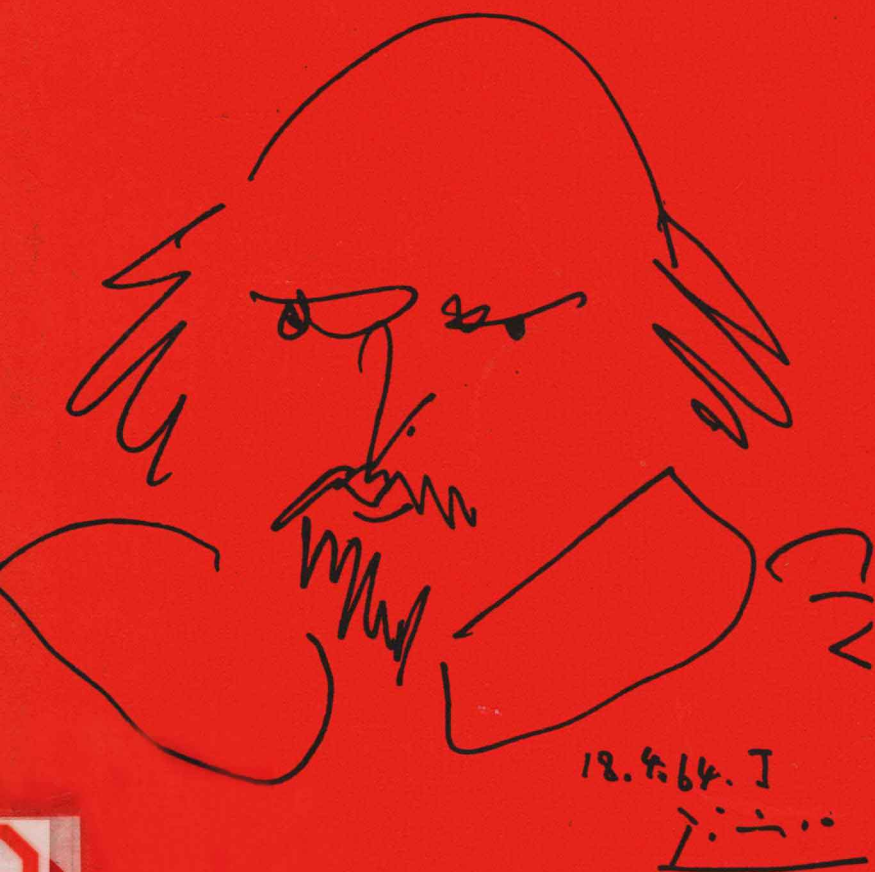


THE NEW SHAKESPEARE

The Winter's Tale



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THE WINTER'S TALE



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THE WINTER'S TALE

I

No Quarto edition of this play has been discovered; and we must therefore rely on the First Folio for our authoritative text. Most fortunately it happens to be a good one, excellent among its companions in the volume, in details which the Textual Editor will indicate and discuss.

II

The date of the play, as we have it, can be fixed with fair exactitude. Three lines of external evidence converge upon the year 1611.

(a) Dr Simon Forman—a somewhat notorious character in his day, who combined medicine with clairvoyance—in a *MS Booke of Plaies and Notes Thereof...for Common Pollicie* (Ashmole MSS 208) records that he witnessed a performance of *The Winter's Tale* at the Globe Theatre on May 15, 1611. The entry runs:

In the Winters Talle at the glob 1611 the 15 of maye g
Obserue ther howe Lyontes the kinge of Cicillia was overcom with Jelosy of his wife with the kinge of Bohemia his frind that came to see him, and howe he contriued his death and wold haue had his cup berer to haue poisoned, who gaue the king of Bohemia warning therof & fled with him to Bohemia.

Remember also howe he sent to the Orakell of Appollo & the Annsver of Apollo, that she was giltles and that the king was jelouse &c. and howe Except the child was found Again that was loste the kinge should die without yssue, for the child was carried into Bohemia & ther laid in a forrest & brought vp by a sheppard And the kinge of Bohemia his sonn married that wentch & howe they fled into Cicillia to Leontes, and the sheppard hauing showed the letter of the nobleman by whom Leontes sent a was

<away?> that child and the jewells found about her, she was knownen to be Leontes daughter and was then 16 yers old.

