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THE FIRST ANTI-STRATFORDIAN

"The Life and Adventures of Common Sense," by Herbert Lawrence,
1769.

By Percy Allen

To members of the Shakespeare Fellowship and to all who are interested in the Shakespeare mystery the problems of authorship and interpretation become more fascinating with every passing year. The latest discovery - that of the first Anti-Stratfordian - is as intriguing as any.

Our President, Colonel Douglas, contributed to the May issue of our "News-Letter" an article entitled "News from France," in which he told us of a certain new book, "A La Rencontre de William Shakespeare," written by a Frenchman, M. Mathias Morhardt, to which our distinguished vice-president, Professor Lefranc, has contributed a preface. M. Morhardt's book supports the case for the Earl of Derby as Shakespeare, an attribution of which Professor Lefranc has long been the foremost advocate. The article above mentioned contains the following paragraph:

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 - A Historical Allegory," which constituted a veiled attack upon the authenticity of the plays by Shakespeare.

This was news to me - very interesting news too. I had read Professor Allardyce Nicoll's article in the "Times Literary Supplement," February 1932, entitled "The First Baconian," showing that by 1785 the Rev. James Wilmot, D.D., was already at work upon studies which would transform him into a Baconian; and I had known that, even before the opening of the Civil War in 1642, men-of-letters were writing enigmatic verses with an obviously anti-Stratfordian meaning; but I had no idea that

an anti-Stratfordian book had been written in 1769, the very year in which Garrick inaugurated his Stratford-upon-Avon Festival in honour of a spurious Shakespeare.

I hastened, therefore, to read "The Life and Adventures of Common Sense," and did so one day in July in the North Library of the British Museum; after which, at the London Library, I read the French version of the second English edition. From the first pages I was thrilled by these two books, which to my thinking penetrate, in their own peculiarly symbolic way, far deeper into the actual facts of the Shakespearean mystery than do any other writings since the Restoration. Herbert Lawrence, the supposed author of this anonymous work, clearly hints that he is in possession of authentic information concerning the truth of the authorship; and this may well be the fact, because - supposing him born about 1720 - his great grandfather may have been a contemporary of the Shakespeare group; and the story may easily have come down to Lawrence through his father, or through some of his aristocratic friends, among whom Lord Sandwich, then First Lord of the Admiralty, was the best known.

In this article, however, I must not attempt any interpretation of the strange allegorical story which sprawls through the 500 pages of the first English edition, and is developed in the second English edition, which as yet I have read only in French. The reading of the riddle must wait until the next issue of the "News-Letter"; by that time we shall have been able to ponder the matter and to make further researches. But I must express our indebtedness to Professor Abel Lefranc for having called our attention to this extraordinary book which has not yet received a tithe of the attention that is its due, and when carefully interpreted, it will be seen to deal another deadly blow to the traditional Shakespearean case.

Meanwhile, let us examine for a moment the very remarkable anti-Stratfordian passage in this striking book. The group of persons dealt with in the full allegory are a dramatist named Wit, his two friends, Genius and Wisdom, and his son, Humour, the date being "at the time of the Armada, 1588."

In London, Wit, Genius, and Wisdom, make the acquaintance of a person belonging to the playhouse, a profligate in his youth, and, as some say, a deer-stealer. Certainly a thief, from the time he was capable of distinguishing anything.

There can be no difficulty in identifying the individual described above. Unmistakeably he is William Shaksper of Stratford, who, according to tradition, fled from Stratford about the time of the Armada to escape the wrath of Sir Thomas Lucy, whose deer in Charlecote Park he was suspected of stealing. In London Shaksper is supposed to have opened his theatrical connection by holding horses' heads outside the playhouses.

My epitome, from the French version of the second English edition, continues thus:-

My father (Wit, the dramatist, and father of Common Sense) and his friends, suddenly formed an intimate liaison with this man (a connection "vraiment de coeur") who, seeing that he had to deal with somewhat careless people (sans souci) who were never on guard, seized the first opportunity to steal from them all he could: and, the better to hide his theft, he told them, with an affected air of interest, that one misfortune came never without another, and that information was being laid against them, as persons suspected of being involved in the plot which was being hatched by the Scottish Queen against the life of Elizabeth; that he knew their innocence, but that they had better not reckon on that; since nothing could save them, except swift flight from the country.

