

# THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP

## NEWS-LETTER

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GILBERT SLATER D.Sc., F.R.Hist.S. : AN APPRECIATION

by B. M. Ward

It is with deep regret that we record the death, on March 8, at 4 Park Crescent, Oxford, of Dr. Gilbert Slater. He was 73 years of age and had been in ill-health for many years. He had been a Vice-President of the Shakespeare Fellowship since 1930: and by his death the Fellowship has suffered a very real loss.

His conversion to the anti-Stratfordian cause arose in a very interesting way. Shortly before 1930 there was a Drama Week at Oxford, at which a repertoire of Elizabethan plays was presented. Dr. Slater attended two of the plays - Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" and Dekker's "Shoemaker's Holiday." He was at once struck by the fact that, whereas the shoemaker in Dekker's play was a thoroughly realistic character who spoke, behaved, and acted exactly like an Elizabethan artisan, Shakespeare's shoemaker in "Julius Caesar" was wholly unconvincing. On the other hand Shakespeare's aristocratic characters were perfectly natural. Dr. Slater, therefore, arrived at the only possible inference - viz., that the Shakespeare plays must have been the work of an aristocrat who habitually moved in aristocratic circles, and not a "man of the people" like Dekker and Shakspeare of Stratford who habitually moved in bourgeois and artisan circles.

Dr Slater's conversion to anti-Stratfordianism was quickly followed by his joining the Fellowship, and the publication of "Seven Shakespeares," which is well known to our members. His chief personal contribution to the authorship question was his claim that Lady Pembroke - "Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother" - should be given her share in the Shakespeare works. When I first met him he told me that, as a young man, he had been much impressed by Samuel Butler's arguments that the "Odyssey" was written by a woman; and he felt that, to some extent, the same was true of some of the Shakespeare plays. And certainly no one can deny that the lives of Lady Pembroke, Raleigh, Lord Oxford,

and Lord Derby were interwoven to a remarkable degree. Dr Slater was a strong supporter of the "Group Theory," as those who have read "Seven Shakespeares" know.

No one who ever met him could fail to be struck by the breadth of his mind and knowledge. He was an acknowledged authority, at the London School of Economics, on the Elizabethan Poor Law, and 16th century Political Economy. He recently published an authoritative book about Southern India, where he worked some time during the war. And, as a young man, he was one of the founders of the Co-operative Movement at Woolwich.

#### NEWS FROM FRANCE

by Col. M. W. Douglas, C.S.I., C.I.E.

Our distinguished Vice-President, Professor Abel Lefranc, contributed an interesting article to the February number of the "Revue Bleue," entitled "La Question Shakespearienne au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle."

He finds that Shakespearian research, orthodox or other, is increasing in all countries, and the volume and variety of the problems is such as to compel the attention not only of scholars but even of the general public. Moreover, the growing number of representations of the Plays bears testimony to their popularity, and tends to accentuate the contrast between these masterpieces and the life of their reputed author, an inexplicable feature of the orthodox case. Though tardily admitted by orthodox scholars, it is now certain that the Plays "are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time," and contain impersonations of prominent men.

Such Plays as the following for instance abound with hidden implications: "Julius Caesar," "Coriolanus," "Henry IV, V," "Richard II, III," "The Tempest," "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and "Cymbeline," and the Author may well be called "The Poet of Statesmen and the Tacitus of the Drama." It is sufficient to cite the two volumes of "Shakespeare's England" (Oxford 1916), and at once realize the impossibility of tracing any link whatever between the Plays and the supposed Poet of Stratford.

These are spreading convictions, and traditional scholars are disquieted in consequence. But the day is at hand, nearer

perhaps than is realized, when the eyes of the public will be opened and the real author of these works will emerge from obscurity, and be known. Nevertheless, in order that such a result may be achieved, additional workers must be recruited, and the research be continued, so admirably initiated by the late Sir George Greenwood. The Professor extends a welcome to M. Mathias Morhardt, who has published a series of articles on the Shakespearean problem, supporting the case for the Earl of Derby. These are now being collected in one volume with a preface by Professor Lefranc.

It is not generally realized that the authorship of the Shakespearean works was suspect so far back as 1769 when a surgeon, Herbert Lawrence, a friend of David Garrick, published a curious work entitled "The Life and Adventures of Common Sense: Historical Allegory," which constituted a veiled attack on the authenticity of Plays by 'Shakespeare.'

