

# THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP

## NEWS-LETTER

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### BOOK REVIEWS

"The Man who was Shakespeare" by Eva Turner Clark  
(Richard R. Smith, New York, 1937)  
with 14 full-page illustrations  
Reviewed by B. M. Ward

Amazing energy and erudition are displayed by the author of "The Man who was Shakespeare." It is a virile book, one to claim and hold attention and interest. Already we have learned to value previous works from the same pen, indicating as they do noteworthy discoveries and convincing solutions of many formerly unsolved problems, all clearly set forth in pleasant language, easy to read and to follow.

It was in 1930 that Mrs Clark published "Shakespeare's Plays in the Order of their Writing" (there was a simultaneous edition in America under the title "Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays"). In this book she made a valuable contribution to the Oxford theory. With a wealth of topical allusion and evidence from the records of the Court Revels, she showed that the plays were originally written some twenty years earlier than is commonly supposed - i.e. from 1576 to 1590, and not from 1590 to 1610. In this connection we must not forget the pioneer chronological work of Admiral Holland. In 1923 he published "Shakespeare through Oxford Glasses" - revised and enlarged in 1934 under the title "Shakespeare, Oxford and Elizabethan Times" - in which he showed, by topical allusions, that many of the plays were written in the fifteen-seventies and 'eighties. It is significant that Mrs Clark and Admiral Holland, working independently, more often than not arrived at approximately the same date for the original composition of the plays.

The importance of the chronology of the Shakespeare plays cannot be over-emphasized. The Oxford theory alone makes it possible to understand the many topical allusions to the fifteen-seventies that are to be found in the majority of the comedies. In 1580 Oxford was thirty: Bacon and Derby nineteen: and Shakspere of Stratford sixteen. No more need be said - at least so far as the original composition of the comedies is concerned, though there must have been many revisions,

alterations, and additions, when they were adapted for the public stage in the 'nineties, and began to be published in quarto from 1598 onwards.

In her present book Mrs Clark has correlated Lord Oxford's life with the plays. The latter, one by one, are fitted into the pattern of the many and varied events of his career, and the result is a perfect harmony. A striking feature of the book is an occasional chronological interpolation relating to the life of Shakspeare of Stratford. For instance, in the year 1584, by which time most of the comedies and several tragedies had been written, Lord Oxford - who was 34 and had had a company of actors under his patronage for four years - became the lessee of the Blackfriars Theatre with his secretary, John Lyly, as actor-manager. Mrs Clark adds the following note in parenthesis:

(1584. Birth of twins to William Shakspeare of Stratford. At the age of twenty, the poor Stratford citizen had a family of five to support.)

There is some new material in the book, especially an analysis of "Eastward Ho," a play written in collaboration by Chapman, Jonson, and Marston, and produced in 1605 at Blackfriars by the Children of the Queen's Revels. In this play, which is not readily accessible, there is a character called Touchstone who is identified as Oxford. Mr Percy Allen, in his "Life Story of Edward de Vere", pointed out that Lord Oxford was the historic original of Touchstone in "As You Like It." We now know that "Eastward Ho," from the topical allusion point of view, was the sequel of "As You Like It." It was a common trick of Elizabethan playwrights to link up their characters from play to play by similar, or nearly similar, names. The two Juliets (in "Romeo and Juliet" and "Measure for Measure") who are Anne Vavasour, and Polonius and Pandarus (in "Hamlet" and "Troilus") who are Lord Burghley - whose Court nickname was Pondus - are cases in point. Mrs Clark's analysis of that little-known play "Eastward Ho" is most interesting and well worth reading.

Another interesting suggestion in the book is in connection with Henry Peacham's "Minerva Britannia," published in 1612. The title-page of this book contains a cryptic picture - such cryptic pictures and printers' ornaments are very common in Elizabethan and Jacobean books. This particular picture, which Mrs Clark reproduces as her frontispiece, shows a hand holding a pen emerging from behind a drawn curtain, and this hand is

writing the words "Mente Videbori" ("By the mind I shall be seen"). This obviously suggests an author whose identity is concealed, but which can be deduced "by the mind" behind the pen. Mrs Clark shows that the words "Tibi Nom. de Vere" are an exact anagram of "Mente Videbori." By an unfortunate misprint on pages 253 and 257 the word "Mente" is spelt "Menti."

