Providence. In harmony with this change of temper the style has likewise undergone another change, and the tense structure and marmoreal phrasing of *Antony and Cleopatra* have given way to relaxed cadences and easy and unaccentuated rhythms. It is possible that these plays, Shakespeare’s last plays, with the unimportant exceptions of his contributions to Fletcher’s *Henry VIII.* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* were written in retirement at Stratford. At any rate the call of the country is sounding through them; and it is with no regret that in the last pages of *The Tempest* the weary magician drowns his book, and buries his staff certain fathoms deep in the earth.

(E. K. C.)

*The Shakespeare-Bacon Theory.*

In view of the continued promulgation of the sensational theory that the plays, and presumably the poems also, so long associated with the name of Shakespeare, were not written by the man whose biography is sketched above, but by somebody else who used this pseudonym—and especially that the writer was Lord Chancellor Francis Bacon, Viscount St Albans (1561-1626)—it appears de­sirable to deal here briefly with this question. No such idea seems to have occurred to anybody till the middle of the 19th century (see *Bibliography* below), but having once been started it has been elabor­ated in certain quarters by a variety of appeals, both to internal evidence as disclosed by the knowledge displayed in Shakespeare’s works and by their vocabulary and style, and to external evidence as represented by the problems connected with the facts of Shakespeare’s known life and of the publication of the plays. To what may be called ingenious inferences from data of this sort have even been added attempts to show that a secret confession exists which may be detected in a cipher or cryptogram in the printing of the plays. It must suffice here to say that the contentions of the Americans, Mr Donnelly and Mrs Gallup, on this score are not only opposed to the opinion of authoritative bibliographers, who deny the existence of any such cipher, but have carried their supporters to lengths which are obviously absurd and impossible. Lord Penzance, a great lawyer whose support of the Baconian theory may be found in his “ judicial summing-up,” published in 1902, expressly admits that “the attempts to establish a cipher totally failed; there was not indeed the semblance of a cipher.” Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence, in his *Bacon is Shakespeare* (1910), goes still farther in an attempt to prove the point by cryptographic evidence. According to him the classical “ long word ” cited in *Love's Labour's Lost,* “ honorificabilitudinitatibus,” is an anagram for “ hi ludi F. Baconis nati tuiti orbi ” (these plays F. Bacons offspring preserved for the world); and he juggles very curiously with the numbers of the words and lines in the page of the First Folio containing this alleged anagram. He also cites the evidence of (more or less) contemporary illustrations to books, which he explains as cryptographic, in confirmation. These interpretations are in the highest degree speculative. But perhaps his argument is exposed in its full depth of incredibility when he counts up the letters in Ben Jonson’s verses “ To the Reader,” describing the Droeshout portrait in the First Folio, and, finding them to be 287 (taking each w ” as two “ v's ”), concludes (by adding 287 to 1623, *i.e.* the date of the First Folio) that Bacon intended to reveal himself as the author in the year 1910! This sort of argument makes the plain man’s head reel. On similar principles anything might prove anything. What may be considered the more reasonable way of approaching the question is shown in Mr G. Greenwood’s *Shakespeare Problem Restated* (1908), in which the alleged difficulties of the Shakespearian authorship are competently presented without recourse to any such extravagances.

The plausibility of many of the arguments used by Mr Greenwood and those whom he follows depends a good deal upon the real obscurity which, for lack of positive evidence, shrouds the biography of Shakespeare and our knowledge of the precise facts as to the publication of the works associated with his name ; and it has been assisted by the dogmatism of some modern biographers, or the differences of opinion between them, when they attempt to interpret the known facts of Shakespeare’s life so as to account for his authorship. But it must be remembered that, if Shakespeare (or Shakspere) wrote Shakespeare's works, it is only possible to reconcile our view of his biography with our knowledge of the works by giving *some* interpretation to the known facts or accepting *some* explanation of what may have occurred in the obscure parts of his life which will be consistent with such an identification. That different hypotheses are favoured by different orthodox critics is therefore no real objection, nor that some may appear exceedingly speculative, for the very reason that positive evidence is irrecoverable and that speculation—consistent with what is possible—is the only resource. In so far as evidence is to be twisted and strained at all, it is right, in view of the long tradition and the prima facie presumptive evidence, to strain it in any possible direction which can reasonably make the Shakespearian authorship intelligible. As a matter of fact the evidence is strained alike by one side and the other; but as between the two it has to be remembered that the onus lies on the opponent of the Shakespearian authorship to show, first that there is no possible explanation which