The Professor then passes on to consider the origins of the Baconian case; and finds that some sixteen years after the publication of Lawrence's book, two distinguished scholars were inquiring into the validity of the Stratford claim. The evidence came to light in 1932, and was derived from a manuscript found among the books left to the University of London by the late Sir E. Durning Lawrence. It refers to the researches of the Rev. James Wilmot, D.D., dating from 1875, and to a paper by James Cowell entitled "Reflections on the life of William Shakespeare" read before the Philosophical Society of Ipswich in 1805. These two scholars made independent investigations and came to the conclusion that the Stratford hypothesis was a fiction.

Cowell subsequently met Dr Wilmot when the latter was eighty years of age, and discovered that he considered Bacon to be author of the Shakespearean works. Unfortunately Dr Wilmot burnt all his literary output before he died; but his niece published a memoir in 1813 in which he was said to be one of the alleged authors of the famous "Letters of Junius." He was undoubtedly a scholar of some standing, and died as Rector of Barton-on-the-Heath near Stratford. There can be no doubt that the results of his researches would have been valuable. Rowe's life of Shakespeare appeared in 1709, nearly a hundred years after the death of the latter, and created doubts in the minds of the above mentioned critics, which led to their unqualified rejection of Shakespeare of Stratford.

Professor Lefranc then refers to "Hamlet" as another of the Plays based on historical and political foundations. He comments on the "marvellous divination" of James Plumptre who in 1796 published his "Observations on Hamlet," being an attempt to prove that the poet designed it as an indirect censure on Mary Queen of Scots. This was followed by Miss Winstanley's book (1921) "Hamlet and the Scottish succession; being an examination of the relations of the Play to this and the Essex conspiracy."

Professor Lefranc himself, impressed by these views, conducted independent researches, the results of which he published. He will discuss the subject further in his forthcoming work on the Shakespeare problem. It is interesting to find that Professor Lefranc's article was fully reviewed by Emile Henriot in "Le Temps" of March 1st, and no doubt has had a wide circulation.

Needless to say we await with interest the publication of the volume on which Professor Lefranc is now engaged.

#### HAVE THE BALLADS OF TARLETON PERISHED?

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

There recently came into my possession a book entitled "Tarleton's Jest" in which, after giving certain notices from the registers of the Stationers Company, the author said: "Not one of these pieces has escaped the ravages of time." But is this really a fact?

One dated August 2nd, 1589 is: "A sorrowful new sonnet entitled Tarleton's Recantation upon this theme given him by a gent at the Bel-savage without Ludgate (Now or else never) being the last theme he sang." Now read "O Mistress Mine" in "Twelfth Night", particularly the last verse:

What is love? 'tis not hereafter,  
Present mirth hath present laughter;  
What's to come is still unsure:  
In delay there lies no plenty,  
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,  
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

What is its theme except 'now or else never?'

On September 23rd, 1588 we have a ballad entitled

"Tarleton's Farewell." What could possibly suit better than:  
"Come away, come away death," also in "Twelfth Night," with the  
second verse:-

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,  
On my black coffin let there be strewn;  
Not a friend, not a friend greet  
My poor corpse where my bones shall be thrown.

But in October 1589 we have "Tarleton's repentance of his  
farewell to his friends in his sickness a little before his  
death." So we have in "As you like It":-

Blow, blow, thou winter wind -  
in which he speaks of 'man's ingratitude,' 'most friendship is  
feigning,' and 'thy sting is not so sharp as friend remember'd  
not,' which are somewhat different sentiments to the desire  
previously expressed that a friend should not greet his poor  
corpse.

Most of the titles are too vague, and one cannot in  
consequence place the songs of "Much Ado," "Merchant of Venice"  
and "Two gentlemen of Verona," under such titles as "Tarleton's  
Toys," and "Tarleton's Tragical Treatises." But there is one  
more. On February 7th 1578-9 we have "Tarleton's device upon  
this unlooked-for great snow." Could not this be "When icicles  
hang by the wall" in "Love's Labour Lost":-

When all around the wind doth blow,  
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,  
And birds sit brooding in the snow  
And Marian's nose looks red and raw.

