an angel prays repeatedly, and in answer Jonah is sent to preach repentance. His mission is successful, and at last Jehovah himself descends in angelic form and proclaims mercy. It has been thought that the piece was written to silence the Puritan zealots who claimed that the secular drama had demoralized the stage, and forgotten the purity of the Moral and Miracle plays; but it has never been suggested that this was a "chronicle history."

[53]

"George-a-Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield," is not generally credited to Greene, but Ulrici, from the style, assigns it to him. It makes no claim as an historical drama, but is based upon two popular legends and some events during the reign of King Edward, without specifying which king of that name, and "without regard to chronological order or historical truth."

Such is a brief and fair summary of the works, whether authentic or doubtful, of Robert Greene. Let us turn to those of Peele, the friend of Greene and Marlowe.

Dyce assigns to him "The History of the two valiant Knights, Syr Clyomon, Knight of the Golden Shield, sonne of the King of Denmark, and Syr Clamides the White Knight," printed without the author's name in 1584.

[54]

The subject, a chivalrous romance, with dragons and sorcerers and lost princesses, is more a narrative in dialogue than a drama. It is full of long speeches without any real action. It resembles the "Moralities": the clown is called "Subtle Shift," sometimes "Vice." "Rumour" and "Providence" appear, the one to tell Clyomon what has happened during his absence, the other to prevent Clyomon's mistress "from committing rash and unnecessary suicide." The clown calls the piece a "pageant"; it cannot be called "a chronicle history."

Peele's "Arraignment of Paris, a Pastorall" is a court drama in the style of Lilly, intended to flatter the Queen, "poor in action but all the richer in gallant phrases, provided with songs, one in Italian, and with all kinds of love scenes between shepherds and shepherdesses, nymphs and terrestrial gods"; the diction is interesting, because it shows revolt from the prevailing "euphuism," and therefore Peele must be given the praise of first opposing Lilly's affected style.

[55]

The subject and action are as far removed from history as earth from heaven; Paris is accused by Juno and Pallas before the assembled gods, for having pronounced an unjust sentence; he is released without punishment, but as the fair plaintiffs persist in their appeal, the decision is left to Diana, who then awards the fatal apple, not to any of the three goddesses, but to the wise nymph Eliza, who is as chaste as she is beautiful and powerful. Juno, Pallas, and Venus of course agree to this decision and lay all their gifts at the feet of the Queen. At the end, even the three

Fates appear, in order, in a Latin chant, to deliver up the emblems of their power, and therewith the power itself, to the exalted nymph.

"The Old Wife's Tale, a pleasant conceited Comedie," published in 1595, is a dramatized old wife's story told to three erring fancies, Frolic, Antic and Fantastic, quite in the style of a fairy tale, "always wavering in the peculiar twilight, between profound sense and nonsense, between childish play and matured humor." Two brothers who have lost their sisters appear, and then an insolent giant, swaggering with a double-edged sword and attended by an enamored fool, and finally a knight-errant devoting his fortune to pay the stingy sexton for the burial of a victim of poverty; they are now hunting for the princess, the sisters, and the beloved lady, and to free them from the sorcerer; none of them succeed in the effort, except the knight, "and he only by the help of the ghost of the poor Jack whose body he buried." [56]

"The Battel of Alcazar fought in Barbarie" is attributed to Peele and was published in 1586, soon after Marlowe's "Tamburlaine," after which it is modelled and to which it expressly refers. The commentator says: "It is a mere battle piece, full of perpetual fighting and noise, of which the action almost exclusively consists." There is nothing to show that it had any connection with history or chronicle, or was anything better than a hurriedly written, spectacular drama. [57]

The "Edward I." of Peele bears this title: "The famous Chronicle of King Edward the First, surnamed Edward Longshanks, with his Return from the Holy Land. Also the life of Llewellen Rebell in Wales. Lastly, the sinking of Queene Elinor, who sunk at Charing-crosse, and rose again at Pottersshith, now named Queenshith."

The title itself proves that it is not a "chronicle" but an unhistorical fiction. The events pass by in one straight, continuous line, the dramatic personages are characterized almost solely by their actions, the language is a mere sketch. The Queen murders the Lady Mayoress, and on her death-bed confesses a double adultery; she commits perjury by denying the murder and calls upon Heaven to sink her into the depths of the earth if she had spoken falsely. "That she 'sunk at Charing-crosse' before it was erected to her memory, is a sufficiently remarkable circumstance in Peele's play, but it is more remarkable that, assuming to be a 'famous Chronicle,' and in one or two of the events following the Chronicle, he has represented the Queen altogether to be a fiend in female shape,—proud, adulterous, cruel, treacherous and bloody." The play contradicts the Chronicle, and therefore cannot be called a chronicle history. Hollinshed, the source of all Shakspeare's histories, says of Queen Eleanor: "She was a godly and modest princess, full of pity, and one that showed much favor to the English nation, ready to relieve every man's grief that sustained wrong, and to make those friends that were at discord, so far as in her lay." [58]

Mr. Hallam has characterized this violation of historical truth as a "hideous misrepresentation of the virtuous Eleanor of Castile.... The 'Edward I.' of Peele is a gross tissue of absurdity with some facility of language, but nothing truly good." Nobody but Professor Wendell has ever even intimated that Shakspeare imitated it. [59]

It is hardly necessary to consider "The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe," published in 1599, because, in the deliberate opinion of those who have studied the subject most deeply, it was not written till "Romeo and Juliet" was upon the stage in 1592. In it there are distinct traces of Shakspeare's influence. "The love scenes, and the images and similes describing the charms of the beauty of nature, remind one of those incomparable pictures in 'Romeo and Juliet.'" In Peele's other plays he has made but feeble attempts to depict love, beauty, or grace; in "King David" he has "depicted them with a remarkably high degree of success."

These are all the works of Peele which have come down to our time, and after this review of his and of Greene's dramas, it does not seem that "Greene and Peele were the chief makers of such plays," that is, of "chronicle histories," before Marlowe. The truth is, that all the supporters of Malone's theory have taken Malone's unsupported statement as indisputable fact; they have not sufficiently examined the works of Greene and Peele, but have assumed, as Malone assumed, that Greene's charge in his "Groat's Worth of Wit" was conclusive proof that Shakspeare did not write the two parts of the "Contention," and that Greene, or one of the friends he addresses, was in fact the author. [60]

This assumption has again and again been shown to be without foundation. There was no point in Greene's dying sarcasm if he merely quoted a line written by himself; if he quoted one written by Shakspeare, the whole argument of Professor Wendell, that "Henry VI." was "certainly collaborative," that his early work was "hack-writing," that "he hardly ever did anything first," that "to his contemporaries he must have seemed deficient in originality," falls to the ground.

Having done what Malone failed to do, and what Professor Wendell seems not to have done,—having reviewed at some length the works of Shakspeare's contemporaries to whom the older chronicle plays are attributed by Malone,—we invoke, in support of the position we have taken, the opinion of Mr. Charles Knight in his "Essay on Henry VI. and Richard III." [61]

"The dramatic works of Greene, which were amongst the rarest treasures of the bibliographer, have been rendered accessible to the general reader by the valuable labors of Mr. Dyce. To those who are familiar with these works we will appeal, without hesitation, in saying that the character of Greene's mind, and his habits of composition, rendered him utterly incapable of producing, not the Two Parts of the 'Contention,' or one Part, but a single sustained scene of either Part.