Perhaps it might have been agreeable to find a less inflexible attitude on certain disputable questions; but Mrs Clark never fails in good taste or dignity. She could not find satisfaction in deriding opinions not in accord with her own, and no word has ever been written by her capable of offending people who do not entirely share her views.

"I, William Shakespeare" by Leslie Hotson  
Reviewed by Percy Allen

Dr Leslie Hotson is a gifted and assiduous researcher, to whom we are indebted for much valuable information concerning Marlowe, and other Elizabethans. In the present book, Dr Hotson, strongly orthodox in his Shakespearean views, has followed up a "major clue" towards elucidating the life of William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon - as supposed writer of the plays - by digging out many interesting details concerning Thomas Russell, one of the two Overseers of Shaksper's will, drawn up towards the close of his life, in 1616. Russell turns out to be the second son of Sir Thomas Russell, of Strensham, an ancient Worcestershire family. He owned the manor of Alderminster, situate only four miles from Clopton Bridge at Stratford. Dr Hotson has made the further discovery that the sister of Russell's wife was married to the elder brother of Henry Willoughby, whom some scholars, including Grosart and Dr Hotson, believe to have written "Willobie his Avis," the poem introducing the "old player," W.S., generally supposed to be Shakespeare. Further, I read that Thomas Russell married the widow of Thomas Digges; thus linking up with Russell's step-son, Leonard Digges, whose enigmatic verses in the Shakespeare Folio are well known to Elizabethan students.

All this interesting information - and a great deal more - Dr Hotson has gathered into his chapters; and we owe him much thanks for it all; but acceptance of the conclusions which the author derives therefrom is altogether another matter. Dr Hotson assumes the closest intimacy between Shaksper of Stratford, and Thomas Russell; but excepting the fact that the latter was overseer of Shaksper's will, there exists no evidence

at all to prove close friendship between the two men. The Overseer of an Elizabethan will had no legal status whatever with regard to the instrument; and the office appears to be a quasi-complimentary one which might or might not imply personal intimacy with the Testator. Often no doubt, as in Shaksper's case, an Overseer was chosen who lived near to the Testator and was therefore easily accessible. Sometimes the Overseer was of high rank, as shown by Captain Ward's notes of wills at Somerset House, which include, as Overseers to relatively unimportant Testators, the names of Lords Burghley, Sussex, and Derby and Sir Robert Cecil. Obviously in such cases, and no doubt in many others, there can be no assumption of intimacy. The Overseer seems to have been an unofficial arbitrator to whom the Executors could apply for help in the event of a dispute. Dr Hotson, however, always supposes Shaksper to be Russell's intimate friend "lingering" with him at Alderminster House; while of Russell we are told that at Bruton "he nourished the devotion to country life, the passion for horses, hounds, and hawks, which helped him to win the affection of the Cotswold sportsman, Shakespeare"!

This is all very pretty; and many of Dr Hotson's readers will no doubt accept these fancies for proven truth; yet it is no more than a guess based upon an assumption of intimacy. Dr Hotson is a dangerous guide through these seductive but difficult and treacherous paths. He can create an attractive picture, by a process which quietly ignores all such evidence as does not square with his preconceived case. When, for instance, he discovers in Leonard Digges, "not only a Stratford contemporary of the dramatist but a stepson to the Overseer of his will," he congratulates himself upon having destroyed the "mare's nest" that "no recognition of Shakespeare's prowess as a dramatist ever came from any of his Stratford contemporaries." But Dr Hotson omits to mention that Digges - using the hyphenated name "Shake-speare" - openly foretells, in his verses, the dissolution of the Stratford monument, by Time, and the emergence - from a study of his plays - of a new Shakespeare, who shall "look fresh to all ages" - a prophecy which the Oxfordians are helping to fulfil, swiftly, and in every particular.

In conclusion, it is interesting to all anti-Stratfordians to read the following extract from a review of Dr Hotson's book published in "The Spectator," 10th December 1937, by Dr A. L. Rowse:

". . . For with certainly the best will in the world, and going through the records with a comb, one might almost say a tooth-pick, Dr Hotson has not been able to gather more than here and there a nodule of significant information, and most of it suggestive, contingent, rather than establishing a direct contact with the Poet. The silence from that quarter is as profound, as elusive as ever. . . ."

This is a striking comment, coming as it does from an orthodox source. What it amounts to is, "ex nihilo nihil fit."

#### CORRESPONDENCE

From Dr Gilbert Slater, D.Sc., F.R.Hist.S., author of "Seven Shakespeares."

