

THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP
NEWS - LETTER.

No. 2.

March 1937.

PROFESSOR ABEL LEFRANC

We have pleasure in publishing a letter to Colonel Douglas from our distinguished Vice-President, Professor Abel Lefranc, Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur, and of the Académie Française.

Professor Lefranc, whose famous book "Sous le Masque de William Shakespeare : William Stanley, sixième Comte de Derby" will be familiar to many members of the Fellowship, has recently retired on age limit from his official duties at the Collège de France and the Sorbonne. But we are delighted to hear that he is continuing his invaluable Shakespearean work, especially in connexion with "Love's Labour's Lost".

Paris, le 26 Decembre, 1936.

Mon cher Président,

J'ai accueilli la venue de votre aimable lettre avec un grand plaisir, très sensible à votre courtoise appréciation de mon labeur historique, commencé il y a près de cinquante ans. Certes, nous nous intéressons pareillement aux recherches relatives au "Great Problem". Le "Stratford Pictorial" - chose assez piquante - nous servait, depuis quelques années, de trait d'union. Ne le remplacerez-vous pas par un autre moyen de communication entre les membres du "Shakespeare Fellowship" que vous présidez? C'est à souhaiter.

La loi récente sur les limites d'âge vient d'amener ma retraite au Collège de France comme à l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes (Sorbonne). Je voudrais en user, en quelque mesure, pour reprendre mes investigations avec plus de continuité. Le prochain numéro de la "Revue Historique" contiendra un nouvel article que j'ai rédigé au cours des vacances sur les "Eléments français de Peines d'Amour Perdues" ("Love's Labour's Lost"). Je me ferai un devoir de vous envoyer un exemplaire du tirage à part.

J'apprends avec satisfaction que Miss Greenwood a mis sur pied un précis du livre de son regretté père sur le problème Shakespearien. La visite que j'avais pu faire, lors de mon dernier voyage à Londres, à Sir George, avait encore accrue, si c'était possible, mon estime profonde pour l'homme et pour le savant. Continuons le bon combat fidèles à sa mémoire et à son bel effort!

Je vous remercie de me donner une idée du livre du Dr. A.S. Cairncross sur le "Problème d'Hamlet". Evidemment son travail pourra être utile aux hétérodoxes que nous sommes. Je tâcherai de me le procurer. Mais qu'une oeuvre telle que "Hamlet" (Q.2) ait pu être écrite par un jeune Stratfordien de vingt-quatre ans, c'est ce que je n'arriverai jamais à croire. Il me semble, par le résumé que vous voulez bien me donner, que la psychologie de ce Docteur est bien courte et bien élémentaire.

Nous correspondons de temps à autre, le capitaine Ward et moi. Je suis toujours charmé d'être tenu au courant de l'activité du Shakespeare Fellowship.

Je viens de prendre connaissance d'un livre assez récent qui m'a vivement intéressé, "The Real War of the Theatres" (8vo 1935), par Robert Boyes Sharpe. Sa conclusion (Chap. VII) est tout-à-fait remarquable. Elle tend à prouver combien l'idée fondamentale du grand savant qu'est Sir Edmund Chambers, qui nie complètement l'influence de la politique dans les oeuvres de Shakespeare, est fautive et inexacte de tout point. C'est également mon sentiment, malgré tout le respect que j'éprouve pour cet illustre érudit, avec lequel j'ai plus d'une fois correspondu, et que j'ai eu le plaisir de voir au cours du voyage à Londres évoqué plus haut. (Je faisais alors une série de cours à l'Université de Londres et la Conférence Zaharoff à l'Université d'Oxford).

Je suis maintenant le doyen des "Foreign Honorary Fellows of the Royal Society of Literature", ayant été élu en cette qualité en 1897.

Laissez-moi espérer, mon cher Président, que, si vous venez quelque jour à Paris, vous n'oublierez pas votre fidèle "Fellow", et que nous aurons ainsi l'agréable occasion de faire plus ample connaissance.

Veillez agréer, je vous prie, l'assurance de mes sentiments de haute et fort sympathique considération.