"And yet a belief has been long entertained in England, to which some wise and judicious still cling, that Greene and Peele either wrote the Two Parts of the 'Contention' in conjunction; or that

Greene wrote one Part and Peele the other Part; or that, at any rate, Greene had some share in these dramas. This was the theory propagated by Malone in his 'Dissertation'; and it rests not upon the slightest examination of these writers, but solely on the far-famed passage in Greene's posthumous pamphlet, the 'Groat's Worth of Wit,' in which he points out Shakspeare as 'a crow beautified with our feathers.' The hypothesis seems to us to be little less than absurd.... He parodies a line from one of the productions of which he had been so plundered, to carry the point home, to leave no doubt as to the sting of his allusion. But, as has been most justly observed, the epigram would have wanted its sting if the line parodied had not been that of the very writer attacked." [62]

"Titus Andronicus" is a "tragedy of blood" written by Shakspeare, according to the highest authority, when he was twenty-three or twenty-four years of age. Ben Johnson says, in his "Bartholomew Fair" (1614), that it had been on the stage for twenty-five or thirty years. It was doubtless a very early work, but whether "much in the manner of Kyd," as Professor Wendell asserts, can be best determined by reference to Kyd's works. The claim has been made by other critics that "Titus" was "collaborative," but Professor Wendell's is that it was an "imitation." [63]

"The Tragedy of Soliman and Perseda," first printed in 1599, is of doubtful authorship, but has sometimes been credited to Kyd. "The piece still bears a striking resemblance to the old Moral Plays and thereby proves its relatively early origin. A chorus consisting of the allegorical figures Love, Happiness, and Death opens the play and each separate act, and ends it with a controversy in which all the personified powers boast of their deeds and triumphs over the others, till at the end of the fifth act Death remains the victor, and the whole concludes with a eulogy of Queen Elizabeth, the only mortal whom Death does not venture to approach." "Titus Andronicus" will be searched in vain for "much" or little of this "manner of Kyd." [64]

"The First Part of Jeronimo, with the Warres of Portugal and the Life and Death of Don Andrea," not published till 1605, is not an authentic work of Kyd, but is attributed to him by some because, judging from the subject, it belongs to "The Spanish Tragedy" and is regarded by Henslowe as the first part of it. A. W. Schlegel says that "both of these parts are full of absurdities, that the author had ventured upon describing the most forced situations and passions without being aware of his want of power, that especially the catastrophe of the second part, which is intended to surpass every conceivable horror, is introduced in a trivial manner, merely producing a ludicrous effect, and that the whole was like a child's drawings, wholly unmindful of the laws of proportion."

Ulrici maintains that "Jeronimo" itself may be treated as a play in three parts connected only externally: first, the war between Portugal and Spain; second, the life and death of Don Andrea, and third the acts of Jeronimo, who is, however, only a subordinate character. But whether the play be treated as a whole or as composed of substantially separate parts, its action and interest are centred in the story of the love of Don Andrea and Bellimperia; Lorenzo, her brother, persecutes both because he is jealous of Andrea's success. Andrea is finally killed; at his funeral, his ghost appears for no assigned reason, except to exchange greeting with his friend Horatio. "Revenge" and Charon also appear, the one "to forbid Andrea's ghost from divulging the secrets of Hell, the other to accompany him back to the lower regions," and the learned critic adds that "this allegorical by-play is inserted so arbitrarily, so inappropriately and so unmeaningly, that it forms the best standpoint for judging the piece as regards its composition and poetical character. *In this respect its value is next to nothing.*" [65]

If Kyd wrote "Jeronimo," of which there is no satisfactory proof, and if Shakspeare wrote "Titus," "much in the manner of Kyd," which we venture to think more doubtful than the authorship of "Jeronimo," then Shakspeare's supposed imitation was much "better" than the original "popular thing." [66]

That Kyd wrote "The Spanish Tragedy, containing the lamentable end of Don Horatio and Bellimperia with the pitifull Death of Old Hieronimo," first published in 1599, is certified by Heywood in his "Apology for Actors," and there is good authority for the opinion that it was acted as early as 1588. We quote the summary of the plot:

"It is not wanting in absurdities, for the play opens and is connected with 'Jeronimo' by a conversation between Andrea's ghost and 'Revenge'; both remain continually on the stage as silent, invisible spectators, in order, at the end of every act, to add a few words, in which Andrea laments over the delay in the revenge of his death upon the Infanta Belthazar, and 'Revenge' admonishes him to be patient; at the end of the fifth act both return satisfied to the lower regions. Then Bellimperia suddenly falls in love with Horatio, who now steps into Andrea's place, and is persecuted by Lorenzo, at first without any cause whatever, and is finally assassinated. By some means which remain perfectly unexplained and incomprehensible, Lorenzo keeps old Jeronimo from the Court, so that he cannot bring forward his accusation against the murderers of his son. Jeronimo is consequently seized with madness, which, however, suddenly turns into a well calculated and prudent action. The conclusion of the piece is a general massacre, in which Jeronimo, after having killed Lorenzo, bites off his own tongue, stabs the Duke of Castile, and then himself with a penknife." [67]

It can hardly seem strange that the critic should add: "This at once explains why no piece was more generally ridiculed by contemporary and younger poets, than "The Spanish Tragedy."" [68]

If Shakspeare imitated Kyd in "Titus," from such stuff as this, he was surely wise in his "sluggish avoidance of needless invention."

We are tempted to suggest, however, that "The Spanish Tragedy" affords a rich and ample field to modern critics who are solicitous to save the life and work of "the gentle William" from the imputation of being "superhuman": Is it not clear that "Hamlet" was only an imitation of "The Spanish Tragedy"? Did not Hamlet have a friend whose name was Horatio? Was not Hamlet, like Jeronimo, "essentially mad," and did not his madness "turn into a well calculated and prudent action"?

Kyd was the undoubted author of another work, under the following title: "Pompey the Great, his fair Cornelia's Tragedie: effected by her Father's and Husband's downe-cast Death and fortune, written in French by that excellent Poet, R. Garnier, and translated into English by Thomas Kyd." This translation was printed in 1595. The play is thus summarized: It is "a piece which is constructed upon a misunderstood model of the ancients; it is altogether devoid of dramatic action, in reality merely lyrics and rhetoric in dialogue. The whole of the first act consists of one emphatic jeremiad by Cicero, about the desperate condition of Rome as it then was, its factiousness, its servility,—a jeremiad which is continued at the end of the act, by the chorus, in rhymed stanzas. In this tone it proceeds without a trace of action through the whole of the succeeding act, till maledictions and outbursts of grief on the part of Cornelia conclude the piece at the same point at which it had commenced."

[69]

It has never been claimed that "Cornelia" was the model for "Titus." "Cornelia" and "The Spanish Tragedy" are the only dramas that can be certainly called Kyd's. Comparison between these, or either of the others doubtfully attributed to him, and "Titus Andronicus," shows beyond question that the only similarity between the most similar is that both are "tragedies of blood." There is no likeness of plot, characterization, action or diction. There is in "Titus" none of Kyd's "huffing, bragging, puft" language. A ghost concludes "Jeronimo" whose "hopes have end in their effects" "when blood and sorrow finish my desires," "these were spectacles to please my soul." In "Titus," even the Satanic Aaron, "in the whirlwind of passion," "acquires and begets a temperance" that "gives it smoothness."

[70]

When Tamora proposes crimes to her sons, that fiends would refuse to execute, Lavinia does not shriek, nor rant, nor call upon the gods, but speaks what nobody but Shakspeare could have uttered,—

"O Tamora! thou bear'st a woman's face."

It is not necessary to consider the claim sometimes made, that Kyd wrote an old "Taming of the Shrew" or an old "Hamlet." "It is a mere arbitrary conjecture" that he was the author of either.

There is therefore no proof that Shakspeare imitated Kyd, and Professor Wendell's assertion that "Titus Andronicus" is "much" in his manner is utterly without support.

[71]

"The Comedy of Errors" was unquestionably suggested by the "Twins" of Plautus. Is it therefore an imitation?

What is literary imitation? Did Dante imitate Virgil because Virgil's ghost was the guide through the "Inferno"? Did Milton imitate Dante in "Paradise Lost" because he describes the same scenes in different words? Did he imitate the author of Genesis because he reproduces the Garden of Eden in majestic poetry? "Paradise Lost" seems to Professor Wendell "almost superhuman," but when any suggestion of transcendent power is applied to Shakspeare, it assumes an "unnecessary miracle." Shakspeare, whom ten generations of great men have failed to imitate, is in the opinion of Professor Wendell but an imitator, because while, as he says, "he could not help waking to life the stiffly conventional characters which he found, as little more than names, in the tales and the fictions he adapted for the stage," he wrote chronicle plays, comedies, romances, tragedies, after others had worked in the same fields.