It is very pleasing to get the Fellowship report of the progress of the acceptance of the Oxford theory. But I think there is an unfortunate tendency among Oxfordians to push it too far. That Oxford was the author of "Hamlet" and the Sonnets (though there might be included one or two by his friends which got printed with his own) seems to me to be thoroughly established, and also his authorship of "Two Gentlemen of Verona." Then with regard to other plays, his complete or partial authorship is more or less probable.

But I think irreducible minima must be allowed for other authors.

1. In view of the Stratford monument and the Northumberland MS, we must allow Bacon "Richard II" and "Richard III," and a considerable share in other 'Histories,' including, I think, the main authorship of the three parts of "Henry VI."

2. Captain Ward and I at least can maintain the authorship of the "Tempest" by Raleigh and Lady Pembroke. And Lady Pembroke's influence on other plays can be detected by three tests: (a) she alone of indicated authors was a Puritan; (b) a country resident interested in rural affairs; (c) a resident, during considerable periods of her life, in Wales, and with family associations in Welsh areas; and (d) a woman. For these reasons we must allow her a share in "Henry IV" (Glendower), "Henry V" (Fluellen), "King Lear" (Edgar's dialect), "Othello" (the temperance oration), the rural plays generally, and the Roman ones - probably the main authorship of "Coriolanus."

3. To the Earl of Derby we must, I think, assign the main authorship of "Love's Labour's Lost."

4. So much for the aristocrats. Then J. M. Robertson and other moderate Stratfordians have put out arguments which deserve careful consideration for contributions by various known professional dramatists: e.g. (a) Was Greene the principal author of "Titus Andronicus"? (b) Was Marlowe a contributor to "Julius Caesar," and the author of Antony's oration, in which the word 'ambitious' is a quadrisyllable ('amb-it-i-ous') according to Marlowe's custom: elsewhere in Shakespeare it is a trisyllable, as now. (c) Was Chapman the author of "Henry VIII" and was he the main author of "Troilus and Cressida"?

From Lieut.-Col. M. W. Douglas, C.S.I., C.I.E., President of the Shakespeare Fellowship.

A letter from the author of "Seven Shakespeares" is a welcome contribution. Dr Slater lays stress on the view generally adopted outside the orthodox fold that the plays of the Folio were not, even in the main, the work of one man, whether Shakspeare of Stratford, Oxford, or any one else.

The causes are collaboration, revisions, and errors in selection. "Collaboration, rarely found in other forms of contemporary literature, was very common in the drama" (Chambers). "Authors were apt to work collectively, several hands hurrying out a single play . . . there were many poets capable of admirable verse, and writing for the theatre afforded a livelihood" (Lang). Hence the 'disparate styles' in the plays. "Hamlet" is known to have been revised several times. "Richard III" was revised in 1597, 1598, 1602, 1605, 1612, 1622, and was much improved in 1623 (Folio). "Merry Wives" was issued in 1602, reprinted in 1619, and appeared in the Folio nearly twice as long as in the Quarto. Six of the plays in the 1623 Folio had never been heard of: "The Shrew," "Timon," "Julius Caesar," "Coriolanus," "All's Well," "Henry VIII." Shakspeare of Stratford cannot be associated with any of these. Why did he not use them during his lifetime? Where were the manuscripts at the time of his death? Lee's suggestion that they were in the hands of the actors is rejected by Pollard, and it is incredible that they would have 'pigeonholed' them during the years preceding 1623. Nor is certainty possible in efforts to trace the collaborators. Against Chapman as author of "Henry VIII," we find Chambers admitting 'the younger pen' of Fletcher, Spedding telling us that the rest of the play was by Massinger.

As for "Troilus," the first play provided with a preface, and referring to 'the Grand Possessors,' presumably aristocrats, there is the evidence of Henslowe's Diary that it was revised by Dekker and Chettle. Robertson was Sir George Greenwood's principal adversary, and got the worst of many an encounter with him - though, in the orthodox fold, he is regarded as a black sheep by many. On his rejection of "Titus," Saintsbury styled him "one of the craziest topsy-turveyers of actual fact, who had passed the bounds of all rational literary criticism." Chambers notes that "Mr Robertson finds disparate styles in the plays, and transfers the primary responsibility for 'Richard III,' 'Richard II,' 'Henry V,' 'Julius Caesar,' and 'Comedy of Errors' to Marlowe: 'Romeo' to Peele: 'Two Gentlemen' to Chapman: there has been collaboration with some of these, and with Kyd and others: and the majority of the plays as a whole are not of Shakespeare's drafting." Hereupon Chambers, in despair, can only ejaculate "of course, common sense revolts!"

