HENSLOWE, COLLIER, AND THE LATEST GERMAN CRITICISM.

UNTIL recently German criticism in the field of Elizabethan literature has been content to find its materials in the labours of English scholars so far as original documents are concerned. No doubt these materials have not in all cases been as trustworthy as even an indulgent critic could have wished, and those who relied on them have been now and again misled into serious error. The first attempt, however, on the part of a German writer to inquire into the foundations of our historical knowledge of the English stage can hardly be regarded as happily inspired. Dr. Theodor Eichhoff¹ frankly tells us that we have got to wipe out from our memories everything we have so far learnt on the subject, to banish for ever into limbo all the work that has so far been done, and taking him for philosopher and guide, commence the painful and toilsome task of construction once again from the beginning. It is not my present purpose to follow Dr. Eichhoff through the length and breadth of his destructive argument nor to discuss the merits of the 'Versuch einer neueren Grundlegung,' which he offers at the close of his volume

¹ 'Der Weg zu Shakespeare.' Halle, Niemeyer, 1902. Kapitel I. Der Fälscher Collier.

to such faithful followers as shall have attended him so far. This latter is indeed an essay in philosophy rather than in criticism. Starting from the basis of an individualistic idealism, the author proceeds to evolve the conception 'Shakespeare' from his own inner consciousness. With regard to this it will be sufficient to remark that though the result may be the *vraie vérité*—for him—it does not follow that it need have much interest for anybody else. I shall therefore confine my remarks to Dr. Eichhoff's treatment of a single well-known and important document, Henslowe's so-called Diary (*i.e.*, the notebook in which he kept the accounts of his theatrical undertakings), and of the circumstances which have led to an unfortunately intimate association of that document with the name of J. P. Collier.

Upon the author's contentions of the dependence of modern criticism upon Collier's labours, and of the inherent worthlessness of Henslowe's Diary as historical evidence, I need not dwell at length. Suffice it to say with regard to the first that, however exaggerated, it rests upon a basis of truth, and that the insistence upon this truth may be not untimely. The work of revision, however, is not a superhuman one, and I for my part do not despair of seeing it carried through by a scholar who has already shown himself eminently fitted for the task. As to the second, most of those who are interested in the history of the drama are perfectly familiar with the contents of Henslowe's volume, and have long ago formed their own opinion as to the historical value of the evidence to be extracted from it. They are not likely to care much what either

Dr. Eichhoff or I may have to say upon the subject.

I come therefore to the point in Dr. Eichhoff's work which is likely to have most interest for students of English literature, the alleged discovery of a number of hitherto unsuspected forgeries in Henslowe's Diary. Against the occurrence of such unfortunate interpolations in any document known to have passed through Collier's hands students have of course long been on their guard. The able examination of Henslowe's Diary in Dr. G. F. Warner's Catalogue of the Dulwich manuscripts, as well as the same critic's authoritative summing up of the whole question in the 'Dictionary of National Biography,' are familiar to all those interested in the subject. Dr. Eichhoff, however, claims to advance our knowledge of Collier's misdeeds in a truly sensational manner. Those familiar with the Diary will remember that in the receipt accounts a number of pieces are marked with the mysterious letters *ne*, which Collier interpreted as standing for the word *new*. It is these *ne*'s that Dr. Eichhoff maintains to be among Collier's forgeries, and he expends much sarcasm on those who have accepted the identification of *ne* as *new*, and attached weight to these supposed entries of 'first nights.' Into the precise meaning and importance to be attached to the *ne*'s I do not propose to enter in this place, for the reason that I have not yet myself come to a satisfactory conclusion on the subject; what I am here concerned with is the question of their genuineness, which is quite another story.