[72]

Milton was born in 1608. "That was the year," says Professor Wendell, "when Shakspeare probably came to the end of his tragic period, and, with the imitativeness which never forsook him, was about to follow the newly popular manner of Beaumont and Fletcher."

But let us turn to Professor Wendell's opinion of Milton and quote his language: "With Milton, the case is wonderfully different. Read Scripture, if you will, and then turn to your 'Paradise Lost.' Turn then to whatever poet you chance to love of Greek antiquity or of Roman. Turn to Dante himself.... Then turn back to Milton. Different you will find him, no doubt, in the austere isolation of his masterful and deliberate Puritanism and learning; but that difference does not make him irrevocably lesser. Rather you will grow more and more to feel how wonderful his power proves. Almost alone among poets, he could take the things for which he had need from the masters themselves, as confidently as any of the masters had taken such matters from lesser men; and he could so place these spoils of masterpieces in his own work that they seem as truly and as admirably part of it as they seemed of the other great works where he found them." "'Paradise Lost' transcends all traces of its lesser origins, until those lesser origins become a matter of mere curiosity."

[73]

And so it appears that Professor Wendell applies one definition of the word "imitation" to Shakspeare, another to Milton. If Shakspeare found chronicle plays in the theatre, and transformed them into the most vivid and truthful history ever written, "those lesser origins become a matter of mere curiosity," and the charge of imitation fails. If the "Comedy of Errors" is an "imitation" of Plautus, "Paradise Lost" is an "imitation" of Moses. If "Paradise Lost" is not an "imitation" but "something utterly apart," "something almost superhuman ... in its grand solitude"; if Milton has

[74]

"so placed the spoils of masterpieces in his own work that they seem truly and admirably a part of it," then "Love's Labour's Lost" is not an "imitation" of Lilly, nor "Henry VI." of Greene or Peele or Marlowe, nor "Titus Andronicus" of Kyd.

But this indictment against Shakspeare is made more definite in form, and may therefore be more conclusively answered. This is the charge as stated by Professor Wendell:

"A young American scholar whose name has hardly yet crossed the Atlantic,—Professor Ashley Horace Thorndike,—has lately made some studies in dramatic chronology which go far to confirm the unromantic conjecture that to the end Shakspeare remained imitative and little else. Professor Thorndike, for example, has shown with convincing probability that certain old plays concerning Robin Hood proved popular; a little later, Shakspeare produced the woods and outlaws of 'As You Like It.' The question is one of pure chronology; and pure chronology has convinced me, for one, that the forest scenes of Arden were written to fit available costumes and properties.... Again, Professor Thorndike has shown that Roman subjects grew popular, and tragedies of revenge such as Marston's; a little later, Shakspeare wrote 'Julius Cæsar' and 'Hamlet.' With much more elaboration Professor Thorndike has *virtually proved* that the romances of Beaumont and Fletcher—different both in motive and in style from any popular plays which had preceded them—were conspicuously successful on the London stage before Shakspeare began to write romances. It seems likely, therefore, that 'Cymbeline,' which less careful chronology had conjectured to be a model for Beaumont and Fletcher, was in fact imitated from models which they had made. In other words, Professor Thorndike has shown that one may account for all the changes in Shakspeare, after 1600, by merely assuming that the most skilful and instinctive imitator among the early Elizabethan dramatists, remained to the end an instinctively imitative follower of fashions set by others."

Again, he says: "The likeness of their work to the romances of Shakspeare—in subject, in structure, in peculiarities of verse,—has been often remarked; and they have consequently been supposed to have begun by skilful superficial imitation of his spiritually ripest phase. The question is one of chronology not yet fixed in detail; but as I have told you already, the studies of my friend Professor Thorndike have virtually proved that several of their plays must have been in existence decidedly before the dates commonly assigned to 'Cymbeline,' the 'Tempest' or the 'Winter's Tale.' If he is right,—and I believe him so,—the relation commonly thought to have existed between them and Shakspeare is precisely reversed. Shakspeare was the imitator, not they; indeed, as we have seen, he was from the beginning an imitator, not an inventor. And here his imitations are not in all respects better than his models."

Here the grave accusation is distinctly made that Shakspeare imitated Beaumont and Fletcher, and to support it, reference is made to one man only, Professor Thorndike, his pupil and disciple.

And so, in this new case, we have two judges, and the curious fact that the instructor refers to the student and the student to the instructor as the sole authority for the soundness of the decision.

The "Introduction" of Professor Thorndike to his "Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakspeare" sufficiently shows the animus of his essay: he cites the libel of Greene, and intimates that it is an accusation of plagiarism which we have rejected, but which "contains an element of truth worth keeping in mind"; he repeats in positive words the charge of Professor Wendell that Shakspeare began by "imitating or revamping the work of others"; that "Titus Andronicus" and "Henry VI.," "so far as they are his, are certainly imitative of other plays of the time," and adds that "Richard II." and "Richard III." show the influence of Marlowe's tragedies, and "Love's Labour's Lost" of Lilly's comedies.

We have sufficiently answered as to "Henry VI.," "Titus Andronicus," and "Love's Labour's Lost." There is no proof offered as to the histories of the two Richards. The assertion is made without authority or example, without even the application of the usual "verse-tests" by which authorship is so conveniently determined.

Having repeated the erroneous and unsupported statements of his master, Professor Thorndike announces that after these early "imitations" little attention has been given to Shakspeare's subsequent indebtedness to his contemporaries, for the reason that "to most students it has seemed absurd," while to him it is clear that "Hamlet" and "Lear" "contain traces of the 'tragedy of blood type'; that "a closer adherence to current forms can be seen in the relation between the 'Merchant of Venice' and the 'Jew of Malta,'" "or in the many points of similarity between 'Hamlet' and the ... tragedies dealing with the theme of blood revenge," and that "characters ... are often clearly developments of types familiar on the stage," "as for example, Iago is a development of the conventional stage villain." He is certainly correct in saying that to most students these assumptions "seem absurd." Let us examine them briefly, for the purpose of learning whether they deserve any more serious adjective.

Marlowe's "Jew of Malta" appeared about 1589. As the author announces in the prologue, it is based upon Machiavel's theory of life—pure selfishness. The Jew makes war upon all the world, for the gratification of his passion for revenge; he poisons his daughter "and the entire nunnery in which she had taken refuge"; he kills, he betrays, he prepares a burning caldron for a whole garrison,—"tragedy such as this is simply revolting. The characters of Barabas and of his servant, and the motives by which they are stimulated, are the mere coinage of extravagance; and the effect is as essentially undramatic as the personification is unreal." The conduct of the drama is in keeping with the character of this incomprehensible monster of vindictiveness; he is "without

shame or fear, and bloodthirsty even to madness." His bad schemes are always successful; but the action proceeds without connection, the characters come and go without apparent cause; the three Jews, the monks and nuns, the mother of Don Mathias "appear and disappear so unexpectedly, and are interwoven with the action in so entirely an external manner, that the defects of the composition are at once apparent."

If this seems a good model for Shakspeare's Shylock, it will seem impossible, when Barabas shows us his own portrait:

"As for myself, I walk abroad a-nights,
And kill sick people groaning under walls;
Sometimes I go about and poison wells;
And now and then, to cherish Christian thieves
I am content to lose some of my crowns;
That I may, walking in my gallery,
See 'em go pinion'd along by my door.
Being young, I studied physic, and began
To practice first upon the Italian;
There I enriched the priest with burials,
And always kept the sexton's arms in use,
With digging graves and ringing dead men's knells;
And after that was I an engineer,
And in the wars 'twixt France and Germany,
Under pretence of helping Charles the Fifth,
Slew friend and enemy with my stratagemms.
And after that was I an usurer,
And with extorting, cozening, forfeiting,
And tricks belonging unto brokery,
I filled the jails with bankrupts in a year,
And with young orphans planted hospitals,
And every moon made some or other mad,
And now and then one hung himself for grief,
Pinning upon his breast a long great scroll,
How I with interest tormented him.
But mark how I am bless'd for plaguing them;
I have as much coin as will buy the town.
But tell me now, how hast thou spent thy time?"