In the last song of all in "Twelfth Night":-  
When that I was and a little tiny boy,  
there is a verse left out which appears in "King Lear":-  
He that has and a little tiny wit  
With hey ho the wind and the rain.

Now, "since the little wit that fools have was silenced" are  
the words used in "As You Like It" to refer, as I think, to the  
death of Tarleton, and seem therefore to point to the fact that  
Tarleton himself acted the part of the Clown in "Twelfth Night"  
and sang his own ballads, and that they are still in existence  
in the plays of Shakespeare.

SHAKESPEARE'S "CORIOLANUS"

by Percy Allen

The admirable and successful revival of "Coriolanus," at the Old Vic, with Mr Laurence Olivier in the title-part, and Miss Sybil Thorndike as Volumnia, revives interest in this powerful Elizabethan play, which, to modern audiences as for example a few years ago in Paris, puts on deep significance in a Europe continuously at loggerheads over problems of Democracy or Dictatorship.

Was "Coriolanus" recognized as topical in its own day? Considering the now proven fact that most Elizabethan dramas were deliberately aimed, to greater or less degree, at contemporary people and events, we may feel pretty certain that "Coriolanus" was no exception; though the topicalities are less obvious than in most Shakespearean plays, partly for the reason that the author here keeps remarkably close to the story and text of North's "Plutarch," which is indisputably the tragedy's literary source.

Who was Coriolanus in the English allegory? Some members of the Shakespeare Fellowship believe that the play was written by Lord Oxford, and that he is the original of the haughty, intolerant Caius Marcius. Certainly Lord Oxford was a man of abounding pride; but I, personally, agree with Capt. B. M. Ward, who first put forward the idea that Coriolanus is aimed at that proudest of all English courtiers of his time, Walter Raleigh; and that the play, topically considered, is, in part, biographical of Raleigh starting in the year 1596, when he was one of the generals who led the expedition against Cadiz (Corioli) at the time of the famine in England. That dearth was the subject of the citizens' murmurings in the opening scene:-

"Let us kill him (Coriolanus), and we'll have corn at our own price."

The price of corn had trebled during the famine years when incidentally Shakspeare of Stratford was dishonestly cornering such commodities; and Raleigh had made himself notoriously unpopular with the proletariat, who held that his handling of monopolies, granted to him by the Queen, had raised the cost of living in England. Raleigh, of course, did not like Coriolanus go over openly to the Volscians (Spaniards); but he was certainly implicated in the plot against the crown after James's accession; and was condemned, reprieved, and committed to the

Tower in 1603. If Raleigh is Coriolanus, then his fellow generals against the Volscians (Spaniards) at Cadiz would seem to be the Earl of Essex and Lord Howard of Effingham. Virgilia becomes Lady Raleigh; and Volumnia, mother to Coriolanus, is Raleigh's intimate friend Lady Pembroke.

This raises an interesting question - the authorship of the play. "Coriolanus" is certainly a late Shakespearean work; and since it was not entered in the Stationers Register until November 8th, 1623, was probably never printed before that year. Capt. Ward holds, and I agree, that the tragedy was written by some individual in the Pembroke group who was a great admirer of, and sympathizer with Raleigh, possibly Lady Raleigh herself. She, we know, was both poet and playwright, her play "Antonie" being almost as close to the French original from which it was taken, as is Coriolanus to North's "Plutarch." If that be so, the MS may have been found at Wilton House, after Lady Pembroke's death in 1621, and included in the Shakespearean Folio, by her protégé Ben Jonson. If she wrote it, the style is remarkably virile for a woman. Readers will remember that the Shakespearean Folio of 1623 was dedicated to Lady Pembroke's sons, the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery.

The following passage from Act I, scene 3 gives us a vividly described incident which is not in Plutarch. Valeria is speaking of Virgilia's (Lady Raleigh's) son:

O' my word, the father's son. . . O' my troth. . . has such a confirmed countenance. I saw him run after a gilded butterfly; and when he caught it he let it go again; and after it again; and over and over he comes, and up again; caught it again; or whether his fall enraged him, or how 'twas, he did so set his teeth and tear it; O I warrant how he mammoocked it!

Capt. Ward suggests that Lady Raleigh is here describing an actual incident in the life of Raleigh's son, Carew, who was 13 years old when his father was executed in 1618.

