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# THE Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter

MAY, 1945

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

Canon Rendall described his Shakesperean researches as a form of "literary recreation." Be that as it may, his active mind was seldom at rest. Among his publications is a remarkable treatise on "Immortality." He was also interested in psychic questions, such, for instance, as the polter-geist and other phenomena connected with Borley Rectory. He kept in touch with the case through friends, clerical and lay, and recorded his views, in 1941, in a communication to *Light*, the journal of the London Spiritualist Alliance.

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Mr. Gerald Rickwood has succeeded Sir Gurney Benham in the Editorship of the *Essex Review*, and is appreciative of "Canon Rendall's great work in connection with the Oxford claim." He writes that he is looking forward to the tribute to Canon Rendall in our News-Letter; and, as desired, copies of this number are being sent to him. He also writes, as follows, to the President:

"You will be interested to learn that the bulk of Canon Rendall's collection of Shakesperean books, and his M.S. and notes, have been accepted by Liverpool University Library; and no doubt you will like to make a note of it in the Fellowship News-Letter. Apart from the Canon's personal link with the city, he knew of no place where they would be more readily available to members of the American Fellowship visiting this country."

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Relative to the article, in this number on *The Group Theory and Some Modern Intellectuals*, the Editor has just heard from a friend of his—a distinguished

poet and dramatist—that Mr. James Agate, the well-known dramatic critic of the *Sunday Times*, is now a convinced Baconian. Probably Mr. Agate has not read, nor considered, the case for Oxford; but on that point we have no information.

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Members who have not already done so are requested to send subscriptions or donations for the current year to the Hon. Treasurer. The printing and circulation of this News-Letter is a costly process.

The following is communicated by Mr. J. W. Tierney. It is from the Friends Intelligencer of February 17th last.

A busy judge finally consented to take his wife to an amateur performance of *Hamlet*. On the way home the enthusiastic lady said, "There has been some doubt as to who wrote the play, Bacon or Shakespeare?"

"My suggestion is," replied her bored mate, "that both graves be opened, and the one that turned over to-night is the author."

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The Editor is always glad to receive short articles, letters, press-cuttings, etc., which may be useful for future issues. He much regrets that pressure of space, caused by the death of two distinguished members, has compelled him to postpone publication of letters and articles which he had ear-marked for this number.

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Members will, please, note the Editor's permanent change of address, as on the front page.

## The Reverend Canon Gerald H. Rendall, B.D., Litt.D., LL.D.

(Sometime Principal of Liverpool University and  
Headmaster of Charterhouse.)

By THE PRESIDENT

As our readers are aware, Canon Rendall died on January 4th, 1945, within three weeks of 94 years of age. *The Times*, in a review of his eventful life, mentioned his plea for Edward de Vere, as Shakespeare. His researches began with a study of the claims for Bacon, and ended with the conviction that, if the latter were Shakespeare, "all literary criticism was at an end." The relentless arguments of Greenwood left only a sense of void agnosticism. He then read "Shakespeare Identified," by J. T. Looney and found "evidence biographical, personal and literary" strongly advocating the claims of Edward de Vere. Although well versed in the plays, he regarded the sonnets as "the key." "Literary links make it impossible to dissociate the sonnets from "Venus and Adonis," or, these poems from authentic productions of de Vere; and "the trails of the Sonnets are found in many of the authentic plays." In his volume on the Sonnets, he records the life and history of de Vere, dwelling also on his relation to the intellectual and literary movements of the Age. In his "Personal Clues" he unravels the clues which connect de Vere as author of the Sonnets and Poems with the works attributed to Shakespeare. His "guiding aim was to interpret the circumstances, emotions, and relationships which brought the Sonnets into being, and get at the heart of their meaning and poetry." To this end, his searching analysis is illustrated with a wealth of comment and quotation, classical, literary, and Shakespearean, drawn from every relevant source, and the outcome of his wide scholarship and varied life history. He accepted the Sonnets as "veiled or unconscious biography, and, read in this light they become from end to end coherent and psychologically luminous, and show clearly how many lines of evidence converge on the personality of Edward de Vere." Throughout, he also found "a unity of note and sequence which enhance their personal significance and poetic charm, rooted in the personalities of de Vere and Southampton" "ample to compel convictions and heighten appreciation." Southampton alone was the Inspiration, the subject of a chequered intimacy that extended over a term of years. "Transposition, as suggested, wrecks the retrospective values of the whole. As it stands, it confirms the preservation of the original order." Canon Rendall deprecated the hazardous identification of Sonnets without adequate evidence. In fact, unless sure of his ground, he avoided such recognitions. He accepted "the mortal Moon" as the Queen, but the Dark Lady, though discussed, passes by unknown. Again, he finds the "five hundred courses of the Sun" (Sonnets 59) "allusive" to the long descent of Edward de Vere, "not accidental"; but there is no mention of Aubrey de Vere in the Crusades of 1098, a date appropriate to the period, and to the sonnet.