[81]

[82]

And the servant answers in sympathetic lines:

"Faith, master, in setting Christian villages on fire,
Chaining of eunuchs, binding galley slaves.
One time I was an ostler in an inn,
And in the night-time secretly would I steal
To travellers' chambers, and there cut their throats;
Once at Jerusalem, where the pilgrims kneel'd,
I strewed powder on the marble stones,
And therewithal their knees would rankle so
That I have laugh'd a-good to see the cripples
Go limping home to Christendom on stilts."

Undoubtedly, the "groundlings" shouted with delight when this fiend was plunged into the boiling caldron which he had heated for others. Barabas dies, "in the midst of his crimes, with blasphemy and cursing on his lips; everything is the same at the end as it was from the beginning."

[83]

To the unlearned reader, there is no "relation" between this wild drama and the perfect art shown in Shakspeare's Jew, who utters no curse when the gentle Portia pronounces sentence, but retires with dignity from her court, because "he is not well."

Professor Thorndike tells us that the "traces" of blood revenge in "Hamlet" and "Lear" have been frequently "remarked." What those traces are we are not informed, but he assures us that "they have not led to any careful investigation of Shakspeare's indebtedness to his contemporaries." That investigation was reserved for his research, and we hope to show how successfully he has performed his great task. Meanwhile, we may be allowed to say that if "Lear" contains any "trace" of the tragedy of blood, it is utterly undiscoverable to the ordinary reader, in the action, character or fate of the victims; and as for "Hamlet," so far is he from any idea of blood revenge, that he doubts and disobeys the message from the other world, doubts indeed the existence of any other world, and dies at last not a bloody death, but by a foil "unbated and envenomed."

[84]

If Iago is but the development of the conventional stage villain, his origin and some of the missing links of his evolution ought to be shown; they have never been guessed, and no critic can produce a single member of his kindred.

From such premises, Professor Thorndike concludes that "it is only natural to expect that the genius who brought many of these forms to their highest perfection should not have been so much an inventor as an adapter"; "We may naturally expect," he says, "that Shakspeare's transcendent plays owe a considerable debt to the less perfect but not less original efforts of his

contemporaries." This "natural expectation" is not disappointed, in Professor Thorndike's opinion, by a comparison between some of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays and those he calls the "romances" of Shakspeare,—*"Cymbeline," "The Tempest,"* and *"Winter's Tale."* The argument is circuitous, but must be carefully followed in order to estimate the validity and weight of the conclusion.

[85]

In the first place, it is assumed as probable that Shakspeare and Fletcher wrote *"The Two Noble Kinsmen,"* and that Fletcher wrote part of *"Henry VIII."* It is admitted that this last assumption is "at odds with the weight of authority" and rests mainly, if not wholly, upon Spedding's essay, in 1850. The only additional suggestion is the new and original test, the so-called "em-them" test. A laborious table is made, purporting to show that in the part assigned to Shakspeare "them" is used seventeen times, "em" only five; that in the part assigned to Fletcher "them" is used but four times, "em" fifty-seven. We are not told from what source this table was made, but *"Henry VIII."* was first published in the folio of 1623. Professor Thorndike says that later editions have strictly followed it, and in Knight's edition, which he certifies to be a reprint of the first folio, "em" as a contraction for "them" occurs just once and no more. Thus far, then, the new "test" seems to give us no satisfactory aid.

[86]

It may be permitted an ordinary reader to wonder how any critic can persuade himself that Fletcher wrote the speech of Wolsey on his downfall, or the prophecy of Cranmer at the christening of Elizabeth. Why is it not a permissible hypothesis that *"Henry VIII."* was written during the reign of the great Queen, and subsequently revised by Shakspeare, after her death, and presented as a "new play," as Wotten calls it?

The only external evidence that Shakspeare wrote any portion of *"The Two Noble Kinsmen"* is the quarto of 1634. On the contrary, all the previous external evidence is against that guess, for it was left out of the First Folio, and Heminge & Condell's positive knowledge is certainly of more weight than the opinion of Professor Thorndike's sole authority, Mr. Littledale. Moreover, the play was not included among Shakspeare's works in the folio of 1632, and did not appear among them until, with six other doubtful plays, the editions of 1664 and 1685. In view of this proof, it is admitted that the question of collaboration is likely to remain forever unsettled, "because it does not admit of complete demonstration." Nevertheless, collaboration is assumed, and the "em-them" test is applied to the text so as to credit 1034 lines to Shakspeare, 1486 to Fletcher.

[87]

German criticism has taken up the subject with minute care, and, we may assert with confidence, has settled beyond doubt that Shakspeare never wrote a single line of *"The two Noble Kinsmen."* And it may be added with equal certainty that if the citations from that play are correctly credited to Fletcher, he never wrote a line of *"Henry VIII."* Professor Thorndike is not consistent with himself. On one page he calls his theory conjectural, on another, a "reasonable conclusion." The play itself ought to convince any fair mind that Shakspeare had no share in it, for it contains an obvious imitation of Ophelia's madness in *"Hamlet,"* which in some points "is a direct plagiarism." But it was important for Professor Thorndike to show what he calls a "probability" that Shakspeare and Fletcher collaborated, in order to establish his theory that Fletcher "influenced" Shakspeare. With the vanishing of the "probability" the "influence" vanishes.

[88]

The second step in the argument is a review of the chronology of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, among which only *seven* are immediately important. *"The Woman Hater,"* licensed 20th May, 1607, published in quarto 1607, as lately acted, again in 1648, and assigned to Beaumont and Fletcher. Its first representation is put by Mr. Fleay on April 5th, 1607. Professor Thorndike conjectures that this play was produced in 1606. *"Philaster,"* the most important in connection with our subject, was first published in 1620. Mr. Fleay dates its composition in 1611; Professor Thorndike, in 1608. The *"Four Plays in One"* he likewise assigns conjecturally to the same year. The fact is, it was first printed in the folio of 1647, and no authority fixes the date of its production. *"Thiery and Theodoret"* was first published in 1621, without giving the name of any author. The quarto of 1648 credits Fletcher as the sole author; that of 1649, Beaumont and Fletcher as the joint authors. Fleay places the date about 1617; Oliphant maintains that it was written about 1607 or 1608, and afterwards revised in 1617 by Fletcher and Massinger; Professor Thorndike ventures the guess that it was written in 1607.

[89]

"The Maid's Tragedy" he places doubtfully in 1609. It was first published in 1619 without naming its authors. The only evidence as to its date is that it was licensed October 31st, 1611.

"Cupid's Revenge" was acted at Court in 1612, and first published in 1615. Professor Thorndike thinks it was an effort to repeat the success of *"Philaster,"* and therefore assigns it to 1609 or 1610.

[90]

"A King and No King" he puts without hesitation in the year 1611, and this is supported by authority. Professor Thorndike remarks that this is the only play (of Beaumont and Fletcher), "acted before 1612, the year of whose production is fixed."

The only reason for referring to *"The Woman Hater"* is to fix the date of Beaumont and Fletcher's appearance. There is absolutely no proof that they were known to literature before that play was licensed by Sir George Buc on the 20th May, 1607. Yet Professor Thorndike, in spite of this, assigns *"The Woman's Prize,"* first printed in 1647, and first acted, so far as the record shows, November 28th, 1633, to the year 1604.

It is to be noted that of the six other plays referred to by Professor Thorndike, and claimed to have been in existence before the end of 1611, the dates of all except *"A King and No King"* are

only conjecturally given.