Remember also the Rog that cam in all tottered like coll pixci¹ and howe he feyned him sicke & to haue bin Robbed of all that he had and howe he cosened the por man of all his money, and after cam to the shep sher with a pedlers packe & ther cosened them Again of all their money And howe he changed apparrell with the kinge of Bomia his sonn, and then howe he turned Courtier &c. Beware of trustinge feined beggars or fawninge fellowss².

This MS was first unearthed in 1836 by Collier: but its authenticity (so far as we know) is not disputed³. The same book gives valuable evidence for the dates of *Macbeth* and *Cymbeline*.

If we may draw the inference, Forman's rather elaborate description of the plot seems to indicate that *The Winter's Tale* was in May 1611 a new play.

(b) In or about the year 1789, while Malone was passing his edition of Shakespeare through the press, he obtained access to the Office-book of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels to James I, and therein found the following entry:

For the Kings players. An olde playe called Winters Tale, formerly allowed of by Sir George Bucke and likewyse by mee on Mr Hemminges his worde that there was nothing prophane added or reformed, thogh the allowed booke was missinge; and I therefore returned it without a fee this 19 of August 1623.

Now Sir George Buc did not formally take over the office of Master of the Revels until August 1610, in succession to Sir Edward Tylney who died in the Octo-

¹ i.e. a shaggy goblin horse; v. O.E.D. 'colt-pixie'.

² From Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, ii. 340-1.

³ Disputed by Dr. Tannenbaum in *Shakesperian Scraps* 1933, but authenticity vindicated in *Review of English Studies*, 1947, pp. 193 [1950].

ber of that year. But Tylney had apparently been ailing for a long while, since as early as 1603, in expectation of his demise, Buc had obtained a reversionary grant of the office and, as it appears from *The Stationers' Registers*, not seldom signed licences on behalf of the invalid. So the above entry is not absolute proof against *The Winter's Tale* having been licensed before August 1610. Still, in the absence of any evidence that it was, we may reasonably take Sir Henry Herbert's entry as corroborative of Simon Forman's.

(c) In 1842 Peter Cunningham, a clerk in the Audit Office and a well-known antiquary, discovered (or professed to discover) in the cellars of Somerset House two lost Account Books of the Revels Office for 1604-5 and 1611-12, the second of which includes an entry concerning *The Tempest* and another recording that there was acted by the King's Players on 'The 5th of November (1611): A play called Ye Winters nighte Tayle.' The authenticity of this MS became involved in a most sorrowful personal story. It was offered for purchase (in 1865) to the British Museum, the authorities of which suspected and impounded it—very properly, because anyhow it should not have come into Cunningham's possession. For various reasons, after being accepted as genuine, it was suddenly scouted as a forgery; under which stigma it remained until, in 1911, Mr Ernest Law, having gone into the matter and sifted it thoroughly, in his *Some Supposed Shakespeare Forgeries*, vindicated the genuineness of the book and poor Cunningham's innocence on the worse charge¹. The entry—for many more

¹ Cf. the Introduction to *The Tempest* in this edition: and, for a summary of the affair, the present writer's *Shakespeare's Workmanship*, pp. 302-312. The Deputy Keeper of the Public Records, Mr A. E. Stamp, in his *Disputed Revels Accounts reproduced in Collotype Facsimile* (Shakespeare Association, 1930), has spoken the latest, and we think the final, word.

years than Hermione under denouncement—stands to-day accepted.

To support this converging *external* evidence, we may add, (*d*) the suggestion that Ben Jonson in his induction to *Bartholomew Fair* (1612-14) intended a topical hit at Shakespeare's *Tempest* and *Winter's Tale* together in the passage 'If there be never a *Servant monster* i' the Fayre, who can help it, he sayes; nor a nest of *antiques*? He is loth to make nature afraid in his Plays, like those that beget Tales, *Tempests*, and such like *Drolleries*.' The coincidence at least is curious. We need not make much of it. But the protestation of some, that Jonson—belonging to Shakespeare's Company at that date—could not have indulged in such an expression, scarcely indicates acquaintance with the characters of the two men. From all we know of them, this is just the thumped-out chaff that Jonson could not deny himself and Shakespeare would smile at.