The finding and publication of the Sonnets afforded conclusive evidence. Canon Rendall was impressed by Colonel Ward's discovery in Hackney Church of

Hall's marriage and the expected date, nine months previous to the publication "comparable with the enterprise of Schlieman on the mounds of Hissarlik." The line "our ever living Poet" could only refer to one "no longer alive." The publication added confirmation of "a piracy aided by Hall." From Shakespeare, then at Stratford, "neither at the time or later does any hint of claim or disclaimer connect these personal poems with him. The facts contradict it, and it is incredible that he submitted tamely to the appropriation of his name and handiwork."

In his review of the poems "Venus" and "Lucrece" he found, as might be expected, that in the main body of the Sonnets the parallels are found in the poems and earlier plays, in the closing sections in the Tragedies such as "Hamlet" and "Lear." The paraphrase of "Mrs. Ann Vavasour's Echo Song," in "Venus and Adonis," which only survived in M.S., constitutes conclusive proof that the poem was by de Vere and that he was the author of the Sonnets. The complex character of de Vere is treated with severity, yet sympathy, and realisation of the phases of his life. "He returned from his Wander-Jahre a changed man, liberated from English insularity and baptised socially and intellectually into the spirit of the Italian Renaissance." "His understanding of human nature, his insight into the complex play of the passions and affections, his range of social sympathies, had been widened." Later, followed his retirement from Court and public life, and his concentration on the production of the Shakespearean plays and poems, culminating in his fulfilment as the great Poet.

In one of Canon Rendall's series of pamphlets, that reviewing "An Elizabethan Puritan" by Louis Golding, he refers to Arthur Golding's translations of the Classics used by Shakespeare and quotes passages in the plays which point to the relationship between himself and his nephew, Edward de Vere, indicating irresistibly the handiwork of the latter. He adds "How could these reminiscences have formed part of the mental furniture of Shakespeare of Stratford?" The pamphlet on "Ben Jonson and the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's Plays" is a masterly review of the measures taken to produce the Folio, showing that the substitution of Shakespeare was a fiction agreed upon. He stresses the close relationship between Oxford and the Pembroke, who were responsible for the Folio, and the intimacy between them and Jonson. "It was neither a commercial nor literary venture, for which the times were not ripe," and the motive must be looked for in Oxford. "A drastic omission was made in excluding the Sonnets, which were too personal and too authentic." This contribution to the solution of the Shakespeare mystery is of inestimable value, on the merits, and owing to the accredited reputation of the author.

All who know Canon Rendall will approve the allusion to his personality in *The Times*. He brought to Charterhouse "high character, spiritual earnestness (as his "Charterhouse Sermons" attest), great industry, wide scholarship, the gift of administration, charm of manner, and a strong belief in athletics."

With much regret we bid *Vale* to Canon Rendall, a former Vice-President, a Colleague in research, highly distinguished, and, a great Gentleman.

## Frederick Bligh Bond

By PERCY ALLEN

In addition to Dr. Rendall, the Fellowship has lost another very distinguished member (honorary) in Mr. F. Bligh Bond, F.R.I.B.A., who died in hospital, at Dolgelly, on March 8th, 1945. (See *Times Obit.*, March 13.)

Born at Marlborough in 1864, and educated at Bath College, Bligh Bond—throughout life a west-of-England man—became an architect, and, when his prentice days were over, started practise in Bristol, specializing, ultimately, in ecclesiastical architecture, and in mediaeval woodwork. He became, in time, an archaeologist of high standing, and of international repute.