#### SHAKESPEARE REDISCOVERED

by Clara Longworth de Chambrun  
With preface by Dr G. B. Harrison  
Scribners Sons Ltd., 12s. 6d. net, 1938  
Reviewed by Percy Allen

Madame de Chambrun's latest book, in common with most

Shakespearean studies by orthodox writers nowadays, is a strange piece of work; the deeper implications of which, as with Dr Hotson's recent "I, William Shakespeare", are based in the main upon assumptions which must be accepted, if the authoress's case is to stand. Dr Hotson assumed, though he could not prove, close intimacy between William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon and Thomas Russell, the overseer of Shakspeare's Will. The Comtesse de Chambrun bases her case for orthodoxy mainly upon two assumptions, neither of them provable, that the "Shakespeare" signatures, including the one upon his alleged copy of Holinshed's "Chronicles," are all in the authentic calligraphy of Will of Stratford; and, secondly, that there was close and prolonged intimacy between Shakspeare and Lord Southampton; though the indisputable fact remains that, after years of research at the Record Office and elsewhere by Captain Ward, Mrs Stopes, and others, no single link has been found to connect the two men, a failure so disappointing, from the orthodox view-point, that Mrs Stopes, shortly before her death, lamented to this reviewer: "My life has been a failure."

Madame de Chambrun, like Dr Hotson, is an indefatigable researcher, and many of her discoveries are important; the most interesting, perhaps, being that John Shakspeare of Stratford was a zealous Catholic, and that his son, William, was brought up in the old faith, to which he permanently adhered. The early chapters of this book seem to establish the fact that the trouble with Sir Thomas Lucy, a stern persecutor of the Catholic recusants, and the mystery of Shakspeare's marriage and flight from Stratford, may be explained less by a mere poaching incident than by the grave dangers which, in the second half of the 16th century, every English Catholic had to face. Shakspeare's mother, Mary Arden, came from a notoriously Catholic family, some of whom suffered martyrdom for their faith. It is an interesting question whether the orthodox school in general is prepared to welcome, as a proven fact, the thesis that 'Shakespeare,' an avowed Catholic, wrote in "King John" the words:

"No Italian priest shall tithe and toll in our dominions." Lord Southampton, according to Madame de Chambrun, had strong Catholic proclivities; and, in the light of her new discovery, she makes much play with the sympathetic connexions, thus postulated, between the alleged poet and his patron. Dr Hotson has recently argued close connexion between Shakspeare and the group behind the Gunpowder plot. This revelation is not easily



to be reconciled with the deeply patriotic spirit of the plays, or with the evident warnings, contained in several Shakespearean dramas, e.g. "Henry IV", against all who dare to challenge the crown and established authority.

In the eleventh chapter, entitled "Shakespeare's Own Copy of Holinshed's Chronicles," the Comtesse claims to have identified "the very one used by Shakespeare when composing Henry VI," ignoring the fact that many orthodox students deny to Shakespeare more than a small part in the composition of that trilogy. It is unquestionable, however, that the volume does contain annotations of the passages used by 'Shakespeare' in his plays; though these may easily have been noted from a printed copy of the play, rather than to facilitate its composition. Concerning the handwriting, it is notorious that palaeographers differ from one another, more even than do most experts; and if the calligraphy be not Shakspeare's, Madame de Chambrun's argument falls. One important point, however, seems to be made. In the next chapter the authoress deals with that document, dangerous to the orthodox, known as the "Northumberland MS." She shows, beyond doubt, that the three ornamented monograms representing "W.S." in that MS are identical with and by the same hand as two among the six similar designs in the above-mentioned Holinshed volume. She argues that this link "might" well indicate Shakespeare (Shakspeare), as possessor of both: yet it is positively certain that the "Northumberland MS" indicates close connexion, not between Will of Stratford and the plays, but between the Shakespearean plays and poems and that aristocratic group of writers of whom Francis Bacon was one. Possibly the Comtesse would have been wiser to leave the "Northumberland MS" severely alone; but it is characteristic of orthodox writers to advance blithely along some line of research, the issue of which they are not always acute enough to foresee. The authoress rather gives away the extent of her knowledge of the Oxford case, by writing of the Earl as "Lord Vere"; but, in closing, it is a pleasure to state that she has written an interesting and useful, if sometimes meretricious book.