

SHAKESPEARE v. SHAKESPEARE

generation of Baconians, are examples of the more cautious type. The former, in *Francis Bacon wrote Shakespeare*, published in 1912, says that he will 'pass by all questions of secret cipher and "cryptograms" in the "Shakespeare" literature. I will not pronounce a personal opinion as to whether there is a cipher'. He bases his Baconian conclusions mostly on a comparison of the lives of the two men concerned and what seemed to him other indications of Bacon's authorship. Lord Penzance, one of the legal minds which has interested itself in the question, writing ten years earlier in a *Judicial Summing Up*, bluntly denies that there is any trace of Donnelly's cipher, and depends mostly on 'parallelisms' between Bacon's works and the plays. This method can, of course, be carried too far. A great many of the ideas and phrases common to both sets of writings are to be found all through Elizabethan literature, and were part of the ordinary speech and writing of the time. All the same, Mrs Henry Pott, studying the Ms. in the British Museum containing Bacon's *Promus of Formularies and elegancies* gives the seekers after parallelisms something to go on. Everybody knows that Shakespeare had the largest vocabulary of any English writer, Milton coming second, quite a long way behind, but perhaps they hardly realise that he coined quantities of new words that had never been used before, though many of them are now used by everybody. Mrs Potts claims that hundreds of these are found in the *Promus*, a collection of notes on words and phrases which had been unpublished till the appearance of her book in 1883.

Besides Bacon and Shakespeare, various claimants have been put forward—Edward de Vere (Earl of Oxford), Roger Manners (Earl of Rutland), and William Stanley (Earl of Derby), Oxford's son-in-law. Of these the most favoured is the Earl of Oxford. The circumstantial evidence in his favour, as put forward by T. J. Looney and other champions, is quite strong, and, of course, if the cipher testimony is not accepted, the evidence for any of the claimants is entirely circumstantial. Curiously enough, as G. H. Rendall points out in *Shakespeare Sonnets and Edward de Vere*, his life story parallels Bacon's in many respects. 'Bacon's mother