(signed) ABEL LEFRANC

"M.O.A.I. DOTH SWAY MY LIFE"

The influence of Montaigne's Essays on "Much Ado about Nothing", "Romeo and Juliet", and "Twelfth Night".

by Rear Admiral H.H. Holland C.B.

Stratfordian scholars have noted the influence of Montaigne on "Hamlet", but not on these three plays. The reason is obvious. Florio's translation was not published until 1603. These three plays were all written before that date, and William Shakespeare was not known to have been a French scholar. Consequently, the commentators never even thought of looking for Montaigne's influence on them. But it is there all the same.

The first French edition, containing the first two volumes only, was published in 1580; and it was not until 1588 that a fifth edition appeared, to which the third volume was added. Now, it is the first two volumes that influence "Much Ado" and "Romeo and Juliet", while it is the third volume that influences "Twelfth Night". Oxfordians, I think, generally agree that the two former were written about 1580 and 1582; and the latter (though not everyone agrees with me) was written, according to my researches, about 1587-88. These dates, from an Oxfordian point of view, are very illuminating; for, assuming that Shakespeare knew French, and wrote these three plays in the 'nineties, one naturally wonders why he discriminated between the volumes in the way he did; and why, writing so long after the publication of the Essays, more plays do not show the same influence - and, to the best of my belief, and with the possible exception of "Troilus and Cressida", they do not. There is, of course, the "Tempest" passage, taken much later from Florio's translation.

Before dealing with the various passages it must again be pointed out that they were originally in French. In books like "Euphues" (about which I hope to write at some later date) the passages generally contain precisely, or at any rate strikingly, similar words. But this obviously cannot be the case here.

"Much Ado about Nothing"

- (1). "A victory is twice itself when the achiever brings home full numbers". (I.i.8).

Montaigne: "Suetonius was wont to say that he esteemed that victory much more which conducted by advice, and managed by council, than by main strength and force.

In the war against Petreius, fortune presenting an apparent occasion of advantage unto him, he saith that he refused it, hoping with a little more time but with less hazard to see the overthrow of his enemy".

- (2). "Joy could not show itself modest enough without a badge of bitterness. Did he break out into tears?" (I.i.22)

Montaigne: "How we weep and laugh at one self-same thing. First he (Xerxes) was suddenly assailed by an excessive joy, to see so many thousands of men at his service, and witnessed the same by the alacrity and cheerfulness of his countenance. And immediately at the very moment, his thoughts suggesting how so many lives were to be consumed ... he began to frown his brows, and grew so pensive that he wept".

- (3). "Good Signior Leonato, you are come to meet your trouble: the fashion of the world is to avoid cost, and you encounter it". (I.i.95-97)

Montaigne: "It were notable discourtesy unto our common rules, both towards an equal, but more toward a great person, not to meet with you in your house, if he have once warned you that he will come: and Margaret, Queen of Navarre, was wont to say to this purpose, that it was a kind of incivility in a gentleman to depart from his house, as the fashion is, to meet with him that is coming to him, how worthy soever he be, and that it more agreeth with civility and respect, to stay for him at home, and there to entertain him: except it were for fear the stranger should miss his way".

So Don Pedro was really administering a rebuke, but with a double meaning on the cost of entertaining Queen Elizabeth when on a Progress.

- (4). "I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow, than a man swear he loves me". (I.i.132)

Montaigne: "An ancient Father saith, we are better in the company of a known dog, than in a man's society, whose speech is unknown to us".

- (5). Borachio says: "See'st thou not I say what (a) a deformed thief (b) this fashion is? (c) how giddily he turns about all the hot blood between fourteen and five-and-thirty, (d) sometimes fashioning them ... like the shaven Hercules in the tapestry".

Conrade says: "All this I see, and I see (e) that the fashion wears out more apparel than the man".

And later on Seacoal says: "And one Deformed is one of them, I know him (f) 'a wears a lock". (III.iii.139-183).