[91]

Compared with these, the chronology of "Cymbeline," "Tempest" and "Winter's Tale" is reviewed. "Cymbeline," according to Dr. Simon Forman's Diary, was acted between April 20th, 1610, and May 15th, 1611; it must therefore have been written before the last named date. Mr. Fleay fixes the date in 1609, Malone in 1605, and both Chalmers and Drake substantially agree with Malone. Ulrici assigns the date of composition to 1609 or 1610.

"The Tempest," according to Professor Thorndike, cannot be dated earlier than October 13th, 1610, nor later than 1613, and was probably written and acted late in 1610 or early in 1611. Ulrici agrees with this.

"The Winter's Tale," as appears by Forman's Diary, was acted May 15, 1611. Ulrici says: "It is now a matter of certainty that it must have been brought upon the stage between August, 1610, and May, 1611." It has been suggested with some plausibility that this play was an early production by Shakspeare which he remodelled. A play called "A Winternyght's Pastime" is entered at Stationer's Hall as early as 1594. Professor Thorndike fixes the date between January 1st and May 15th, 1611 and assumes that the drama is imitated from Jonson's "Masque of Oberon." He suggests that as in the "Masque" the chariot of Oberon is drawn by two white bears, "perhaps here, as in the dance, costume and actor reappeared in the play, in the bear who chases Antigonus." Anything to show that Shakspeare imitated anybody.

[92]

The argument is based upon this chronology and the alleged similarity between the enumerated dramas: the issue is made upon the respective dates of Beaumont and Fletcher's "Philaster" and Shakspeare's "Cymbeline." There is no claim that Shakspeare imitated Beaumont and Fletcher or was influenced by them, except in his three "romances," and of these, "Cymbeline" is placed first. Professor Thorndike undertakes to prove that "Philaster" was written before October 8th, 1610, and this is his reasoning:

[93]

"In the 'Scourge of Folly' by John Davies of Hertford, entered in the Stationer's Register October 8th, 1610, occurs an epigram referring to this play." Let us examine this statement first. On the next page he says: "The '*Scourge of Folly*' furnishes no further clue in regard to the date of the epigram." On page 59 of the same essay, referring to another play, "Don Quixote," the statement is made that it was "entered S. R. 1611 and printed 1612." The entry was therefore in the nature of a "license to print." It is clear that in this instance the actual printing or publication was after the entry. The same rule must apply to other plays of the same period. The date of entry affords no proof whatever of the date of publication or of presentation. Therefore the date of the entry of "The Scourge of Folly," October 8th, 1610, as Professor Thorndike states, "affords no clue in regard to the date" of Davies's "epigram." The "epigram" may have been written long after the entry in the Stationer's Register, and probably was, because it is not to be assumed that the "epigram" appeared in the entry of the play, and Davies cannot be assumed to have had any knowledge of the existence of "Philaster" until it appeared upon the stage, a date entirely uncertain.

[94]

Further, Professor Thorndike says: "There is no reason why 'Philaster' may not have been produced before Burbage took up the Blackfriar's lease in 1608. There is in fact no early limit that can be set for the date; the final limit is of course fixed by Davies' epigram." Of what value is the final limit "fixed by the epigram" when there is no proof of the date of that? What ground is there, beyond mere arbitrary assumption, for assigning "Philaster" to 1608? That play was not printed till 1620. Mr. Fleay, Professor Thorndike's constant authority, says it was written in 1611, after "Cymbeline" was upon the stage. There is absolutely no proof, therefore, that "Philaster" was written before October 8th, 1610, no proof when it was entered, licensed or first acted; and so it is clear, as Professor Thorndike says, that "the date, 1608, adopted by Dyce, Leonhardt, and Macaulay, is no more than a conjecture." On the other hand, as we have shown, the external evidence is conclusive that "Cymbeline" was upon the bills before May 15th, 1611, and therefore the argument that "Philaster" preceded "Cymbeline" finds no better support than the opinion of Dyce, Leonhardt, and Macaulay. It is mere conjecture.

[95]

Professor Thorndike expressly admits that of the six plays which are claimed as "romances," "A King and No King" "is the only one acted before 1612 the year of whose production is fixed," but he states without qualification that "Winter's Tale" and the "Tempest" were not acted until after "Philaster." As we have seen, "Winter's Tale" was acted May 15th, 1611, and Professor Thorndike himself says that "'The Tempest' was probably written and acted late in 1610 or early in 1611"; "Cupid's Revenge" "was acted the Sunday following New Year's 1612; 'A King and No King' in December, 1611." These are the only two of the six of which the date of acting is given. Nowhere does Professor Thorndike pretend to give any date whatever when "Philaster" was acted; the only question discussed is as to the year of authorship, and that is left uncertain. The statement that "Winter's Tale" and "The Tempest" were "not acted until after 'Philaster'" is utterly without warrant or authority. If Shakspeare is to be adjudged the "imitator" of Beaumont and Fletcher, the judgment must rest upon facts or inference from facts, and not upon the unsupported opinion of Professor Wendell's pupil.

[96]

Professor Thorndike in fact admits that "we cannot be certain about the date of 'Cymbeline,'" but yet assumes that "Philaster" preceded it, both in date of production and public appearance, and proceeds to draw a long parallel between the "romances" of Beaumont and Fletcher and those of Shakspeare, for the purpose of showing that the "romance" or the heroic "romance" was a new style of drama, "created" by Beaumont and Fletcher and probably adapted and improved by Shakspeare.

[97]

Whether there is any difference in definition between the "romance" and the "heroic romance" seems immaterial, since Professor Thorndike uses one term as synonymous with the other. He gives "the most noticeable characteristics of the romances": "A mixture of tragic and idyllic events, a series of highly improbable events, heroic and sentimental characters, foreign scenes, happy denouements." This definition is elaborated in connection with the "romances" of Beaumont and Fletcher:

1st. They took the plots from any source.

2nd. The plots are ingenious and improbable.

3rd. The plots lack realism.

4th. The plots deal with heroic persons and actions.

5th. The characters are not historical.

6th. The plays are located far off, for example, in Milan, Athens, Messina, Lisbon.

7th. The action has little to do with the real life of any historic period, but with "romance."

8th. The story is of sentimental love, as contrasted with gross, sensual passion.

9th. There is variety of emotional effect.

10th. There is always a happy denouement.

All these elements of the definition are applied to "Cymbeline," "The Tempest" and "Winter's Tale," and it is maintained that none of Shakspeare's previous dramas present the same features. This is a convenient method of showing that Beaumont and Fletcher "created the romantic drama" and that Shakspeare was "influenced" in writing "Cymbeline" by "Philaster," but it is not criticism; it is rather an attempt to "create" a definition and apply it to "Philaster," and then to deny its application to "Midsummer Night's Dream," "Much Ado About Nothing," "The Merchant of Venice," "Twelfth Night" or "Measure for Measure."

Why does Professor Wendell call the "Two Gentlemen of Verona" a "romantic comedy," if Beaumont and Fletcher "created" the type which Professor Thorndike pronounces "romance"? He deliberately classifies "Much Ado" and "Twelfth Night" as "romantic comedies." Is not "Philaster" a "romantic comedy"? Then, as "Much Ado" was probably written in 1599, "Twelfth Night" in 1598, when Beaumont was twelve or thirteen and Fletcher twenty-two or twenty-three, it seems quite "probable" that they were "influenced" in writing their "romances" by Shakspeare. If there is any fundamental difference between "romantic comedy" and "romance," what is it? This is a difficult question, which Professor Thorndike has attempted but failed to answer. He admits that "Philaster" has some generic resemblance to "Measure for Measure," but says that "No one would think of finding close resemblance between it and anyone of the 'romances.'" If the resemblance is generic, does it matter whether it is "close"? If "Measure for Measure" falls within the laborious definition of a "romance," or of a "tragi-comedy," as both that play and "Philaster" are called, why shouldn't we think of "Measure for Measure," produced in 1604, four years before the wildest conjecture puts the date of "Philaster," as the model upon which Beaumont and Fletcher built?