(*e*) Still on Jonson—Professor Thorndike¹ has drawn from his Masque *Oberon*, acted at Court on January 1, 1611, a suggestion that may help us to fix the date of *The Tale* yet more closely. The main part of this masque was taken by a chorus of Satyrs who sang a song to the Lady Moon, and the stage-direction goes on—

The Song ended: they fell suddenly into an antick dance, full of gesture, and swift motion, and continued it, till the crowing of the cock: At which they were interrupted by Silenus.

Comparing this with the dance in our Play (4. 4.) of twelve Satyrs, Professor Thorndike argues that either Jonson must have borrowed from the public stage—that is, from *The Winter's Tale*—the idea of this antic dance for the Court masque, or Shakespeare must have borrowed this popular novelty from the masque. The second alternative is far more probable, because of the great importance of the Court masques and the desire for

¹ *The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher upon Shakespeare.*

novelty in them, and because the public may naturally be supposed to have been anxious to see a reproduction. Professor Thorndike reminds us that actors from the theatres were drawn upon for these Court performances, and he bids us note how the Servant introduces the Satyrs in our Play.—

One three of them by their own report, sir, *hath danced before the King*: and not the worse of the three but jumps twelve feet and a half by the Squire (yard measure).

‘It is still more probable because an anti-masque in Beaumont’s *Masque of the Inner Temple* is obviously made use of in a similar way in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Finally, we may note that the dance is an integral part of the Masque of Oberon, while it is a mere addition to the Play.’

If Professor Thorndike’s argument convinces us, we must even narrow down our date of composition from 1611 to the early part of that year, between January 1, when the *Masque of Oberon* was presented at Court, and May 15, when Forman saw *The Winter’s Tale* enacted at the Globe.

Happily we find this date or something near it—at any rate the conclusion drawn from the above *external* evidence that here we have one of Shakespeare’s last Plays—supported by all the usual *internal* tests of metre, etc. The language, so frequently involved and compacted, belongs to his later manner; speeches begin and end in the middle of a line¹; save in the Prologue to Act 4 no five-measure verses rhyme; ‘light’ and ‘weak’ endings

¹ The ‘speech-ending test.’ König (*Der Vers in Shakespeare’s Drama*)—our reference is borrowed from Dr Moorman’s introduction to this play in ‘The Arden Shakespeare’) gives 87.6 as the percentage of speeches ending with an incomplete line in *The Winter’s Tale*, 85.5 in *The Tempest*, 85 in *Cymbeline*.

abound¹. All these are accepted *stigmata* of a 'late' Play: and these again support conclusions at which some lovers of Shakespeare may have arrived through critical attention to his style and workmanship. With a few of these we shall presently deal after pushing some ordinary furniture out of the way.

III

For the title—A 'winter's tale' means, as it has always meant, just an 'old wives' tale'—a tale told by the chimney-corner, maybe to children before they go to bed, maybe to cronies sitting up late. It might be some legend of an ancient house, exaggerated in report, or a

¹ Dr Ingram in 1874 (*Transactions of The New Shakespeare Society*) tabulated the Plays by their number of 'light endings,' such as *are, is, may*; and 'weak endings,' such as *and, by, if, of*. 'His calculable table gives an ascending series from *Love's Labour's Lost*, wherein there are but three light endings, up to *The Winter's Tale* wherein out of 1825 lines of verse in the play, 57 have a light ending and 43 a weak ending, or a percentage of both together of 5.48' (Furness).

It would be a mistake, of course, to accept 'weak ending' for a necessarily invidious or slighting term, or even as less than an occasional grace of usage. Shakespeare, as playwright and actor, relied on his players (as he should rely upon *us*, his silent readers) to interpret his own delicate and loose-running rhythm. Thus—for an instance from 1. 2., which contains other like endings—

I know not: but I am sure 'tis safer to

Avoid what's grown than question how 'tis born—

no intelligent actor would speak the first line in thumping iambic, coming down upon the 'to' as if it were 'toe.' He would lay just as much extra stress upon 'safer' as allows him to carry the 'to' over to the next line with a natural rapidity. So with

bold oxlips and

The crown imperial

in Perdita's famous and lovely speech.

fairy-tale, or a family-curse, or anything to make you look over your shoulder, of ghosts, goblins, 'things that go bump in the night.' Young Mamillius in this play had heard such.—Says his mother to him in the nursery—

Pray you, sit by us,
And tell's a tale.