This passage, remarkable in itself, is made more so by the fact that two recently published orthodox books, namely Prof. Leslie Hotson's "I, William Shakespeare," and the Comtesse de Chambrun's "Shakespeare Rediscovered," both bring forward good evidence to show that William of Stratford was a Catholic recusant, and was a friend of several persons who became implicated in the Guy Fawkes Conspiracy. Mme. de Chambrun even argues that recusancy, and not deer-stealing, provided the real reason why Shaksper fled from the pursuit of that zealous puritan and heresy-hunter, Sir Thomas Lucy. Incidentally it should be noticed that the author of this "Autobiography of Common Sense" has here got his chronology a little wrong, because Mary Queen of Scots was beheaded in 1587, before, and not after, the destruction of the Spanish Armada; but Lawrence has already warned his readers that he occasionally misplaces his dates.

Wit, Genius, and Co., thus duped and frightened, bolt to Holland; and during the preliminary panic, the theatre-man-rogue, otherwise Shaksper of Stratford, began a search among

Wit's baggage, and found therein:

"a common-place book, in which was contained an infinite variety of modes and forms to express all different sentiments of the human mind, with rules etc. for every occasion or subject that might occur in dramatic writing. The man also discovered the magic glass of Genius, which would not only show the external surface of any object, but even penetrate into the deep recesses of the soul of man. He found also the mask of Humour, which made every sentence from its wearer's mouth pleasant to hear.

The author adds that only he, Common Sense, his mother Truth, and his father's friend Wisdom, knew how this theft was accomplished, and that their reason for taking no notice of it was, that they thought the loss could be recovered, and that they could distress the man from Stratford, "without depriving the country of its greatest ornament." According to Herbert Lawrence, then, Will of Stratford, by means of this trick concerning a Catholic plot, induced the genuine "Shakespeare" and certain of his friends to bolt from England, and then stole from them the literary material for the plays, also the means by which those plays were lit with genius and humour. As for the silence of Common Sense and his mother Truth, I interpret the passage as meaning that Lawrence himself had secret information concerning the truth of the matter, but dare not, for sufficient reasons, divulge it.

Up to this point Common Sense has never made it positively certain that the elaborate allegory written round the adventures of Wit the dramatist and his companions, aims directly at the authorship of the Shakespearean plays; but now he decides it is time that he did so. The paragraph from which I have been quoting concludes:

With these (stolen) materials, and with good parts of his own, he commenced Play-Writer, and how he succeeded I need not tell you; for his name was Shakespeare.

It is surely an intensely interesting and significant fact that so early as 1769, an Englishman who was in touch with the Court life of his day should tell us openly that he knows Shaksper of Stratford to have been a dealer in trickery and theft as a dramatist; and that the man or rather men primarily responsible

for the plays were a group whose leader was named Wit, a writer whose identity with that of others who appear in the allegory I will consider in the next "News-Letter." We shall also have to determine, if we can, the meaning of the allegory as a whole; the degree of authority that may reasonably be granted to it; also - which is very important - the extent to which it corroborates, or disproves, the varying interpretations that members of the Fellowship have been putting hitherto upon this mystery of Shakespeare. Another significant fact is that Herbert Lawrence's book, so far as I know, has been utterly ignored by Sir Edmund Chambers, and all other upholders of the traditional Shakespeare case. The reason is not far to seek. Shakespearean orthodoxy, these days, is having an unhappy time, when every passing year confronts its supporters with fresh and insuperable difficulties which they have long ago ceased to attempt to explain away; while almost every orthodox book that appears, instead of propping and genuinely strengthening their tottering cause, only presents them with new problems. Two typical examples are the latest books of Professor Hotson and the Comtesse de Chambrun, both of which, as I have already stated, adduce evidence that Shaksper of Stratford was a Catholic; although Shakespearean plays and poems, while theologically agnostic, are always national, patriotic, and sometimes protestant in tendency. It becomes increasingly evident every day that, even before the outbreak of the Civil War, and from the Restoration period onward, a series of English writers were satisfied about the spuriousness of the orthodox case, and were expressing their views more or less openly. Professor Lefranc's preface to M. Morhardt's book tells how Lawrence in 1769, Wilmot in 1785, Plumptre in 1796-7, Cowell in 1805, and others, successively threw down their challenges to orthodoxy; Plumptre being the first openly to advance the theory, now indisputably proved, that the play "Hamlet" was designed in part as "an indirect censure on Mary Queen of Scots." Plumptre had realized that at least one of the plays was topical in theme - a concept that was followed up by Miss Winstanley, Mr J. T. Looney, Capt. B. M. Ward, Professor Lefranc and others; whereas in the main the orthodox strenuously denied any considerable topicality in Shakespeare.