From this welter of unsubstantial conjecture emerges Mr Looney, in "Shakespeare Identified," with the definite evidence and logical deductions which form the framework of the Oxford hypothesis. Colonel B. R. Ward, C.M.G., thereafter founded the "Shakespeare Fellowship," with Sir George Greenwood as President, not in order to support Mr Looney's case, but to ascertain the truth; and the researches of our members have found expression in some thirty volumes issued in America, France, and England. The general view seems to be that whereas Oxford was the 'Master Mind,' he collaborated with his cousin Bacon, and his son-in-law Lord Derby; and it may be that some unfinished plays by Oxford were completed by one or other of them and others. We do not know. Dr Slater, and with good reason, would include Raleigh and Lady Pembroke in the group.

In accepting Oxford as the author of "Hamlet," "Two Gentlemen," and the Sonnets, Dr Slater is undeniably 'on velvet.' But in view of Mrs Clark's researches into the records of the Court Revels, we may safely add "Portio and Demorantes," the forerunner of the "Merchant of Venice." "Romeo" and "All's Well" are clearly Oxford plays; and there are others, including the tragedies, which certainly bear his mark.

After his retirement from public life in 1589, Lord Oxford remained a recluse, and devoted himself to literature until his death in 1604. This was the main period of Shakespearean publication, and the year 1604 is significant. Oxford died. The

publication of authentic plays - up till then fifteen in all - suddenly ceased. In this year, according to Masson, Shakspeare of Stratford (described by Greenwood as 'the honest broker' of the plays) transferred his headquarters from London to Stratford.

Though much of the Baconian evidence is fantastic, some of it is unanswerable. No one can deny that in 1597-8, when Shakspeare of Stratford was credited with sixteen plays, two classical poems, and most of the Sonnets - and was as well known in the London of those days (200,000 inhabitants) as Mr Noel Coward is to-day - the Bishop of Norwich and John Marston were unaware of his existence, and attributed "Venus" and "Lucrece" to Bacon, urging him to "write better or write alone." No answer is forthcoming to the fifteenth stanza of "Lucrece":

But she, that never cop'd with stranger eyes,  
Could pick no meaning from their parling looks,  
Nor read the subtle shining secrecies  
Writ in the glassy margents of such books:  
She touched no unknown baits, nor feared no hooks;  
Nor could she moralize his wanton sight,  
More than his eyes were opened to the light.

The capital letters, read down the left hand margin - the 'glassy margent' - give B, C, N, W, Sh, N, M,: which is surely an anagram for: BaCoN, W. Shakespeare, NaME. Bacon was clearly part author of the poems. Again, the Northumberland MS which once contained manuscript copies of "Richard II" and "Richard III," tends to confirm the theory that Bacon was the author of these plays; and in the case of "Richard III" he may well have been responsible for the revisions. In view of the extracts from his "Essays of Gardens," "Winter's Tale" must be allotted to Bacon, but it contains topical allusions to the fifteen-eighties, and may have been left unfinished by Oxford.

It is impossible to ignore the researches of Professor Abel Lefranc, the eminent authority on sixteenth century literature, who puts forward the claims of the Earl of Derby. His conclusions on "Love's Labour's Lost" and "Midsummer Night's Dream" are arresting. But Mrs Clark, by reference to the Court Revels, shows that Oxford was responsible for a Masque in 1579 on the same theme as "Love's Labour's Lost," which was certainly revised at least once before its final revision and publication in 1597.



Finally it is certain that the author of "Hamlet" and the Sonnets was the supreme Poet responsible for the main Shakespearean works. We find him in the Earl of Oxford. Moreover, his early life contained all the tragedy that we surmise fell to the lot of the poet. In later life he remained a literary recluse. In the judgement of the best critics his compositions were second to none. Thus, despite contributions from other pens, and the exclusion of certain plays, we maintain that the Earl of Oxford was the 'Master Mind,' and the symbolic 'Shakespeare.'

From Mr E. Morgan.