I have had occasion of late to bestow some attention upon the manuscript in question, and I am in

a position to assert that there are in that manuscript certain forged entries which have not hitherto been recognized as such.¹ These Dr. Eichhoff might have had the credit of detecting had he been content to subject the manuscript to a minute and rigorous examination from the palæographic point of view, instead of allowing himself to be misled by the *ignis fatuus* of a *priori* conjecture. Not one of these has roused his suspicion, and in seeking to condemn others he has begun at the wrong end. In asserting any particular entry to be a modern fabrication it is doubtless well to be able to point to the motive that led the forger to make it; but this is at most collateral evidence supporting that obtained from a minute and expert examination of the actual entry itself. No amount of argument as to the unlikelihood of an entry being genuine, or as to the obvious temptations and opportunities of a forger to perpetrate a particular fabrication, can be allowed to invalidate an entry unless it can on internal and technical grounds be shown to be spurious; no amount of argument as to the unlikelihood of fraudulent manipulation can serve to rehabilitate a manifest forgery. The question is one for those who have the most intimate acquaintance with the document in question coupled with the soundest expert knowledge in palæography as a whole. To the latter of these qualifications my pretensions are small, but I think that after some eighteen months of work at the Diary I could make out a claim to the former, and since Dr. Eichhoff

¹ For all details I must refer the curious to my edition of Henslowe's Diary to be published shortly by Mr. A. H. Bullen.

rests his case almost exclusively on *a priori* arguments, I may as well begin with an emphatic *a posteriori* statement. I believe, namely, that no competent person can, after due investigation, for one moment doubt the genuineness of the *ne*'s in Henslowe's Diary, however great may be the presumptive evidence against them. To state all the minute points upon which this conviction rests would require an article by itself, and then only a comparatively small proportion could find definite expression. But one point is so obvious, and at the same time so cogent, that I am tempted to dwell upon it here. I should premise that the receipt accounts in which the *ne*'s occur consist of daily entries of one line each, made at the time with any ink that happened to be handy—and Henslowe must have kept a most remarkable assortment. The result is that hardly any two consecutive entries are of exactly the same colour; they range from jet black to bright yellow. Now the point with which the forger had the greatest difficulty was to get his ink remotely to resemble that of the genuine entries. Though in a few cases he was more successful—whence the fact of some of his fabrications having been hitherto overlooked—he used as a rule a dirty gray ink which can be detected at a glance. And yet we are asked to believe that he was responsible for the *ne*'s which in every case agree to the minutest shade with the ink used in the rest of the entry.

But I am not concerned merely to maintain that Dr. Eichhoff is mistaken. Although I hope inci-
²⁰ dentally to prove in a particularly unanswerable

manner that the *ne*'s were not inserted in the Diary by Collier, I wish further to maintain that the arguments upon which Dr. Eichhoff bases his contention are in themselves unworthy of serious consideration, and that he has consequently proved himself at the outset an untrustworthy guide in his self-imposed mission of reforming the basis of our dramatic history.

The first argument advanced for regarding the *ne*'s as forgeries is that Malone, in printing his extracts from the Diary in 1790, makes no mention of them. 'Malone soll, als er seine Auszüge machte, diese auffälligen *ne* nicht gesehen haben?! . . . Diese *ne* sind sehr gross und sehr deutlich!! Malone machte Auszüge, er war vor allem für die Titel der Stücke interessiert—und er sollte sich nicht diese deutlich hervorgehobenen Stücke näher angesehen haben?!' One may perhaps be forgiven for suspecting that a writer who has need of such punctuation as this to express his feelings must be rather at a loss for arguments of intrinsic cogency. Malone was merely making extracts, or rather giving a *résumé* of the contents of the Diary, which in no way purported to be complete; he was not concerned to reprint the entries as they stood. What more natural than that he should pass over in silence certain signs the meaning of which was at best conjectural?