Mamillius. Merry, or sad, shall't be?

Hermione. As merry as you will.

Mamillius. A sad tale's best for winter: I have one
Of sprites and goblins.

Hermione. Let's have that, good sir.

Come on, sit down, come on, and do your best
To fright me with your sprites; you're powerful
at it.

Mamillius. There was a man—

Hermione. Nay, come, sit down; then on.

Mamillius. Dwelt by a churchyard... I will tell it softly,
Yon crickets shall not hear it...

—the sort of tale (as one may define it), concerning the gentry and their mysteries, that a child, escaping from his nursery, may gather from hints of gossip in servants' hall or housekeeper's room ('little pitchers having long ears')—something eerie, concerning *his* forbears, keeping him awake, to piece it fearfully in his little mind.

IV

That is all the title designates or conveys; and, for the Tale itself, everyone knows whence Shakespeare fetched it: from a prose romance *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time* written by his old enemy Robert Greene—the same that in 1592 had found him worth a death-bed curse as 'an upstart crow, beautiful with our feathers,' etc. *Pandosto* first appeared in 1588, was republished in 1607 under the new title *Dorastus and Fawnia* (names of the hero and heroine), and ran to many subsequent editions (Gollancz says, no less than fourteen); was translated at least twice into French, dramatised in French, also in

Dutch. Its popularity lasted well into the eighteenth century, *teste* Collier, who says that 'it was printed as a chap-book as recently as the year 1735.'

We who read Greene's tale now—whether in Carew Hazlitt's *Shakespeare's Library* or in Furness, or in Mr P. G. Thomas's modernised spelling (1907)—may be puzzled over this popularity as well as puzzled why Greene himself never, so far as is known, dramatised it. Anyhow Greene had (if our date be correct) been dead nineteen years, and his story had reached its third impression in 1609, before Shakespeare beautified his play with the novel's feathers, just as he had derived *As You Like It* out of Lodge's *Rosalynde*. To make a play out of another man's novel was no plagiarism in those days: but we may speculate on the language Robert Greene's ghost used about it.

It really seems an idle waste of industry to go searching about for other possible sources when we have (besides other coincidences) the words of the Oracle in *Pandosto* staring us in the face¹.

The Oracle

Suspition is no prooffe: ielousie is an unequall iudge: *Bellaria* is chast: *Egistus* blameless: *Franion* a true subject: *Pandosto* treacherous: his babe an innocent, and the King shal live without an heire: if that which is lost be not founde.

The filiation is so evident that there seems little need to enquire curiously into what other sources Shakespeare may conceivably have dipped, as to enumerate small phrases in the play borrowed from the novel. Yet, since we have just now mentioned the Oracle, one little debt may be mentioned. Shakespeare has been laughed at for placing this shrine of Apollo at Delphi in the island (!) of

¹ Shakespeare altered the names of the characters. Transferred from Greene *Bellaria* = *Hermione*, *Egistus* = *Polixenes*, *Franion* = *Camillo*, *Pandosto* = *Leontes*.

Delphos. But Greene's novel—and Greene was a 'Maister of Artes in Cambridge'—says explicitly that the jealous King sent 'sixe of his noble men whome he best trusted to the Isle of Delphos, there to enquire of the Oracle of Apollo,' etc. To the Elizabethan classical-romantics Delphi, the god's oracular seat, and the isle of Delos his birthplace and other shrine, might easily be one and the same—in geography 'nigh enough and no matter.'

Nor is it worth while here to pursue the question whence Greene fetched the framework of a story so plainly, in incident and *grace*, derivative from old Greek prose romances—such as Longus his *Daphnis and Chloe*, Heliodorus his *Theagenes and Charicles*, Achilles Tatius his *Clitophon and Leucippe*, or such a tale as must have furnished Plautus with the plot of *Rudens*. Oracles, shipwrecks, royal infants exposed on mountain-sides or cast adrift on perilous seas to be rescued by poor folk and nurtured as shepherd boys and cottage maids; pastoral love-making daisy-chains, sheepfolds prowled about by bear or wolf—*triste stabulis*—pirates who tear the lovers apart; pursuit by the swain, coincident search by desolated or repentant parents, rescue and recognition by the aid of tokens (which Aristotle, by the way, condemns as the worst form of *ἀναγνώρισις*): all these belong to the outfit of 'classical' romance which the Renaissance brought back into fashion, superseding the romances of Chivalry and their equally conventional stock-in-trade—such as the Poet who falls asleep on May-morning, or the distressed Damsel in the forest, or the magic Robe testing chastity. The change of fashion is quite apparent in Sidney's *Arcadia* (1580), and Greene pillages the revived wardrobe at will.

