The Authenticity of a Passage in the First Quarto of "Hamlet."—I should like to discuss more fully in "N. & Q." a very interesting question, which was raised at a meeting of the New Shakspere Society, in connexion with Dr. Abbott's paper on "The Early Quartos of Hamlet." In the first quarto (1603), in the scene in which Hamlet instructs the players how to deliver his lines, after he has condemned the clowns who speak "more than is set down for their apparell, and Gentlemen quotes his jests downe in their tables, before they come to the play, as thus: Cannot you stay till I eate my porridge? And, you owe me a quarter's wages: and, my coate wants a cullison: And, your beere is sowre: and, blabbering with his lips, and thus keeping in his cinkapase of jests, When, God knows, the wanne clovrae cannot make meat, and yon '11 beat the post."

"And then you have some agen, that keeps one suit of jests, as a man is knowne by one suit of Apparel, and Gentlemen quotes his jests downe In their tables, before they come to the play, as thus: Cannot you stay till I eate my porridge? And, you owe me a quarter's wages: and, my coate wants a cullison: And, your beere is sowre: and, blabbering with his lips, and thus keeping in his cinkapase of jests, When, God knows, the wanne clovrae cannot make meat, and yon '11 beat the post."

Dr. Abbott scouted the idea that this passage could possibly be Shaksperean. However, upon my calling attention to the phrase "keeping in his cinkapase of jests," and adducing a passage from Much Ado about Nothing (ii. 1, 76, &c., Globe Edition), in which the word "cinkapase" is used in precisely the same metaphorical sense, he allowed the phrase to be Shaksperean's. That was all which I was at that time prepared to contend for; but upon considering the matter more at leisure, I have arrived at the conclusion that the whole passage is Shaksperean's, in as true a sense as any portion of the first quarto can be called Shaksperean's, for there is not a passage in the play (or scarcely one) which the pirate of 1603 did not mutilate. It is clear that Dr. Abbott, in admitting the phrase "cinkapase of jests" to be Shaksperean's, must needs go a little further with me. The phrase must have had a context. Is not that context, very likely corrupted (as usual) by the words addressed to the ears of the "groundlings"?

There are two other quaint turns in the passage, which strike upon my ear with the true Shaksperean ring: one occurs at the beginning, and the other at the close, viz., the description of the clown who "keeps one suit of jests, as a man is known by one suit of apparel," and who "cannot make a jest unless by chance, as the blind man catcheth a hare." But, then, if the passage is Shakspere's, and of fair average merit, I suppose I shall be asked the question, "Why was it omitted from the quarto of 1604?" Perhaps because it occurred to Shakspere's mind that Hamlet's admirable discourse upon elocution and the business of the stage had already sufficiently delayed the progress of the play.

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Ladies and Freemasonry.

I perceive in the late newspapers a paragraph to the following effect:—

"It is announced that the Baroness Burdett-Coutts intends to present in person the Masonic Lodge of her name with a set of Chairs of the Order for the Master and Senior Warden. Having recognized the charitable disposition of the Craft, she expressed an earnest desire to be a co-worker with Freemasonry. The brethren will entertain her at a repast. This will be the first time in England at which a lady has been present when Lodge furniture, as such, has been in the room."

The writer of the above seems to have forgotten the story of Lady Aldworth, which is thus related in Dr. Caulfield's very interesting Annals of St. Fin Barre, Cork, 1871:—

"1775. The Hon. Mrs. Aldworth, aged 80 years, buried. Mrs. Aldworth was daughter of Arthur Lord Doneraile, by Eliza, daughter of John Hayes, of Winchelsea, in the county of Sussex, Esq. This lady justly ranks amongst the most remarkable persons of her time. The following account of her connexion with the Masonic body is from a rare tract, published in Cork in 1811, and subsequently a few copies were struck off in 1869 for members of the family: 'Lord Doneraile, Mrs. Aldworth's father, who was a very zealous Mason, held a warrant in his own hands, and occasionally opened Lodge at Doneraile House, his sons and some intimate friends in the neighbourhood assisting; and it is said that never were the Masonic duties more rigidly performed, or the business of the Craft more sincerely

* Cp. Much Ado, ii. 1, 205, &c.—"Ho! now you strike like the blind man: 'twas the boy that stole your meat, and you'll beat the post."