"Measure for Measure" answers every detail of the definition: the plot is taken from "Promos and Cassandra"; it is ingenious and improbable, lacks realism, deals with heroic persons and actions, a sovereign duke and his rascal brother; the characters are not historical; the location is far off; the action has little to do with the real life of any historical period; the story involves sentimental love, as distinctly contrasted with sensual passion; there is variety of emotional effect; the denouement is happy. If therefore the definition of "romance" is correct, "Measure for Measure" is as much of that type as "Philaster"; Beaumont and Fletcher did not "create" it, and there is no reason for supposing that Shakspeare imitated them in "Cymbeline," "Tempest," or "Winter's Tale."

But certain traits of construction are named as peculiar to the six "romances" of Beaumont and Fletcher and those of Shakspeare, and it is sought to show that Beaumont and Fletcher set the fashion in these also.

1st. They did not observe the unities.

2nd. They disregarded the chronicle method.

3rd. They left out battles and armies.

4th. They presented a series of contrasted and interesting situations leading up to a startling climax.

5th. The by-plots assist the main action.

6th. There is the use of tragi-comedy.

Does any attentive reader of Shakspeare's comedies, whether called romantic or tragi-comic, or by whatever other name, need to be told that many of them contain all these traits? General review is impossible, but take "The Merchant of Venice" as an illustration:

The unities are not observed. We think it is generally thought that Shakspeare was in the habit of disregarding them. The chronicle method is ignored. We are not aware that Shakspeare ever followed it except in writing historical plays. Battles and armies are left out. This comedy, like others by the same cunning hand, presents a series of contrasted and interesting situations leading up to a startling climax. Need we call to mind the rash contract of the merchant, and its almost tragic result, the game of the caskets, the trial and defeat of the clamorous Shylock? The by-plot assists the main action, else why does Jessica keep house for Portia while she goes to play "A Daniel come to judgment"? There is the use of tragi-comedy in the ruin of the merchant, in the whetting of the Jew's knife for the heart of his assured victim. If these "traits" characterize the "romances" of Beaumont and Fletcher, they are possibly more likely to have been the "imitators," because "Shylock" was created in 1596 or 1597, some years before "Philaster" was exhibited as a stage decoration. [103]

It is urged further that in the "romances" of Beaumont and Fletcher "the characters are not individuals, but types," and that those types are repeated until they became conventionalized. There is always a very bad and a very good woman, a very generous and noble man and one so bad as to seem a monster. There is the type of the "love-lorn maiden," of "the lily-livered" hero, of the faithful friend, of the poltroon. It is supposed by many that such types repeated in play after play do not mark the highest original power, but rather poverty of invention, weak and shadowy conception, indistinctness of coloring. Professor Thorndike, however, cannot too much commend this style, because it gives such wide scope for intense passion, startling situation, and successful stage effect, and proceeds to seek for similar types in Shakspeare's "romances" as further proof that he "imitated" "Philaster." In his view, the characters show "surprising loss of individuality." Imogen's character "fails to supply really individual traits"; "Perdita and Miranda have even less marks of individuality than Imogen." They are like Beaumont and Fletcher's heroines who appear in the same stage costumes, wearing the same masks, differing only in stage postures and dialogue. More than this: Professor Thorndike would reduce the "creations" of Viola and Rosalynd to the conventional type of the "love-lorn" maiden, to mere adaptations for the stage, because they dressed in boy's clothes; of Perdita, to an "imitation" of Lady Amelia in "Palamon and Arcyte" because she gathered flowers prettily and was commended by the Queen. He makes the surprising statement that the three heroines in "Cymbeline," the "Tempest" and "Winter's Tale" have on the stage "few qualities to distinguish them from almost any of Beaumont and Fletcher's." It is difficult to discuss such generalizations with the temperance of criticism. They can be true only if Professor Thorndike's theory is correct,—that the delineation of character is solely for stage effect. There is another theory announced and recorded by Shakspeare himself, and illustrated in every drama he wrote,—that the sole end and aim of the stage itself and of the characters it represents, is "to hold the mirror up to nature," and therefore his characters are not "types"; they are men and women who were born, not manufactured; each is a separate, individual human being; each different from every other. We know them, for they have entered our houses, sat at our tables, talked with us, laughed and wept with us, made us shudder at crime and exult in the triumph of virtue. [104]

Therefore, there is but one "Lear": his madness was never imitated outside of Bedlam; but one Lady Macbeth, and we have seen her walking in her awful dream. Beaumont and Fletcher in six romances delineate "love-lorn maidens," "conventionalized types," who differ little from each other, except that three of them "masquerade in boy's clothing" and three do not. They have "little individuality," "are utterly romantic," "utterly removed from life"; all are presented to produce novel situations leading up to a startling climax. [105]

Imogen is not like Miranda or Perdita; neither is a "type" of the "love-lorn" maiden; all are living, acting individuals, differing from each other like those we know, resembling each other only as one beautiful and pure woman resembles another. Professor Thorndike, who is the advocate of Beaumont and Fletcher, may keep his personal opinion that Imogen lacks "individual traits," but we respectfully decline to take his opinion as a critic that she is like Arethusa in "Philaster." For us and for all men and women, Shakspeare has *created* the character of Imogen, as of Perdita and Miranda, and her "individual traits" are clear enough, to those who have had the happiness of her acquaintance, to show that neither in feature or dress, neither in manners or morals, did she "imitate" any of the heroines of Beaumont and Fletcher. But even as a critic we must differ from Professor Thorndike; he accuses Miranda of unpardonable indelicacy, and says she "proposed" to Ferdinand! He gives her language from "Tempest," and remarks with satisfaction that it sounds "very much like one of Beaumont and Fletcher's heroines," meaning of course Arethusa, and so draws the obvious conclusion that Shakspeare in this remarkable instance clearly "imitated" the "creators" of the "heroic romantic drama." The difficulty with this statement first of all is, that it is not true: Miranda does not "propose" to Ferdinand; before her sweet confession of love, Ferdinand had given all lovers the best form of proposal ever spoken, in this language: [107]

"I,
Beyond all limit of what else i' the world,
Do love, prize, honor you."

Arethusa does "propose" to Philaster, and therefore her "proposal" does not "sound very much like" the proposal in "Tempest," or, if it does, it tends strongly to show that Beaumont and Fletcher attempted an "imitation" from "The Tempest." Professor Thorndike the critic has here been misled by his zeal as the partisan: isn't it just possible that the like zeal has misled him in the conclusion that "Cymbeline" was an imitation of "Philaster"? [108]

The second class of "types," as shown by the dramas of Beaumont and Fletcher, is the "evil woman"—Evadne in the "Maid's Tragedy," Bacha in "Cupid's Revenge," Megra in "Philaster," Brunhilt in "Thierry and Theodoret" and Arane in "A King and No King." Professor Thorndike says that "four of them brazenly confess adultery, and four attempt murder," and that "the resemblance ... is unmistakable ... and on the stage even more than in print" these characters "must have seemed to all intents identical." [109]

The only parallel to this in Shakspeare's "romances," as drawn by Professor Thorndike, is that the "wicked Queen in 'Cymbeline' is very like the wicked queens of Beaumont and Fletcher," and that "there are other characters ... who show resemblances to Beaumont and Fletcher's stock types." What the resemblances are we are not told, and we need not inquire until we learn which "type" is the original, which the "imitation." Meanwhile, we may rest upon the fact that, so far as queens are concerned, there is no "stock type" in Shakspeare; they differ from each other as widely as Hamlet's mother from Imogen's mother-in-law. If any of them resemble Beaumont and Fletcher's queens, it is clear that Beaumont and Fletcher were the "imitators," not Shakspeare.