Bond was deeply interested in psychical research, study for which he possessed special aptitudes, particularly in connection with Glastonbury Abbey, when he was official architect to the Diocese of Bath and Wells. His most interesting book, *The Gate of Remembrance* (1918)—describing how, by means of automatic script, he was able to locate, and to discover, the buried foundations of the Lady Chapel at Glastonbury—aroused much public attention. Bond made many other contributions to what, in *The Times* obituary, was called, "The Legend of Glastonbury," with whose vanished monks he was, as he held, in more or less direct, though mysterious, communication.

Late in life, after talks with several of our members, including Mrs. Fitzroy Carrington and myself, Bond became interested in the Oxfordian solution of the Shakespeare problem, though—as he admitted to our President—it was not until after he had attended the Fellowship's last dinner, in 1939—a function at which he spoke—that he fully realized the strength and cogency of our arguments. In Frederick Bligh Bond we have lost an intellect of a very high order, and several of our members mourn a much valued and regretted friend.

## Shakespeare's History Plays

By E. M. W. TILLYARD, LITT.D.

(Chatto & Windus, 18/-)

Reviewed by J. J. DWYER

With a wide knowledge of late mediaeval texts, and of the extensive Shakespeare literature now appearing in the United States, Dr. Tillyard applies to the History Plays the principles ably formulated in *The Elizabethan World Pictures*. His present thesis is that the eight plays, which are historically consecutive, were intended to present a complete scheme, obviously divided into two tetralogies. *King John* and *Henry VIII* fall outside this scheme. The latter play is not dealt with, though *Macbeth* is brought in by way of a brief appendix. In the ordered series the scheme of

crime and punishment, the vindication of Justice and the restoration of Order are seen to be worked out under Divine sanction, whereby England is led to the restoration of Security under the "triumphant" Tudor dynasty. Very much is claimed for these plays: they are said to embody not only all that was implicit in Elizabethan cosmology, but also a complete political philosophy. Indeed it may be doubted whether the author himself, if examined by Dr. Tillyard, would secure very high marks in the subject.

More remarkable still—and this is the point for Oxfordians—are the claims made for the poet. He came up to London from Stratford "well provided with the literary experiments of prolific youthful genius." His concern was not so much with the tastes of a mixed audience as with the status of History among the educated: he was among the "select few" who perceived that History was not mere chronicles or annals; he enjoyed social access to the educated classes; and finally "his prose was founded on the normal speech cadence of the most intelligent and highly educated of the aristocracy."

The direct preparation for all this had been an education ranging over the Homilies (heard in church as a boy), the Mystery plays, the Chronicles (especially Hall and Holinshed), the Morality Plays, Polydore Vergil, Sir Thomas More, and, above all, that important work, *A Mirror for Magistrates*. Thus equipped, Shakespeare promptly took the position of an independent playwright of high repute, and "was on the face of things, far more likely to have been directing or helping a team than to have been in the subordinate position of repairer." "It has been possible," says Dr. Tillyard, "for generations of critics and readers to accept a Shakespeare who offends against verisimilitude and common sense" merely because so many are "still obsessed by the assumption that Shakespeare was ill-educated." It will be noticed that we are getting a long way from the holder of horses' heads outside the Theatre, and from Sidney Lee's acquisitive tradesman; but where and how the young provincial of genius got this education, we are, naturally, not told.

Needless to say that the author, a Cambridge Lecturer, is rigidly orthodox. He entirely accepts both *I Henry VI* and *Titus Andronicus* as Shakespeare's work, seeing much likeness between the two plays, and, moreover, a curious parallel between Talbot and Titus. Of the manifest difference in style there is no word, for Dr. Tillyard holds that "structure and character matter more than verbal detail"; yet the reader may ask whether if *I Henry VI* had appeared in the Third Folio, instead of in the First, our author would accept it as Shakespeare's? He is nearer the mark when he sees much in *King John* that suggests *I Henry VI*. Another startling juxtaposition is when *Love's Labours Lost*, in contempt of "verbal detail" is bracketed with *Richard III*. There is a full and fine disquisition on *K. Richard II*, without mention of the fourteen or fifteen Scriptural allusions which make that play unique in Shakespearean work; and some admirable pages on both parts of *K. Henry IV*, without noticing the obvious fact that every line uttered by Pistol is a pungent parody of Marlowe. Altogether a book worthy of careful study.