In the second place Dr. Eichhoff argues that whereas Henslowe can have had no inducement to mark first performances, Collier's alleged forgery would, if genuine, have lent great importance to the document in which they are found. Now, I am prepared to maintain, on the contrary, that

Collier can have had no motive whatever to perpetrate this particular forgery, while for Henslowe the entry of these signs would have a real business significance. What evidence, indeed, not otherwise deducible from the entries themselves, could Collier expect to attain by the discovery of a sign or symbol, the precise meaning of which must necessarily remain more or less a matter of speculation? The fact of a particular entry being the first occurrence of a title in the accounts, if coupled with the considerably larger receipts due to the higher prices charged for a first performance, supplies us with all the evidence that can be legitimately deduced from the piece being marked by Henslowe as a new play. This Collier, who was no fool, must have clearly perceived, and he would therefore have been most unlikely to incur the additional risk of detection attending each fresh fabrication. On the other hand, in spite of Dr. Eichhoff's authoritative assurance that no one can possibly discover any motive for Henslowe's marking first performances, I venture to think that two obvious ones should at once suggest themselves. In the first place Henslowe would want to know how the receipts from the various plays were running as a measure of their popularity. He would, consequently, for convenience of reference, need some indication of the point in the accounts at which each new piece began its career. The second motive is suggested by the occurrence at irregular intervals of another incidental note, of which Dr. Eichhoff makes no mention, namely, the contraction *m^r pd*, signifying payments made to the Master of the Revels. Each new piece had

to pay toll to that functionary, and the number of *ne*'s occurring between any two dates would represent the number of payments, of seven shillings each, due to the Master for that period.

Little weight, it appears to me, can be attached to the objection that Collier has now and again overlooked a *ne*. To say that Collier cannot have missed them accidentally, is to make a dogmatic assertion utterly at variance with the capabilities of the imperfect human machine. Had Dr. Eichhoff had the chastening experience of copying out the whole of Henslowe's accounts with his own hand, he might have known more of the strange vagaries of which the weary mind and eye are at times capable. The fact of his reproducing the entry '*ne—R⁷ at barnardo & phvlameta—xxxxij^s*' in the form '*ne R^d at Barnardo and pheameta 42 s*' does not suggest that he is himself endowed with any extraordinary powers of accuracy. Nor do we find evidence of any such powers where he treats of minute points of palæographic observation. In more than one instance indeed his statements amount to an absolute misrepresentation of the facts. Thus he informs us that the *ne* in the entry of January 27th, 1597, '*macht übrighens auch hier für den Laien die Fälschung äusserlich ganz klar.*' The stroke, he says, connecting the *ne* with the *R* is carefully drawn up to the ruled column, is there broken off and continued again on the other side of the broad line, not drawn through. Surely without crediting lay readers with any very profound insight, one may expect them to see through such nonsense as this. Of course the vertical columns

were ruled first, before the entries were made, and consequently any strokes of those entries must go over the ruling. No forger, who was not a born idiot—which can assuredly not be imputed to Collier—would make it appear as though the stroke of a forged entry went under the ruling. But besides this the patent facts of the case have been mis-stated. The letter after the vertical ruling is not in this case an *R* at all, but a *tt* (probably standing for 'Total'), and the cross stroke has of course been made after the two down strokes, so that in no case could it be continuous with the tail of the *ne*. Moreover both tail and cross stroke can be plainly seen to go over the ruling, though the ink has not marked so darkly where the pores of the paper were filled up with the previous inking.

The same misrepresentation, which charity and courtesy bid one ascribe to mere incompetence, characterizes Dr. Eichhoff's remarks on the subject of an interesting lacuna occurring on folio 12. A small rectangular piece has been cut out of the centre of this leaf, which bears on the recto a bond of John Griggs', and on the verso some receipt accounts of Henslowe's. Collier merely noted that the seal to the bond had been cut away, and considering that Griggs, in the course of the bond, states that he has set there to his 'hand and seale,' and that a small drop of old wax is still found adhering to the paper just to the right of the hole, the explanation is, on the face of it, plausible enough. Dr. Eichhoff will have none of it. Collier must have made an unsuccessful attempt at a forged
²⁰ *ne* on the verso, and have cut out the piece to save