Further similarities are suggested between the "type" of the "faithful friend" as shown in five of Beaumont and Fletcher's "romances" and Gonzalo in "Tempest," Camillo in "Winter's Tale," and Pisanio in "Cymbeline." The "lily-livered heroes" and the "poltroons" are left out of the laborious comparison, perhaps because none of either can be found in Shakspeare sufficiently like the original types in Beaumont and Fletcher. The examples of the "faithful friend" are not happy. For Gonzalo sets Prospero adrift in a crazy boat and Camillo betrays one patron to save another. [110]

Still following the assumption that "Philaster" was earlier than "Cymbeline," we find Professor Thorndike asserting that "Cymbeline" "shows a puzzling decadence" in style, "an increase in the proportion of double endings," "a constant deliberate effort to conceal the metre"; "the verse constantly borders on prose"; "Shakspeare's structure in general is like Fletcher's, particularly in the use of parentheses and contracted forms for 'it is,' 'he is,' 'I will.'" There is a "loss of mastery" in "Cymbeline," "an apparently conscious and not quite successful struggle to overcome the difficulties of the new structure." An apologetic phrase that all this does not impute any "direct imitation" of Fletcher does not redeem it from the imputation that Shakspeare was not content with copying Fletcher's plot, characters, situations, but he deliberately departed, when "Philaster" met his eye, from the methods he had used for more than twenty years, and carefully copied the mannerisms of a contemporary who, according to established chronology, had been known to the public hardly three years. The merits of the charge, whether of direct or indirect imitation, must be determined solely by the priority in date of the two plays. Meanwhile, the critic's argument would have more force if he had told us how "Cymbeline" shows a "puzzling decadence," how "the structure is like Fletcher's," how the struggle to overcome the difficulty of its novelty appears. As the argument stands it reminds one of Lowell's remark in relation to this style of criticism: "Scarce one but was satisfied that his ten finger tips were a sufficient key to those astronomic wonders of poise and counterpoise ... in his metres; scarce one but thought he could gauge like an ale-firkin that intuition whose edging shallows may have been sounded, but whose abysses, stretching down amid the sunless roots of Being and Consciousness, mock the plummet." [111]

Professor Thorndike takes the further point, in his review of the Drama from 1601 to 1611, that during that period "There are almost no romantic tragi-comedies"; that in fact, including "Measure for Measure," there are only five which offer the slightest generic resemblance to the heroic tragi-comedies like "Philaster" and "Winter's Tale"; that when "Philaster" appeared, there had been "no play for seven or eight years at all resembling it"; and draws the conclusion that Shakspeare, who had been writing "gloomy tragedies" for several years, suddenly left that style and wrote "Cymbeline" in imitation of "Philaster," because "Philaster" had "filled the audience with surprise and delight." The uncomplimentary and uncritical remark is added that perhaps "Timon" and "Coriolanus" had not achieved great success on the stage—at any rate the success of "Philaster" aroused his interest. [112]

"Timon" is assigned by most critics to the last of Shakspeare's life, by many to the year 1612. "Cymbeline," as we have seen, was acted before May 15th, 1611; it is therefore difficult to understand, if the date assigned to "Timon" is correct, how its failure could have "influenced" the production of "Cymbeline."

But Professor Thorndike's statement is incorrect. During the decade named, "Measure for Measure" was acted at Court in 1604; his conjectural date of "Philaster" is 1608. As we have shown, "Measure for Measure" fully answers his definition of the "romance" or "heroic tragi-comedy," and he admits that it bears a generic resemblance to "Philaster." His statement that for seven or eight years before "Philaster" "no play had appeared at all resembling it" is therefore without support, and contradicts his own admission. He assumes much more, and to support his conclusion argues that "Philaster" was perhaps produced before 1608. The importance of the point justifies deliberate attention. Against the opinion of most scholars, against the express statement of Dryden, he assigns "Pericles" to the year 1608; credits Shakspeare with the authorship of the "Marina story;" admits that "the plot is ... like those of the romances, and particularly like that of the 'Winter's Tale,' in dealing with a long series of tragic events leading to a happy ending," but endeavors to escape the inevitable conclusion, by the statement, utterly inconsistent with his own chronology, that, "if the play was as late as 1608, there is a possibility of Beaumont and Fletcher's influence just as in the romances." [113]

"Pericles" contains a sentimental love story, the plot is like that of the "romances," the variety of [114]

the emotional effects is similar, and there is a contrast of tragic and idyllic elements. The play is founded upon a "romantic story." All this is admitted, but Professor Thorndike thinks the love story is not sufficiently prominent, the idyllic elements are not treated as in the romances, and Marina is therefore not like any of the heroines of Beaumont and Fletcher, but, while "something like Portia, more like Isabella." And so "Pericles" is distinguished from the romances because the "treatment" is "different," and finally, because Professor Thorndike is committed to the theory that Beaumont and Fletcher "created" a new type of drama, he asserts that "'Pericles' is doubtless earlier than Shakspeare's romances, but there is no probability that it preceded all of Beaumont and Fletcher's." Dryden in his Prologue to Davenant's "Circe" says: "Shakspeare's own muse his Pericles first bore," and the great weight of opinion is that it was a very early production. The "Story of Marina" is as romantic as "Cymbeline," and is of the same "type" as "Philaster," and therefore, if Dryden is right, there is a strong probability that "Pericles" preceded all of Beaumont and Fletcher's romances, and that in "Cymbeline" Shakspeare did not imitate them. [116]

We come at last to the end of the argument. Professor Thorndike, premising that the historical portion of "Cymbeline" and the exile of Posthumous have no parallels in "Philaster," institutes a detailed comparison between the plots, characters, and composition of the two plays, and shows that they are so strikingly similar as to justify the positive conclusion that "Shakspeare influenced Beaumont and Fletcher or that they influenced him." We may admit more than this: If "Cymbeline" followed "Philaster," he was not only influenced by them, he not only imitated them, he was a plagiarist; and no apologetic words that, upon the assumption stated, "Cymbeline" did not owe a very large share of its total effect to "Philaster," can make less the gravity of the charge, and if the assumption is groundless or even probably groundless, no excuse remains to the critic who makes it. [117]

Let us see: After all his learned review of dramatic chronology, after all his statements conveying the assurance that "Philaster" was the original "type" of the "romance," Professor Thorndike says in so many words, which for accuracy we quote: "Some such statement of the influence of 'Philaster' on 'Cymbeline' could be adopted if we were certain of our chronology. But the evidence for the priority of 'Philaster' is not conclusive, and its support cannot be confidently relied upon. Leaving aside, then, the question of exact date, and only premising the fact that both plays were written at about the same time, we must face the questions,—which is more plausible, that Shakspeare influenced Beaumont and Fletcher or that they influenced him? Which on its face is more likely to be the original, 'Cymbeline' or 'Philaster'?" [118]

If "Cymbeline" was first written, then "Philaster" becomes not an original but a copy, adaptation, imitation, plagiarism, if you will. The similarities remain the same, the argument is reversed. We have shown that the evidence is conclusive, in the opinion of the best critics, that "Cymbeline" preceded "Philaster." Coleridge, Ulrici, Tieck and Knight think that "this varied-woven romantic history had inspired the poet in his youth" to attempt its adaptation to the stage; that having had but a temporary appearance, Shakspeare long afterwards, near the end of his career, may have remodelled it, and Malone, Chalmers, and Drake assign "Cymbeline" with "Macbeth" to 1605 or 1606. Our argument might be safely put upon this point alone. Professor Thorndike's is placed solely upon "plausibility" and "likelihood." To support it, he assumes again the certainty of "the priority of Philaster"—which he had just admitted to be uncertain—in order to show "the nature of Shakspeare's indebtedness," and then concludes from "the nature of the indebtedness," and from the fact that "Philaster" "was followed immediately by five romances of the same style in plot and characters" "which mark Fletcher's work for the next twenty years," that "these facts create a strong presumption that 'Philaster' was the original," "a strong presumption that 'Cymbeline' was the copy," and finally ends the argument as it began, with these flattering words: "We may, indeed, safely assert that Shakspeare almost never invented dramatic types." And this is the argument which Professor Wendell thinks "virtually proves that several of their plays (Beaumont and Fletcher's romances) must have been in existence decidedly before 'Cymbeline,' 'The Tempest' or 'Winter's Tale,'" "that the relation commonly thought to have existed between them and Shakspeare is precisely reversed." [119]