Shakespeare follows him in this and—bating a few glaring anachronisms—in keeping closely to the classical atmosphere, with only such liberties as the habit of his time would easily allow. On this point, Professor F. W.

Moorman, introducing this play in 'The Arden Shakespeare,' cannot be bettered.

No Christian sentiment (he remarks) is permitted to fall from the lips of any of the characters in the stress of the conflict to which they are subjected. It is Jove and the 'good goddess Nature' that Paulina invokes in order that Hermione's child may be saved from the yellow taint of jealousy, and the trust of the wronged Queen is ever in the 'divine Apollo.' Perdita at the shepherd's feast makes poetic allusion to Jupiter, bright Phoebus, Lady Fortune, Juno's eyes, Cytherea's breath and Dis's waggon, in a way that would seem grossly unnatural in a simple shepherdess, were we not to understand that she is a shepherdess brought up in a time when these deities were the objects of daily worship.

In the last Act Leontes, welcoming Florizel and Perdita, calls on the gods to purge the air for their arrival; and Hermione, descended from her pedestal, lifts her hands praying—

You gods look down,
And from your sacred vials pour your graces
Upon my daughter's head!

V

We shall postpone examining what Shakespeare was hoping or trying to do with this Romance of Greene's, turning it to drama, until we have noted what he actually did with the plot. The main structural differences are these.—

(1) In *Pandosto* (we shall use Shakespeare's names) Leontes' jealousy is made slow and by increase plausible. Shakespeare weakens the plausibility of it as well by ennobling Hermione—after his way with good women—as by huddling up the jealousy in its motion so densely that it strikes us as merely frantic and—which is worse in drama—a piece of impossible improbability. This has always and rightly offended the critics, and we may be

forgiven for a secret wish, in reading Act 1, Scene 2, to discover some break or gap to which one might point and argue, for Shakespeare's credit, 'Here is evidence of a cut by the stage manager's or some other hand, to shorten the business.' But the scene runs connectedly, with no abruptness save in Leontes' behaviour; which indeed confounds Camillo, on the stage, hardly less than it shocks us, in the audience. Nor can we find any need to abbreviate for theatrical convenience, seeing that *Cymbeline* outruns our play in length, while *Hamlet* and *Antony and Cleopatra* extend to something like 4000 lines apiece. The explanation, to our mind, lies deeper and touches the very heart of what Shakespeare, in his later plays, was trying to do: and with this we shall have later, briefly, to deal. But for the moment we must continue (in the tradition of editors) to enumerate the more important of Shakespeare's improvements upon Greene's story.

(2) For some reason best known to himself he makes Bohemia and Sicily change places. Casually, too, Bohemia finds itself in the unexpected (and so often admired) possession of a sea-board. Jonson began to deride this in one of his reported talks with Drummond of Hawthornden; and successive editors have waded ashore upon that coast, to condemn or to explain it. For our part we think it occurs happily enough in a play where the Oracle of Apollo finds itself mixed up with the Emperor of Russia, Whitsun pastorals, and Puritans singing hymns to bagpipes: and to our mind the final criticism upon this little lapse was uttered long ago by Corporal Trim in his story of *The King of Bohemia and his Seven Castles*.—

The unfortunate King of Bohemia, said Trim.... Was he unfortunate, then? cried my uncle Toby....

The King of Bohemia, an't please your honour, replied the Corporal, was unfortunate in this:—that taking great pleasure in navigation and all sort of sea-affairs;—and there

happening throughout the whole kingdom of Bohemia to be no sea-port town whatever—

...How the deuce should there, Trim? cried my uncle Toby: For Bohemia being totally inland, it could have happened no otherwise.

...It might, said Trim, if it had pleased God—etc.