Our case gradually becomes more complete and unassailable. We have invited any opponent to meet us on the battle-field of facts. Thus far our challenge has not been accepted.

THE STRATFORD MONUMENT

by Dr H. M. M. Woodward

Much has been written about the Stratford Monument and there is some confusion about it, so this purports to be a brief record of such facts as are known.

It is generally considered that there are only two portraits of Shakespeare which are cited as authentic. These are the Droeshout engraving in the first Folio and the Stratford bust. They are absolutely dissimilar. Yet it must be observed that where there are various portraits of the same individual, there must be some measure of agreement.

One fact is clear. There was a monument in Stratford church before the year 1623, when the first Folio was published, on account of the lines written by Leonard Digges.

Thy workes, by which outlive
Thy tombe, thy name must, when that stone is rent
And time dissolves thy Stratford Monument

If you examine the monument in Stratford church to-day you will see a bust where the face has a heavy and stupid expression. There is "an entire lack of the faintest suggestion of poetic or spiritual inspiration in its plump earthliness."

In the "Monthly Review," April 1904, Mrs Stopes brought to light certain facts which had previously escaped every one's notice, and this article is chiefly taken from her book called "Shakespeare's Environment" from the chapter entitled "The True Story of the Stratford bust."

In 1636 Sir William Dugdale compiled his great work, "History of the Antiquities of Warwickshire." Owing to the Civil War this was not published until 1656. In this there is an engraving of the monument which differs very widely not only in the surrounding portions but also in the bust itself from the one you see to-day. Instead of the stupid looking man holding pen and paper we behold in Dugdale a melancholy man with hollow cheeks; "The moustache droops down softly and naturally instead of perking upwards, there is no mantle on the shoulders, no pen in the hand, no cushioned desk. The arms are bent awkwardly, the hands are laid stiffly palms downwards on a large cushion

suspiciously resembling a Woolsack. This bust in the Dugdale engraving is also entirely unlike the Droeshout portrait.

Now Dugdale compiled his great work with meticulous care, and, as an example, if you compare his engraving of Sir Thomas Lucy's tomb with the original you will see he has faithfully copied all important details.

Below the bust as you see it to-day there are the following lines:

JUDICIO PYLIUM, GENIO SOCRATEM, ARTE MARONEM
TERRA TEGIT, POPVLVS MAERET, OLYMPUS HABET.

STAY PASSENGER, WHY GOEST THOU BY SO FAST
READ IF THOV CANST, WHOM ENVIOVS DEATH HATH PLAST
WITH IN THIS MONUMENT SHAKESPEARE: WITH WHOME,
QUICK NATVRE DIDE: WHOSE NAME DOTR DECK Y TOMBE
FAR MORE, THEN COST: SIEH ALL, Y HE HATH WRITT,
LEAVES LIVING ART, BUT PAGE, TO SERVE HIS WITT.

OBIIT ANO DO 1616
AETATIS. 53 DIE 23 AP.

As pointed out by Dr Slater there are some errors in the copying. "Plast" should read "Plac'd." "Sieh" should be "Sith." "Within" is made into two words.

The engraving in Dugdale should be compared with the volume of Sir William Dugdale's diary which contains his own special drawings for the tombs in Warwickshire churches. It will then be seen that the word is spelt "Judicio" not "Judcyo" as in the engraving. There are some slight differences between the drawing and the engraving but in the drawing the lines of the the cloak are drawn by Dugdale as they appear to-day, and the engraver must have carelessly altered it.

Who caused the monument to be erected, who wrote the English lines, and what they mean, is a matter for conjecture. They have been attributed to Ben Jonson; but like so many other things in the Shakespearean mystery there is no evidence and no proof. The writer could have known nothing about the burial because he says "within the monument," whereas as is well known Shakespeare is buried in the chancel.

From a study of these facts it follows that at some time or

other an alteration was made in the monument. Mrs Stopes thinks that this took place in 1746, and that it was done by John Ward, the grandfather of Mrs Siddons, who was in Stratford in 1746 and gave the whole proceeds of a presentation of "Othello" in the Town Hall on September 8th towards the restoration of the monument. There is no proof however that it may not have taken place before this date. The stone is soft and friable and there are many theories as to the need for restoration; but here again we have no definite proof.