Let us answer both Teacher and Pupil. Suppose, to follow the Thorndike method, that "Cymbeline" appeared before "Philaster," that six romances by Beaumont and Fletcher followed in rapid succession, while only two by Shakspeare appeared, but differing essentially from each other and from "Philaster." Suppose that "Cymbeline" upon its first night "filled the audience with surprise and delight," that Beaumont and Fletcher, perceiving "its dramatic and poetic excellence," copied in "Philaster" a portion of its plot and attempted to copy some of its characters and situations. Suppose their experiment with this copy took the crowd by storm—Isn't it reasonable to suppose that they would repeat the profitable attempt as many times as the applause warranted? Isn't that just what they did, repeating and imitating themselves over and over, until Beaumont died? Does the number of repetitions and imitations increase the "plausibility" or "likelihood" of the theory that "Philaster" was the original of the type? If Shakspeare found his gain increasing by copying the fable, character, style, and denouement of "Philaster," why did he not continue to copy in "The Tempest" and "Winter's Tale," and why is it impossible for Professor Thorndike to deny originality to either of these plays, except by his careless error as to Miranda's "proposal" and the reference to Lady Amelia gathering flowers at Oxford in 1566? Professor Thorndike's argument comes to this and only this: If Shakspeare wrote "Cymbeline" before Beaumont and Fletcher wrote "Philaster," then Shakspeare was the "creator of the heroic romances." If the question of priority is doubtful, it is just as impossible to prove the "plausibility" or "likelihood" of priority as it is to prove the date. There is no proof, therefore, no [121]

presumption, strong or weak, that "Cymbeline" was influenced by "Philaster" or was a "copy" of it. But there is proof that Beaumont and Fletcher repeatedly and habitually imitated Shakspeare, and we cite it mostly from Professor Thorndike's essay.

[122]

In "The Two Noble Kinsmen" there is a "distinct imitation of the circumstances of Ophelia's madness and death in Hamlet." In "The Woman Hater," assigned conjecturally to 1605 or 1606 by Professor Thorndike, there are "several burlesque imitations of Hamlet."

In "The Knight of the Burning Pestle" (1607-1608) there are burlesque imitations of passages in "Henry IV." and in "Romeo and Juliet."

In "Philaster" occurs this line:

"Mark but the King, how pale he looks with fear,"

—a distinct parody of the similar line in "Hamlet"; but it will be remarked that Professor Thorndike calls it an "echo," not an imitation.

In "The Woman's Prize," improbably assigned to 1604, the whole play is imitated from "The Taming of the Shrew,"—is in fact an attempted sequel to it, and Professor Thorndike wanders from chronology to indulge a sneer, by the remark that "The Woman's Prize" was "very well liked," the "Taming of the Shrew" only "liked." Possibly that was because then, as now, some people preferred imitations.

[123]

In "The Woman's Prize," there is also a burlesque on "Hamlet" and a parody on "King Lear." In "The Triumph of Death" these lines occur:—

"No, take him dead drunk now, without repentance,
His lechery enseamed upon him,"

and Professor Thorndike says "it sounds like a bit from an old revenge play." It is a distinct imitation from "Hamlet" where the King is seen at his prayers.

In the "Scornful Lady" there is one certain and one possible slur at "Hamlet."

In "Cupid's Revenge" there is an imitation from "Antony and Cleopatra."

In "Philaster" Arethusa imitates Lear when he awakens from insanity to consciousness.

Upon the Wendell-Thorndike theory, we have a few undisputed facts bearing upon the "plausibility" of the conclusion that Beaumont and Fletcher "influenced" Shakspeare, the likelihood that "Philaster" was the original, "Cymbeline" the "copy." Shakspeare at the age of forty-six, long after he had portrayed the real insanity of Lear, the simulated insanity of Hamlet, the confessional dream of Lady Macbeth; long after he had "filled the audience with surprise and delight" by the romantic realities of Hero and Portia, of Viola and Rosalind; years after he had anticipated the heroic "romance" in the romantic adventures of Marina; long after he had depicted the heroic triumph of Isabella over the lustful Angelo—this man, Shakspeare, condescended to imitate a youth of twenty-two, whose name was Beaumont, to steal from him much of the plot, characters, action, and denouement of "Philaster" and to make the theft more open and unblushing, presented "Cymbeline" upon the same stage within a year of the original "type," and assigned the parts to the same actors who had won remarkable popular applause for the drama from which he had "cribbed" his imitation. And this imitation was not from friendly authors, but from those of a hostile school, who had during their whole career borrowed from his plots, parodied his phrases, and ridiculed his masterpieces by slurs and burlesques. We respectfully dissent from the assertion that these facts "create a strong presumption that 'Philaster' was the original," "Cymbeline" the "copy." On the contrary, it seems to us that they are utterly inconsistent with any such presumption, and with the whole theory and teaching of Professors Wendell and Thorndike.

[124]

[125]

That theory, as we have shown, is based upon the assumption that Marlowe, or Greene, or Peele, or somebody else, wrote most of "Henry VI"; the assumption that Fletcher helped Shakspeare write "Henry VIII"; the assumption that Shakspeare assisted Fletcher in the composition of "The Two Noble Kinsmen"; the unsupported, the admitted conjecture that "Philaster" was written before October 8th, 1610; the unwarranted assertion that Beaumont and Fletcher "created the romance" in spite of the admission that the date of creation depends upon the priority of "Cymbeline" or "Philaster," which is likewise admitted to be wholly uncertain; the suppression of the proof from "Measure for Measure" that, years before "Philaster," Shakspeare, within the proposed definition, had produced a romantic tragi-comedy; the guess as to priority in favor of Beaumont and Fletcher, in spite of repeated imitations by them from previous plays of Shakspeare. And so the argument in support of the theory is a pyramid of *ifs*, supporting an apex that vanishes into the thin air of an invisible conclusion.

[126]

To us, after all this latest effort to depose the sovereign of English literature from the throne where he has worn the crown for more than three centuries, and seat there a pretender, having no title, either by divine right or the suffrages of mankind, Shakspeare is the sovereign still.

[127]

He needed and he sought no allies to win his realm; he imitated no fashions of other courts to maintain his own; he took good care that the records of his universal conquests should be kept,—written by his own hand, and fortunately preserved by his friends,—secure from the interpolations and imitations of his contemporaries and successors.

Much has been written of Shakspeare's impersonality, and we have been taught to think that his dramas are utterly silent as to his own experience. But now and then one finds in them a glimpse of it, as the lightning flash in the darkest night for an instant shows the heavens and the earth. That others attempted to imitate him is clear enough; that he imitated others, and least of all Beaumont and Fletcher, nobody can reasonably believe who reads his opinion of the imitator in "Julius Cæsar":

"A barren spirited fellow; one that feeds
On objects, arts, and imitations,
Which, out of use, and stal'd by other men,
Begin his fashion."

Matthew Arnold's verdict has not been reversed.

[128]

*"Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,*

*"Planting his stedfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality;*

*"And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at.—Better so!*

*"All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow."*

Transcriber's note

The following changes have been made to the text:

Page 14: "a successful playwright" changed to "a successful [playwright](#)".

Page 33: "'T is but the short'ning" changed to " ['Tis](#) but the short'ning".

Page 53: "piece was writtin" changed to "piece was [written](#)".

Page 53: "two valiant Kinghts" changed to "two valiant [Knights](#)".

Page 73: "Professer Wendell applies" changed to "[Professor](#) Wendell applies".

Page 87: "German critcism has" changed to "German [criticism](#) has".

Page 108: "is n't it just" changed to "[isn't](#) it just".

Page 126: "throne where he was worn" changed to "throne where he [has](#) worn".

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CRITICS VERSUS SHAKSPERE ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.