

TERMS.—One year, \$1.50, when paid in advance. Those in arrears subject to previous terms.

That there should be a coal famine in a mining town is singular. The 1500 inhabitants of the town of Trevorton are seriously threatened by a coal famine.

M. De Lesseps and his canal have received a serious setback from the French Government. Some time ago his proposal to issue lottery loans to obtain funds to carry on the work at Panama, was made public, and the opinion at the time seemed to be that the Government would permit their issue.

A NEW WAY TO PURIFY WATER.

Probably one of the most useful and interesting discoveries of the century has just been perfected and put to practical use by Professor Hugo Blanck and R. W. Smith, of Pittsburg.

THE AUSTRALIAN VOTING SYSTEM PROPOSED TO BE ESTABLISHED.

A bill to establish the Australian system of voting was introduced in the Assembly at Albany. It provides that all ballots shall be printed at public expense and that the voter shall retire to a private compartment and there mark with an X the names of candidates for whom he proposes to vote.

HOW THE WAR SCARE AFFECTS GERMANY.

As a consequence of the war rumors in Europe there will be such an emigration from Germany to the United States in the coming spring as was never witnessed before.

The men, young and middle-aged, drilled into machine-like stolidity as they are, do not admire the prospect of being shot at any more than the inhabitants of less warlike nations would, and the most strenuous efforts are being made by the civil and military bureaucracy of the Government to discourage and prevent the rush of the outgoing human tide.

DONT

let that cold of yours run on. You think it is a light thing. But it may run into catarrh. Or into pneumonia. Or into consumption. Catarrh is degenerating. Pneumonia is dangerous. Consumption is death itself.

BILL NYE TAKES A HAND.

The Shakespeare-Bacon Puzzle Wrestled with Conscientiously—Why Bill Favours the Claim of Bill Shakespeare—His Handwriting Skillfully Fought Upon—Its Likeness to Horace Greeley's—Difference Between Shakespeare and Bacon—A Kind Lift for the Yeomanry.



RUSTING that it will not in any way impair the sale of Mr. Donnelly's book, I desire, says Bill Nye in the New York World, to offer here a few words in favor of the theory that William Shakespeare wrote his own works and thought his own things.

It does not undertake to stand up for the personal character of Shakespeare, but I say that he wrote good pieces, and I don't care who knows it. It is doubtless true that at the age of eighteen he married a woman eight years his senior, and that children began to cluster about their hearthstone in a way that would have made a man in a New York flat commit suicide.

Three little children within fourteen months, including twins, came to the humble home of the great Bard and he began to go out and climb upon the haymow to do his writing. Sometimes he would stay away from home for two or three weeks at a time, fearing that when he entered the house some one would tell him that he was again a parent.

Yet William Shakespeare knew all the time that he was a great man, and that some day he would write pieces to speak. He left Stratford at the age of twenty-one and went to London, where he attracted very little attention, for he belonged to the yeomanry, being a kind of dramatic Horace Greeley both in the matter of clothes and penmanship. Thus it would seem that while Sir Francis Bacon was attending a business college and getting himself familiar with the whole arm movement, so as to be able to write a free, cryptogram hand, poor W. Shakespeare was slowly thinking the hair off his head, while ever and anon he occasionally brought out his writing materials and his bright, ready tongue and wrote a sonnet on an empty stomach.

Prior to leaving Stratford he is said to have dabbled in the poaching business in a humble way on the estates of Sir Thomas Lucy, since deceased, and that he wrote the following encomium or odelet in a free, running hand, and pinned it on the knight's gate:

O, dear Thomas Lucy, Your venison's juicy, Juicy is your venison; Hence I append my benison. The rose is red, the violet's blue, The keeper's a chump and so are you, Which is why I remark and my language is plain. Yours truly, High Low Jack.

Let me now once more refer to the matter of the signature. Much has been said of Mr. Shakespeare's coarse, irregular and vulgar penmanship, which, it is claimed, shows the ignorance of its owner, and hence his inability to write immortal plays. Let us compare the signature of Shakespeare with that of Mr. Greeley, and we notice a wonderful similarity. There is the same weird effort in both cases to out-cryptogram Old Cryptogram himself, and enshrine immortal thought and heaven-born genius in a burlesque-proof panoply of worn fences, and a chirography that reminds the careful student of the general direction taken in returning to Round Knob, N. C., by a correspondent who visited the home of a moonshiner with a view toward ascertaining the general tendency of home-brewed whisky to fly to the head.

If we judge Shakespeare by his signature, not one of us will be safe. Death will wipe out our fame with a wet sponge; John Hancock in one hundred years from now will be regarded as the author of the Declaration of Independence, and Compendium Gaskell as the author of the New York Tribune.

I have every reason to believe that while William Shakespeare was going about the streets of London, poor but brainy, erratic but smart, bald-headed but filled with a nameless yearning to write a play with real water and a topical song in it, Francis Bacon was practicing on his signature, getting used to the full arm movement, spilling ash after sheet of paper, trying to make a virtue out of a red, worn wire man's pen of shaded loops without taking his pen off the paper and running the rebus column of a business college paper.

Poets are born, not made, and many of them are born with odd and even disagreeable characteristics. Some men are born poets, while it is true that some acquire poetry while others have poetry thrust upon them. Poetry is like the faculty, if I may so denominate it, of being able to voluntarily move the ears. It is a gift. It can not be taught to others.