On account of Florio's very free translation, Montaigne's passage is given in the original French:

Montaigne. "(b) La facon de se vestir presente luy faict incontinent condamner et mépriser l'ancienne, d'une résolution si grande et d'un consentement si vniuersel que vous diriez c'est vne vraie (c) manie qui luy roule ainsi son entendement. (e) Par ce que nostre changement est si prompt en cela que l'inuention de tous les tailleurs du monde ne scauroit fournir assés de nouuelletez, il est forcé que bien souuent (a) les formes mesprisees reuiennent en crédit ... Les anciens Gaulois, dict Sidonius Apollinaris, (f) portoint le poil long par le deuant (d) et le derrière de la teste tondu, qui est cete facon qui vient être renouvellee par l'usage effeminé et lache de ce siecle".

(a), (b), (c), (d) and (f) need little comment: 'thief' is being used in the contemptuous sense (as by Lady Percy in "Henry IV"). (e) is a slightly different line of thought: while Montaigne says the fashions change before new apparel can be invented, Shakespeare says they change before old apparel is worn out.

- (6). "There was never yet philosopher that could endure the toothache patiently". (V.i.35).

Montaigne: "What good or commodity may we imagine this far-understanding of so many things brought ever unto Varro or Aristotle? ... could they ever draw any ease for the gout from Logic?"

"Romeo and Juliet".

- (1). The Capulet retainers show their contempt for their adversaries by biting their thumbs. In a chapter headed "On Thumbs" Montaigne says: "In Rome it was a sign of favour to wring and kiss the thumb, and of disfavour or disgrace to lift them up and turn them outwards". (I.i.).
- (2). Juliet is weaned at the extraordinary age of three. Montaigne mentions countries where children suck till they are four, and sometimes twelve years old. (I.iii.25).
- (3). Nurse says "were not I thine only nurse, I shouldst say thou hadst sucked wisdom from thy teat". Montaigne says: "the very same instinct and impression which I sucked from my nurse I have kept". (I.iii.67).
- (4). In praising Paris, Lady Capulet says: "That book in many eyes doth share the glory That in gold clasps locks in the golden story". (I.iii.91). This objection to the important and principal glory being shared and therefore detracted from by an unimportant subordinate is the gist of a whole chapter headed "That a man should not communicate his glory". Amongst other instances Montaigne quotes King Edward III refusing to assist the Black Prince of Crecy lest it should detract from his glory.

I will quote two passages only: "For (as Cicero saith) even even those that oppugne her (i.e. glory) will nevertheless have the books they write against her to bear their names upon their front, endeavouring to make themselves glorious by despising glory". "But seldom shall we see a man communicate his honour, share his reputation, and impart his glory, unto others".

- (5). When Juliet says:

"Whats in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet". (II.ii.43)

she is paraphrasing and converting into flowers and smell where Montaigne, also talking about names, draws his simile from herbs and taste. In a chapter headed "Of Names", he says: "What diversity soever there be in herbs, all are shuffled up together under the name of a salad".

- (6). In Act III scene ii, Shakespeare treats a delicate subject in rather a prettier way than Montaigne does. Juliet says:

"Hood my unmanned blood, bating in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle; till strange love grown bold
Thinks true love acted, simple modesty".

Montaigne says: "A woman which lies with a man ought, together with her petticoat, leave off all bashfulness".

"Twelfth Night"

The following passages in Volume III of Montaigne's Essays, headed "Of the Uncommodity of Greatness", are echoed in Maria's letter read by Malvolio.

- (1). "Since we cannot attain unto it, let us revenge ourselves by railing against it. ... In my conceit it is a virtue whereunto myself might easily attain".
- (2). "Verily meseemeth that we value it at too high a rate, and prize overdear the resolution of those whom we have either seen or heard to have contemned, or of their own motion rejected the same. Her essence is not so evidently so commodious but a man may refuse it without wonder".
- (3) "I have shewed by the conduct of my life, that I have rather sought to avoid, than otherwise, to embrace beyond the degree of Fortune that at my birth it pleased God to call me unto".

- (4). "My mind is so dull and slow, that I measure not good Fortune according to her height, but rather according to her facility. And if my heart be not great enough, it is rateably free and open".

