

that we can learn more clearly and truly if they have paid and rendered it to the aforesaid camera.'²

Avarice makes one other reference to 'Lombards' in the course of his confession:

I lerned among Lombardes and Jewes a lesson,
To wey pans with a peys and pare the hevyest,
And leve it for love of the crosse to legge a wedde and lose it. (B, v, 342-4)

There is at least one instance of a collector 'paring', or 'clipping', coin on its way to the camera.³ It was a trick with which the Jews (sometimes themselves known as Lombards, if they came from Italy) were also charged, not without reason; and a few years before the presumed date of the B-text the Commons had complained that the Lombard merchants were harbouring Jews, although their presence in England had been illegal since 1290.⁴ It is clear that the writer of these and other passages in the poem (in particular, lines 128-33 of *Passus IV*) followed with a keen eye the devious and complicated financial transactions of his day—especially those centring on the papal treasury.

J. A. W. BAXSITT

Oxford

SHAKESPEARE'S 'HEBENON' AGAIN

The studies of Bradley and Montgomery (*M.L.R.* xv, 1920, 85-7, and 305-7, respectively) show conclusively that the name *hebenon* (or *hebona*) derives through Marlowe, Spenser, and Gower from *ebenus*, the ebony tree. But the twofold effect which Shakespeare attributes to 'hebenon' has not been so finally explained. It seems inescapable that he has associated this deadly concoction with the effects of perhaps more than one deadly plant. Many times suggested are henbane and yew (see especially Nicholson and Harrison, *Tr. New Sp. Soc.* 1886-2, pp. 21-31, and 1880-5, pp. 285-321); and for *lignum vitae*, regarded as a species of ebony, Montgomery proposes interesting arguments. In the search the most famous of all poisons has been neglected⁵—the hemlock, as it has been described by Pliny.

Holland's translation of the original, perhaps both, might well account for the lines describing the terrible operation of the poison when poured into the ears (*Hamlet*, I, v, 64-73):

whose effect

Hold such an enmity with blood of man
That swift as quicksilver it courses through
The natural gates and alleys of the body,
And with a sudden vigour it doth posset
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine,
And a most instant tetter bark'd about,
Most heaz-like, with vile and loathsome crust,
All my smooth body.

² Vide Lunt, *op. cit.* I, 313, and v, 33.

³ Vide Samaran, C. and Mollet, G., *La Falsité postifiale en France au XV^e siècle* (Paris, 1902), pp. 218, 217. In 1284 London Lombards were prosecuted 'de mitionibus regie monete' (Beardwood, *op. cit.* p. 12).

⁴ *Statute parchmentum*, II, 332a, 1276 (and cf. 330a).

⁵ Suggesting the word *Aloe*, K. Elze adds the

afterthought, 'Perhaps should we not conjecture that hemlock was intended here?' V. B. Green-Armytage dismisses the question with the statement that "'hebenon" must mean hemlock' (*Gynaecology and obstetrics in Shakespeare*, *J. Obstet. and Gynaec. Brit. Emp.* xxxvii (1899), 282). These are the only allusions to hemlock I have noted.

Pliny thus describes the perils of the famous hemlock (Bk 25, ch. 13):

Sucus exprimitur foliis Scribæusque, tum enim maxime tempestivus est. Semine trito expressus et sole densatus in pastillos necat sanguinem epissando. Haec altera vis, et ideo sic necatorum maculae in corporibus adparent.

This passage Holland renders somewhat awkwardly (ed. 1635, p. 236):

There is a juice pressed out of the leaves and flowers both together, for that is the right reason [season], namely whilst it is in flower: the which is pressed out of that seed stamped, being afterwards dried in the Sun and made into balls or troches, kills them that take it inwardly, by congealing and cluttering their blood; for this is a second venomous and deadly quality that it hath: which is the cause, that whosoever die by this means, there appear certain spots or specks in their bodies after they be dead.

In brief, hemlock is said to produce two effects: it kills by 'congealing and cluttering' the blood; upon the dead body it produces 'certain spots or specks'. The first effect, much elaborated in the *Howlet* passage, is identical with that in Pliny; in the second, *maculae* may have suggested the leperous tetter.

The pouring into the ears, it has been often suggested, Shakespeare may have adopted from Pliny's warning about the use of henbane in this same book, chap. 4:

Oleum fit ex semine [of henbane], quod ipsum scribis infusum temptat mentem.

If this sentence afforded the poet a starting point, then the later unique attributes of hemlock may easily have stirred him to the poetic elaboration which follows. Such a possibility in no way denies the poet's acquaintance with other dangerous plants, accounts of which may as easily have reinforced the passage here.

THOMAS P. HARRISON, JR.

AUSTIN, TEXAS

TWO ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF HERDER'S 'MARAN ATHA': A NOTE

W. K. Ruprecht ('*Felicia Hemans und die englischen Beziehungen zur deutschen Literatur*', *Anglia*, XLVIII (1924), 206) and H. Trenchon (*Le jeune Edgar Quinet* (Paris, 1937), pp. 242 f.) draw attention to *A Brief Commentary on the Revelation of Saint John*. From the German of the celebrated Herder (London, Hatchard, 1821, 291 pp.), the former without further remark, the latter with an observation that the translation 'semble intégrale' and a few lines on the translator's Introduction on Herder. Darling's *Cyclopaedia Bibliographica*, 1859, II, col. 1742, confuses matters by listing this work under *Johannes Offenbarung* and not *Maran Atha*, as if it might be a translation of the *Urform* of this latter. Lowndes's *Bibliographer's Manual* notes that the translator was Sir George Duckett, Bart. Allibone describes Sir George as the translator of Michaelis's *Burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, London, 1827,² while Halkett and Laing, who list *A Brief Commentary* without a note of the translator's name and with the wrong date (1831), erroneously give Sir John Duckett as the name of the translator of Michaelis's work.

Sir George Duckett (1777-1856), F.R.S., F.S.A., was the son of the first baronet, Sir George Jackson (who assumed the name of Duckett, his wife being heiress of

¹ *Erklärung der Begrüßungs- und Auferstehungsgeschichte Christi nach den vier Evangelisten. Mit Rücksicht auf die in den Fragmenten gemachten Einwürfe und deren Beantwortung. (Das fünfte Fragment selbst aus G. E. Lessings viertem Beytrage zur Geschichte und Literatur mit J. D.*

Michaelis Anmerkungen, als ein Anfang zur Begrüßungs- und Auferstehungsgeschichte Christi.) Halle, 1782-3. An interesting echo of Lessing's controversial writings in this country. The British Museum catalogue lists the translation, but does not state the name of the translator.