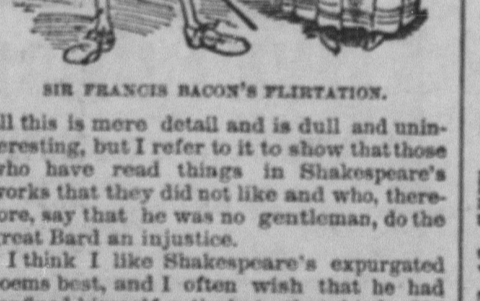
With Shakespeare. He was one of the yeomen of Stratford, and his early record was against him, but where do poets usually come from? Do they first breathe in the immortal sentiments which, in after years, enable their names to defy the front teeth of oblivion while stopping at one of our leading hotels?

Did Burns soak his system with the flavor and the fragrance of the Scotch heather while riding on an elevated train? Did any poet succeed in getting up close to nature's great North American heart by studying her habits at a twenty-five-dollar german? I try not. Moreover, every one who studies the history of our great poets and orators will throw likewise. Lord Tenison wrote better things before he tried to divert his attention between writing poetry and being a Lord. So I say that from our yeomanry frequently sprung the boys whose rare old rural memories float in upon and chasten and refine their after lives even when fame comes, and fills them full of themselves and swells their aching heads as they swoop galaxy across the country in a special train.

I do not go so far as some of the friends of Shakespeare, and say that while he was a lovely character and a great actor, that Bacon was a ham. I do not say that, for Bacon had his good points. The thing that has done more to injure Shakespeare's name than the eyes of the historian that might see, perhaps, was his seeming neglect of his wife. But we should consider both sides of the question before we pass judgment. The Hathaways were queer people and Anne was unusually so. Her father snubbed her in his will just as her husband did, which shows that Mrs. Shakespeare was not highly esteemed even by her parents. The brief notice which Anne received in these two wills means a good deal, for there is nothing quite so thoroughly unanswerable as a probate snub.

Shakespeare in his own will gave to his wife his second-best bed, and that was all. When we remember that it was a bed that sagged in the middle, and that it operated by means of a bed-cord which had to be tightened and tuned up twice a week and that the auger-holes in the bedstead seemed ever to mutely appeal for more powder from Persia's great powder magazine, we will be forced to admit that William did not passionately love his wife. I know that Shakespeare has been severely criticised by the press for leaving his family at Stratford while he himself lived in London, only visiting home occasionally, but I am convinced that he found that they could live cheaper in that way. Help in the house was very high at that time in London, and the intelligence offices were doing a very large business without giving very much intelligence. Friends of his told him that it was not only impossible to get enough help in the homes of London, but that there was hardly enough servants to prevent a panic in the employment bureaus. Several offices were in fact compelled to shut down for a half day at a time, one using the limited stock in the forenoon and the other in the afternoon.

Shakespeare was a perfect gentleman, having been made so by the Herald's College, which invested his father with coat armor. This coat armor made a gentleman of the elder Shakespeare, and as William's mother was already a gentleman under the code, William became one also, both on his father's and on his mother's side. Of course



SIR FRANCIS BACON'S FLIRTATION. all this is more detail and is dull and uninteresting, but I refer to it to show that those who have read things in Shakespeare's works that they did not like and who, therefore, say that he was no gentleman, do the great Bard an injustice.

I think I like Shakespeare's expurgated poems best, and I often wish that he had confined himself entirely to that kind. If I had a son who seemed to lean towards poetry and felt like trying his lyre now and then, I would advise him to write expurgated poems exclusively.

I do not say that Shakespeare was the author of his own works, and it would not look well in me to set up my opinion in opposition to that of scholars, experts and savants who have had more advantage than I have, for if I would never take advantage of any one; but I say that somehow the impression has crept into the papers that he was a pretty good little play-writer, and I am glad that Mr. Childs has had a testimonial made and sent over to England that will show an appreciation, at least, of his ability to keep before the people.

It will be noticed by the alert and keen-scented litterateur that I have carefully avoided treading on the tail of Mr. Donnelly's cipher. Being rather a poor mathematician anyway, I will not introduce the cipher at this time, but I will say that although the whole thing happened about three hundred years ago, and has now nearly passed out of my mind to the best of my recollection Shakespeare, though he was the son of a buckwheat, and though he married his wife with a poetic license, and though he left his family at Stratford rather than take them to live in a London flat, wrote the most of his plays with the assistance of an expurgator who was out of the city most all of the time.

I can not show Shakespeare's ready wit better at this time than by telling of his first appearance on the stage as I remember it. He came quietly before the footlights with a roll of carpet under one arm and a lockhammer under the other. In those days it was customary to nail down stage carpets, and while doing so, "Shakespeare" we all called him then, knocked the nail off his left thumb, whereupon he received an ovation from the audience. Some men would have been rattled and would have "called up," as we say, but Shakespeare was always ready to please his friends or respond to an encore, so putting his right thumb up against a large painted rock in a mountain scene, he obliged by knocking off the other thumb-nail.

A Merry New Year !!

Old Fathr Time, like the Harvester, annually gathers in the crop and 1887 like its predecessors has been stored away for reference only. 1888, in its gay and youthful attire is upon us, and with it brings new resolutions, inspiration and vigor. We enter the New Year with the best of wishes towards all and kindly solicit a share of your patronage:

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Advertisement for Winchester Repeating Rifles, including details on ammunition and the company's location in New Haven, Conn.

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PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD—(Philadelphia and Erie Division)—on or after Nov. 20, 18

Table of train schedules for the Pennsylvania Railroad, listing routes like Erie Mail, Niagara Exp., and Sunday Mail, with departure and arrival times for various stations.