I happened to take down from the bookshelf the other night the Heinemann edition of "The Taming of the Shrew," which I have had for twenty-five years, and to look again at George Brandes's introduction. You no doubt know that Brandes was a strict Stratfordian, and, therefore, coming from him, such an introduction I think you will agree is unconsciously most destructive of the Stratfordian tradition, and as I have not seen it referred to in any of our literature I have had it typed out and enclose it herewith, feeling sure that you will be interested in reading it. I think it is quite startling in fact.

In "The Taming of the Shrew," we notice with surprise not only the correctness of the Italian names, but the remarkable way in which, at the very beginning of the play, several Italian cities and districts are characterized in a single phrase. Lombardy is "the pleasant garden of great Italy"; Pisa is "renowned for grave citizens"; and here the epithet "grave" is especially noteworthy, since many testimonies concur to show that it was particularly characteristic of the inhabitants of Pisa. C. A. Brown, in Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems, has pointed out the remarkable form of the betrothal of Petruchio and Katharina (namely, that her father joins their hands in the presence of two witnesses), and observes that this form was not English, but peculiarly Italian. It is not to be found in the older play, the scene of which, however, is laid in Athens.

Special attention was long ago directed to the following speech at the end of the second act, where Gremio reckons up all the goods and gear with which his house is stocked:-

"First, as you know, my house within the city  
Is richly furnished with plate and gold;  
Basins and ewers to lave her dainty hands;  
My hangings all of Tyrian tapestry;  
In ivory coffers I have stuff'd my crowns;  
In cypress chests my arras counterpoints,  
Costly apparel, tents, and canopies,  
Fine linen, Turkey cushions boss'd with pearl,  
Valance of Venice gold in needlework,  
Pewter and brass and all things that belong  
To house or housekeeping."

Lady Morgan long ago remarked that she had seen literally all of these articles of luxury in the palaces of Venice, Genoa, and Florence. Miss Martineau, in ignorance alike of Brown's theory and Lady Morgan's observation, expressed to Shakespeare's biographer, Charles Knight, her feeling that the local colour of "The Taming of the Shrew" and "The Merchant of Venice" displays such an intimate acquaintance, not only with the manners and customs of Italy, but with the minutest details of domestic life, that it cannot possibly have been gleaned from books or from mere conversations with this man or that who happened to have floated in a gondola.

From Mr F. Lingard Ranson.

The following extract from "All of a Piece," by E. V. Lucas, published in Easter 1937 by Methuen, may be of interest to members of the Fellowship. Pages 9 to 13 deal with a description of the Church and Town of Lavenham, and at the bottom of page 13 Mr Lucas writes:

... Not long ago I expressed in print the need for the systematic preparation of guide-books to the Old Country: large books for the cities and towns, smaller books for smaller towns, and pamphlets or leaflets for villages; which, I contended, should always be on sale at post offices. It was mainly a council of perfection, but one day there arrived a little guide to this very town of Lavenham (lovely word), by F. Lingard Ranson, which admirably supplies what is needed, so much so that no visitor intending to follow the author's footsteps could possibly do so in a stay of less than a week. Mr

Ranson's culminating wish is that the Government should take over Lavenham as a special preserve; and I agree with him.

I should call this the perfect guide-book had not Mr Ranson, in his patriotic zeal, selected one of Lavenham's heroes, Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, born 1550, and the last Earl to hold the Manors of Lavenham, as the real author of Shakespeare. It is not merely a theory; "recent research," says Mr Ranson boldly, "has revealed some convincing proofs that, (in large type) Edward de Vere was the writer of most of the plays and poems attributed to Shaksper of Stratford." Well, we shall, perhaps, see; and some day, perhaps, the Swan of Avon will be transferred to Suffolk. But, honestly, I hope not. If Shakespeare was not Shakespeare, I do not want to know who was. I want to cherish the sublime mystery.

#### OCCASIONAL NOTES

On December 3rd last Mr Percy Allen lectured to the Thursday Club (a London Literary Club) at their rooms in Bloomsbury, on "Lord Oxford as author of Shakespeare's Sonnets." This was the Club's own choice out of several subjects submitted. The Rev. Canon Hannay ("George A. Birmingham") was in the chair, and a discussion followed.

... ..  
Just as we were going to press, we received from Mr Louis P. Benezet a copy of his new 35-page pamphlet entitled "Shakspere, Shakespeare, and De Vere." It will be reviewed in our next issue.

... ..  
The Editors would welcome from members any items of news which would be of general interest, for publication in these "Occasional Notes." Please address to: Hon. Secretary, Shakespeare Fellowship, 3 Valley Green, Welwyn Garden City, Herts.