(3) We can see no warrant for tracing Hermione's restoration back to the *Alcestis*: and the *coup de théâtre* of the living statue is not in Greene, in the latter part of whose story (4) the King involves himself in an unpleasant business which the play avoids. (5) As we have seen, Shakespeare changed the characters' names; taking Florizel, maybe, from *Amadis de Gaule* (Book ix), Autolycus somehow from the *Odyssey*, and five out of Sidney's *Arcadia*.

VI

But all this seems to us trivial in comparison with the enquiry, What in this play was Shakespeare trying to do?

When, towards the close of the last century, through the pains of many scholars, the chronological order of Shakespeare's plays had been roughly determined, sundry critics at once detected in the last few of them a notable change of atmosphere, a tenderness, a mellowness, consonant with the sun-setting of a great genius. This, no doubt, they over-sentimentalised, provoking sterner critics to detect merely a decline of power.

For our part we see no reason why these two views should conflict. In those last years there were not to be—probably there could not be—any more *Hamlets*, *Othellos*, *Lears*: but a great master's ambition may yet grow while his hand is failing: he may yet, confident in his old virtuosity, aspire to do something never before attempted with success. Now, of these two opponent sets of critics, whom we may summarise as *A* and *B*, the former is undoubtedly right to the extent of perceiving

that Shakespeare was set on doing a new thing, and a most difficult thing, the difficulty lying in its very nature. No one can study the last plays without recognising a man possessed with the idea of *reconcilement*; of creating a world in which the sins of the fathers are not visited on the children. But reconcilement, forgiveness, is a slow process by contrast with the conflict of will and passion, which declare themselves in bold sudden strokes. It is therefore peculiarly difficult to handle as a spectacle in the short 'traffic of our stage'; especially difficult to handle when the wrongs of the parents have to be atoned in the loves of their grown-up children. For some obvious reasons we must leave *King Henry VIII* out of account. But in *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, by various devices, he strives to bring this haunting idea of his into accord with dramatic Unity of Time. In this play of ours, having to skip sixteen years after Act 3, he desperately drags in Father Time with an hour-glass, and not only makes him apologise for sliding over the interval, but uses him as prologue to a second intrigue.—

Imagine me,
Gentle spectators, that I now may be
In fair Bohemia, and remember well
I mentioned a son o'th' king's, which Florizel
I now name to you; and with speed so pace
To speak of Perdita.

—Which means on interpretation that Shakespeare, having proposed to himself a drama in which a wronged woman has to bear a child, who has to be lost for years and restored to her as a grown girl, simply did not know how to do it, save by invoking some such device. At length, after many essays, in *The Tempest* he did achieve the impossible thing and compress the story into one single, brief movement.

VII

But the critic whom we have called *B* has in *The Winter's Tale* opportunities enough of arguing a decline of power, and pointing for evidence to faults and even absurdities of construction compared with which the anachronisms on which so many editors have dwelt appear but trivial. Let a few be instanced:

(a) The Oracle. 'It seems,' says Coleridge, 'a mere indolence in the great bard not to have provided in the oracular response (Act 2, Sc. 2) some ground for Hermione's seeming death and sixteen years' voluntary concealment'; and Coleridge even suggests how it could have been conveyed, in a single sentence of fifteen words. Shakespeare let the opportunity go. The resurrection of Hermione thus becomes more startling, but at a total loss of dramatic irony.

(b) Next let us take Antigonus, with the deep damnation of his taking-off. The child Perdita is laid on the sea-shore, with wealth in jewels and the evidence of her high parentage beside her. All we have now to do as a matter of stage-workmanship is to efface Antigonus. But why introduce a bear? The ship that brought him is riding off the coast of Bohemia and is presently engulfed with all her crew. The clown sees it all happen. Then why, in the name of economy, not engulf Antigonus with the rest—or, better still, as he tries to row aboard? If anyone ask this editor's private opinion, it is that the Bear-Pit in Southwark, hard by the Globe Theatre, had a tame animal to let out, and the Globe management took the opportunity to make a popular hit.

(c) Next for Autolycus: He is a delightful rogue, as Dr Simon Forman found him, and as we all like to recognise him. But as a factor in the plot, though from the moment of his appearance he seems to be constantly and deliberately intriguing, in effect he does nothing at all. As a part of the story he is indeed so negligible that