Compare these four passages with the letter to Malvolio. (II.v. 155-159).

- (1). "Some achieve greatness".
- (2). "Some have greatness thrust upon them".
- (3). "Some are born great".
- (4). "Be not afraid of greatness".

There is another chapter in this volume headed: "Of Three Commerces or Societies". The following passages are again echoed in Malvolio's letter:

- (1). "Were I to dress myself after mine own manner, there is no fashion so good whereto I would be so affected, or tied, as not to know how to leave and loose it".
- (2). "I envy those which can be familiar with the meanest of their followers, and vouchsafe to contract friendship, and frame discourse with their own servants. Nor do I like the advice of Plato, ever to speak imperiously unto our attendants, without blitheness and sans any familiarity, be it to men or women servants".
- (3). "I give myself to State-business, and to the world more willingly when I am all alone".
- (4). "In mine own house, in the midst of a numerous family, ... I reserve both for myself and others an unaccustomed liberty ... There every man demeaneth himself as he pleaseth, and entertaineth what his thoughts affect. Whereas I keep myself silent, meditating and close, without offence to my guests and friends".
- (5). "At the Court, and in press of people, I close and sink into my own skin. ... I am inured to be merry on great assemblies".

Compare these passages with the remainder of Malvolio's letter:

- (1). "Put thyself into the trick of singularity: remember who commended thy yellow stockings".
- (2). "Be surly with servants".
- (3). "Let thy tongue tang arguments of State".
- (4). "Be opposite with a kinsman".

- (5). "Inure thyself to what thou art like to be: cast thy humble slough and be fresh".

It now seems fairly evident that Malvolio's letter is based on Montaigne's Essays.

Consequently, the line "M.O.A.I. doth sway my life", one of the mystery lines of Shakespeare, at once comes to mind. Malvolio has noticed that it begins with the same letter as his own name, but there is no consonancy in the sequel. In the name "Montaigne", however, this difficulty does not exist:

"M O (nt) A I (gne) doth sway my life"-

solves the problem: and the line may be taken in a general sense as follows:-
The advice I give you is founded on the precepts of Montaigne, though you, and the audience, will think that I am referring to your own name.

DR. CAIRNCROSS AND "HAMLET".

The "Times Literary Supplement" (2.1.37) published a letter from Mr. Percy Allen. He pointed out that the so-called "revolutionary theory" that "Hamlet" was written by Shakespeare in the fifteen-eighties, propounded by Dr. A.S. Cairncross in his "Problem of Hamlet", is by no means new; because Mrs. Clark and Admiral Holland, many years ago, gave convincing reasons for dating the play about 1583.

This letter drew the following reply from Dr. Cairncross:

To the Editor, "Times Literary Supplement".

Sir,

I am obliged to Mr. Percy Allen for his appreciative reference to my recent book, "The Problem of Hamlet." But I should like to dissociate my investigations from his work and methods and from those of Mrs. Clark and Admiral Holland. The topical allusions on which they rely, are notoriously unsure ground in Shakespearian chronology; and their use of interpolation and revision is so universal that it loses all value. The "memorial" theory, however, which I have followed, is now well established, thanks to the work of Dr. Greg, Mr. Crompton Rhodes, the late Dr. Smart, and Professor Peter Alexander; and, if properly applied, can be trusted to give results of scientific value.

I should like further to deny Mr. Allen's statement that my conclusions have been forestalled by the Shakespeare Fellowship. There is, I believe, a considerable difference between assuming, on the doubly unsure ground of topical allusions and the "Oxford" hypothesis, that "Hamlet" was first drafted in 1583, and my theory, based on a critical examination of the texts, that the First, or Bad, Quarto of "Hamlet" is entirely a "memorial" reconstruction similar to "The Contention" or "The Merry Wives" (1602); that therefore no hypothesis involving revision or the existence of an "Ur-Hamlet" is necessary; and hence that the "Hamlet" mentioned by Nashe in 1589 could only have been Shakespeare's. ...

A.S. CAIRNCROSS.

51, Burnbaule Road, Hamilton, Lanarkshire.