Orders were given "to beautify" as well as to repair it. In 1749 the repairs were completed and the colours repainted by Mr John Hall, a limner of Stratford-on-Avon. Since then it has had various experiences. Soon after the repairs were finished it was taken down and a cast made from it by Mr Malone. In 1793 it was painted white. Finally in 1861 it was repainted after the original colouring by the artist who discovered what has been called the Stratford Portrait still reverently preserved at the birthplace, though it has no claim to authenticity. Its strong resemblance to the bust is of itself suspicious.

BOOK REVIEW

"Elizabeth and Sixtus," by H. Kendra Baker (London, C. W. Daniel, 7/6)

Reviewed by Percy Allen

Mr H. Kendra Baker is a believer in the Baconian authorship of the Shakespearean plays, and contributes frequently to "Baconiana," the official organ of the Bacon Society. Naturally, therefore, he is interested in the character and doings of Queen Elizabeth, whom some Baconians believe to have been Bacon's mother. In this book he has thrown what will be, for many readers, fresh light upon the Queen's character and her work for England, by giving us a series of extracts, done into English, from the second edition of the first French translation of the Italian "Historia e vera Vita di Elizabetta, Regina di Inghilterra" (1704), by Gregorio Leti (1630-1701), a writer born only twenty-seven years after Elizabeth's death. Leti, who came to England in 1680, and was well received by Charles II, wrote a large number of books, including lives of Philip II of Spain, Oliver Cromwell, the Emperor Charles V, and Pope Sixtus V - this last (1669) being freely made use of by Mr Baker. According to Frederick Chamberlain, author of "The Private Life of Queen Elizabeth," Leti was an inaccurate writer who nevertheless

respected "the substance, purpose, and arrangement" of the original documents from which he worked.

As its title indicates, the purpose of Mr Baker's book is to provide some account of the friendly relations and secret understanding which undoubtedly existed between the protestant English Queen and the Franciscan monk, Fra Felice Perretti, Cardinal di Montalto, who was created Pope in 1585 under the title of Sixtus V.

Sixtus was a most unconventional, original, and eccentric character; wholly Machiavellian in the cunning and duplicity with which he served what he believed to be the interests of the Roman Church. He cared not a jot whether the instruments he employed were counted among the heretics or the faithful. A great reformer in his unconventional way, kind to the poor, though ruthless towards evil-doers, in his foreign policy he followed one dominant idea - the acquisition for the Roman State of the Kingdom of Naples, then held by Philip II of Spain. For that purpose, Philip must be weakened. This explains why - with the help of a somewhat mysterious Catholic Englishman, the Chevalier Carr, who acted as a spy and diplomatic secret agent between himself and Queen Elizabeth, Sixtus kept Elizabeth fully informed concerning all King Philip's preparations against this country; and strongly encouraged her to defend the Low Countries, as well as her own shores, against that very Monarch whose Armada he should have regarded as God's appointed instrument for the suppression of the English heretics.

Undoubtedly Sixtus had a great and sincere admiration for Elizabeth; and used to say openly that the only three rulers in Europe who knew their business were himself, the Queen of England, and King Henry of Navarre, also a protestant! One of his half-serious jokes was that he and Elizabeth, between them, could well, in a single night, "create another Alexander the Great." He died August 27th, 1590, before he had succeeded in adding Naples to the Roman State. His passing caused genuine grief to England's Queen, who, according to several Ambassadors at her court, "has not been seen to smile since she received the news."

Mr Kendra Baker's unpretentious little book makes good reading for all students of English history during the Armada period and helps towards an understanding of contemporary European politics.

OCCASIONAL NOTES

One of our American members, Mr James S. Cushman, recently delivered a lecture on the Oxford theory at Princeton University. The following is an extract from "The Princeton Alumni Weekly" of 13th May, 1938:-

Campus Shakespearians delved into an exotic byline of their hobby one evening when James S. Cushman, an exponent of the Oxfordian theory of Shakespeare's works, lectured in McCosh on his reasons for believing that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, wrote the plays and poems attributed to the Stratford Bard.

. . .

Mr Percy Allen will deliver a lecture before "John o' London's Literary Circle" on Saturday, November 12th, entitled "Lord Oxford wrote the Plays and Sonnets of Shakespeare." One of our members, Mr W. Kent, will be in the chair. Visitors are welcomed, admission 1s. The lecture will be at 7.30 p.m. prompt, at Kingsway Hall, The Oak Room, Kingsway, W.C.2.

. . .

Mr Percy Allen proposes to give a further series of lectures for members of the Fellowship and their friends during the autumn and winter at St. Ermin's Hotel, Westminster. Full particulars will be issued to members in due course.