would justify the tradition, and secondly that there is positive evidence which can upset it and which will saddle the authorship of Shakespeare's works on Bacon or some one else. The contempt indiscriminately thrown on supporters of the Baconian theory by orthodox critics is apt to be expressed in terms which are occasionally unwarranted. But even if we leave out of account the lunatics and fabricators who have been so prominently connected with it, the adventurous amateur—however eminent as a lawyer or however acute as a critic of everyday affairs—may easily be too ingenious in his endeavours to solve a literary problem in which judgment largely depends on a highly trained and subtle sense of literary style and a special knowledge of the conditions of Elizabethan England and of the early drama. In such an exposition of what may be called the “ anti-Shaksperian ” case as Mr Greenwood’s, many points appear to make for his conclusion which are really not more than doubtful interpretations of evidence; and though these interpretations may be derived from orthodox Shakespearians—orthodox, that is to say, so far at all events as their view of Shakespearian authorship is concerned—there have been a good many such interpreters whose zeal has outrun their knowledge. The fact remains that the most competent special students of Shakespeare, however they may differ as to details, and also the most authoritative special students of Bacon, arc unanimous in upholding the traditional view. The Baconian theory simply stands as a curious illustration of the dangers which, even in the hands of fair judges of ordinary evidence, attend certain methods of literary investigation.

There is one simple reason for this: in order to establish even a prima facie case against the identification of the man Shakespeare (however the name be spelt) with the author of Shakespeare’s works, the Baconian must clearly account for the positive contemporary evidence in its favour, and this cannot well be done; it is highly significant that it was not attempted or thought of for centuries. It is comparatively easy to point to certain difficulties, which are due to the gaps in our knowledge. As already explained, the orthodox biographer, armed with the results of accurate scholarship and pro­longed historical research, attempts to reconstruct the life of the period so as to offer possible or probable explanations of these diffi- culties. But he does so backed by the unshaken tradition and the positive contemporary evidence that the Stratford boy and man, the London actor, the author of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece,* and the dramatist (so far at least as criticism upholds the canon of the plays ascribed to Shakespeare), were one and the same.

It may be useful here to add to what has been written in the pre­ceding article some of the positive contemporary allusions to Shakespeare which establish this presumption. The evidence of Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia* (1598) has already been referred to. It is incredible that Ben Jonson, who knew both Shakespeare and Bacon intimately, who himself dubbed Shakespeare the “ swan of Avon,” and who survived Bacon for eleven years, could have died without revealing the alleged secret, at a time when there was no reason for concealing it. Much has been made of Jonson’s varying references to Shakespeare, and of certain inconsistencies in his references to both Shakespeare and Bacon ; but these can be twisted in more than one direction and their explanation is purely speculative. His positive allusions to Shakespeare are inexplicable except as the most authoritative evidence of his identification of the man and his works. Richard Barn field (1598) speaks of Shakespeare as “ honey-flowing,” and says that his *Venus* and *Lucrece* have placed his name “ in Fame’s immortal book.” John Weever (1599) speaks of “ honey- tongued Shakespeare,” admired for “ rose-cheeked Adonis,” and “ Romeo, Richard, more whose names I know not.” John Davies of Hereford (1610) calls him “our English Terence, Mr Will Shakespeare.” Thomas Freeman (1614) writes “to Master W. Shakespeare: ”—“ Who loves chaste life, there’s Lucrece for a teacher ∣ Who list read lust there’s Venus and Adonis ∣ . . . ∣ Besides in plays thy wit winds like Meander.” Other contemporary allusions, all treating Shakespeare as a great poet and tragedian, are also on record.

Finally, it may be remarked that although many problems in connexion with Shakespeare’s authorship can only be solved by the answer that he was a “ genius,” the Baconian view that “ genius ” by itself could not confer on Shakespeare, the supposed Stratford “ rustic,” the positive knowledge of law, &c., which is revealed in his works, depends on a theory of his upbringing and career which strains the evidence quite as much as anything put forward by orthodox biographers, if not more. As shown in the preceding article, it is by no means improbable that the Stratford “ rustic ” was quite well educated, and that his rusticity is a gross exaggeration. We know very little about his early years, and, in so far as we are ignorant, it is legitimate to draw inferences in favour of what makes the remainder of his career and achievements intelligible. The Baconian theory entirely depends on straining every assumption in favour of Shakespeare’s *not* having had any opportunity to acquire knowledge which in any case it would require “ genius ” to absorb and utilize; and this method of argument is directly opposed to the legitimate procedure in approaching the undoubted difficulties. Isolated phrases, such as Ben Jonson’s *dictum* as to his small knowledge of Latin and Greek, which may well be purely comparative, the con­temptuous expression of a university scholar for one who had no academic training, can easily be made too much of. The extreme