himself. 'Of a seal there can be no question in this place, indeed none occurs in the volume.¹ On the contrary, the excision has only removed the greater portion of Griggs' name, of which the two first letters alone now appear.' This, I beg to say flatly, is not the case. The bond is not signed, as Dr. Eichhoff asserts, by various Griggs. It is signed by John Griggs, and by him alone, the repetitions of the signature being attempts on Henslowe's part to imitate his creditor's hand. Griggs' signature is intact; it is the lower of these copies by Henslowe that has the appearance of being mutilated. More than this. We find Dr. Eichhoff walking straight into the trap which the careless neglect of available evidence ever prepares for the weaver of ingenious conjecture. It so happens, namely, that the cutting out of the seal can be proved to have been anterior to the entry of the accounts on the verso, and these in their turn anterior to Henslowe's copies of Griggs' signature. The hole can be proved to have been there very nearly two centuries and a half before the time at which Collier is alleged to have attempted a forgery upon the missing portion! The date of the bond is 1592, that of the receipt accounts 1595. The three outer edges of the hole are cut sharp with a knife, the inner edge alone being torn and ragged. Now a glance at the verso will show that Collier was wrong in supposing that the 'date of the year' has been cut away from three successive entries along with the seal. Had the '1595' been written similarly as in the other entries, the first

¹ True; but neither does the phrase 'hand and seal' occur, so far as I remember, in any of the other bonds.

figure at least must have still been visible. Further, some of the strokes in the entries near the hole have passed the edge and have left marks at corresponding points on folio 11 verso. On the other hand, the tearing of the inner edge has damaged all three R's. It follows that when the entries were made in 1595 the three sharp edges had already been cut, while the inner edge was yet intact. Again, in Henslowe's lower copy of Griggs' signature the top loop of the *ŷ* has passed this ragged edge (intact in 1595), and may be distinctly traced on folio 13. So much for the elaboration of *a priori* reasoning whereby it is sought to saddle the unfortunate Collier with a fresh load of forgeries.

I hope I have said enough to show the absolute worthlessness of Dr. Eichhoff's arguments. There is no ground whatever for questioning the genuineness of the entries he attacks, but by a happy chance we actually possess positive evidence touching the point. Dr. Eichhoff, by basing his contentions upon mere conjecture, placed himself at the mercy of the first new fact that might turn up, and it happens that in the present instance the fates have played him a particularly unpleasant trick. The authorities of Dulwich College, namely, have recently acquired the transcript of portions of Henslowe's Diary which Malone had made for him towards the end of the eighteenth century. In this volume not only do the *ne*'s appear, but Malone has appended in his own hand his conjecture as to their significance: 'By NE, I believe, is meant *New Enterlude*. M.' Upon the importance of this evidence it is needless to enlarge, but I may draw

attention to an interesting point which the transcript brings to light in connection with Collier's interpretation of the mysterious *ne*'s. In support of his theory that they represented new productions, he adduced an entry in which, after the title of the piece, was interlined the note '1 day.' This of course is at once set down by Dr. Eichhoff as a shameless forgery. Any competent observer can satisfy himself at a glance of the genuineness of the entry, and Malone's transcript is there to place the matter beyond doubt. In the transcript, however, the interlineation reads not '1 day' but '10 day,' and if the original be carefully examined the traces of an erased 'o' can yet be discerned. Collier, in order to bear out his theory, did not forge this note into the manuscript, but gave the desired meaning to an authentic entry by a skilful use of the knife.¹

Dr. Eichhoff exhausts his vocabulary to express his scorn and virtuous indignation at Collier. To defend Collier is impossible. But in point of knowledge of his subject and general competence in the handling of historical evidence his German critic will do well not to seek comparison with the object of his diatribe.

W. W. GREG.

¹ Dr. Eichhoff represents Collier as saying that the note '1 day' is underlined (*unterstrichen*), a statement he characterizes as 'eine gemeine Lüge.' Collier never said that it was *underlined*, which it is not, but that it was *interlined*, which it is. A reviewer who was inclined to be severe would have little difficulty in turning many of the author's most unmeasured terms against himself.