The Editor of the "Times Literary Supplement" did not print Mr. Allen's reply because, he said, it would only lead to controversy.

It is therefore, given below:

To the Editor, "Times Literary Supplement".

Sir,

... The "Oxford" hypothesis, and the conclusions that follow thereupon, are not grounded, any more than those of Dr. Cairncross himself, solely upon topical allusions; but are built up upon a mass of evidence, documentary and circumstantial, into which topicalities are rightly fitted. Admiral Holland's notes on "Hamlet", in his "Shakespeare, Oxford, and Elizabethan Times", provide forty-five topical clues to about 1583. Among these clues is the reference to "impress of shipwrights" (for defence against Spain), which is used by Dr. Cairncross himself, and with the same implication! If, therefore, such topicalities are "notoriously unsure ground", may I ask why Dr. Cairncross uses a stream of them in his book (pp. 81, 82, 101-115)? And why he has entitled chapter 8, "The Topical References"? And why he concludes this chapter thus:

In short, it seems impossible to account for the topical allusions ... in "Hamlet" (Q.1), unless by referring the play and the piracy to a date not later than 1593.

It would, indeed, be more accurate to say "a date not later than 1589", because he argues that the so-called "Ur-Hamlet", mentioned by Nashe in that year, was simply a "memory" version of Shakespeare's "Hamlet".

Has Dr. Cairncross forgotten what he wrote?

May I ask all open-minded readers to consider which of our two conflicting hypotheses is the more rationally probable, granted that the date of "Hamlet" must now be put somewhere in the fifteen-eighties:

- (1). That the Shakespeare plays, including "Hamlet", were the work of an English nobleman born in 1550, incidents from whose life-story (identity of "Shakespeare" apart) are dramatized many times over in the plays.
- (2). That the plays are the work of a Statford burgess, born in 1564, who came to London about 1588 at the age of 24 with such plays as "The Taming of the Shrew", "The Merchant of Venice", "Romeo and Juliet", "Twelfth Night", and others, in his pocket; and with "Othello" and "Hamlet" either already written or seething in his brain.

In conclusion, I would respectfully remind Dr. Cairncross that there is unity in truth; which explains why we have both arrived at approximately the same date for the writing of "Hamlet".

PERCY ALLEN

OCCASIONAL NOTES

Mr. Percy Allen's activities.

Mr. Percy Allen has contributed an article entitled "Shakespeare Upon A Platform Stage", to the February issue of "Drama", the organ of the British Drama League. The article deals with the Shakespearean productions at the Ring, Blackfriars, by the Bankside Players, an organization directed by Mr. Robert Atkins.

On January 18th Mr. Allen lectured at the Old Vic to members of the Vic-Wells Association. The subject was "Topicalities in Shakespeare", and Mr. Edwin Fagg was in the chair. There was a large attendance, and an animated discussion followed.

On February 7th he spoke to the members of the York Repertory Theatre, at the Theatre Royal, York. The subject was "Shakespeare - the Man behind the Mask". The discussion which followed, and which was kept up till a late hour, was one of the best for quality and animation, that Mr. Allen's lectures have so far aroused.

Miss Greenwood is collecting material for a biography of the Countess of Pembroke - "Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother". A life of Lady Pembroke is long overdue; and Miss Greenwood would welcome any suggestions from members as to the collection of such material.

"The Shakespeare Problem Restated", by Sir George Greenwood M.P., condensed by Elsie Greenwood, with a Foreword by Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede, -

will be published at the end of this month by "The Athenaeum Press", 13, Breems Buildings, Fetter Lane, E.C.4., price 6/- net, postage 4d.

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor, "Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter".

Dear Sir,

I would like to tender my most grateful thanks to all those members of the Fellowship who by subscriptions and their kind promises to buy copies of my new edition of my father's book, "The Shakespeare Problem Restated", have materially helped towards the success of the enterprise. I also wish to thank most sincerely the President and Hon. Sec. of the Fellowship for the unfailing help and advice I have received from them in the course of my undertaking.

yours sincerely,

ELSIE GREENWOOD.

5, Kensington Gate, London, W.8.