## The Group-Theory and Some Modern Intellectuals

Academic scholars, in general, remain rigidly orthodox in their professed Shakespearean views, despite the fact that almost every book they publish, upon a Shakespearean subject, shatters their case, by the showing of their own arguments. It seems, however, certain that several well known writers and journalists to-day are wavering from orthodoxy, and are tending to accept, in one form or another, the group-theory of Shakespearean authorship.

One of these, probably, is Ivor Brown, who, reviewing recently Dr. Tillyard's book on *Shakespeare's History Plays*, in *John O'London* (26.1.45), comments upon the extraordinary amount of contemporary knowledge, literary, historic and philosophic, possessed by Shakespeare, and pertinently asks how the dramatist acquired all this learning, while actively engaged in theatrical and mercantile pursuits? Mr. Brown writes:—

"It may naturally be asked whither all this is leading? To Baconianism or Oxfordism? Not necessarily; but the question, 'How did Shakespeare spend his time?; how did he fit it all in?'; has to be faced."

There follows Mr. Brown's personal, non-committal, solution; but this Editor's opinion, now shared by many others, is, that Ivor Brown, at bottom, is to-day more than dubious concerning the validity of the orthodox case.

Our President tells me, by way of corollary, that in his recent Pelican book, Mr. H. G. Wells admits his conversion to the group hypothesis, when he alludes to *The Merchant of Venice* as "the dullest play perhaps produced by the Shakespeare group." Mr. Wells writes further: "Mr. Shahani (the Indian philosophical writer, Ranji Shahani) is oblivious to the obvious probability of a mixed origin for Shakespeare's plays. . . . You cannot tell whether that composite person Shakespeare was a Catholic or Protestant."

Protestant or Catholic, H. G. Wells is evidently convinced that the elusive "Shakespeare" was, in fact, the pen-name of a group. Probably Mr. Ivor Brown, before long, will have admitted to the same perfectly correct conclusion.

Here is some further interesting corroboration kindly communicated by our member, Mr. J. W. Tierney.

From *The Countryman*. Spring Issue, 1945.

Article *In the Country and Out of It*. p. 46.

There is a second relationship (with the Walcheren country) which is of much interest. H. G. Wells,

Ivor Brown, and James Agate, are said to be among the recent adherents to the belief that "Shakespeare" was written by a group which did not include Stratford-on-Avon actor, but did include Bacon, the master-mind being Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, hereditary Lord Great Chamberlain, who commanded the English cavalry in Walcheren in 1585. His cousins, Francis and Horace de Vere, were successively commanders-in-chief. Now note a curious speculation regarding the names of characters in *Hamlet*: Francisco, Francis de Vere; Bernardo, Olden. Barneveld: Horatio, Horace de Vere; Marcellus, (Prince) Maurice of Orange. And the natural son of Edward de Vere, the "fair youth" of the sonnets, fell in the siege of *Geertruidenberg*, a place which figured in the Walcheren news. You will find all this in a literature to which Lieut.-Col. Montague W. Douglas, C.S.I., Sir Clement Markham, and Col. Ward have contributed. Even in the well known lines:

For this relief much thanks. 'Tis bitter cold  
And I am sick at heart—

is found an expression of the feelings of Sir Francis de Vere, who had recently returned from the Netherlands after twenty years' service, wounded, and in failing health. But could any one who was not like Shakespeare, a professional actor, have written plays which, apart from being saturated with the imagery of the stage, are still supremely actable after three hundred and fifty years?

Mr. C. Wisner Barrell, in a letter to the Editor dated March 8th, sends much interesting information. Here are extracts.

"We have recently incorporated the Shakespeare Fellowship, in this country as a literary and educational research corporation under the laws of the District of Columbia. . . This will give us a much better professional standing, and should make it possible for us to secure funds for more . . . extensive work in the Oxford-Shakespeare case. . . Dr. Benezet has been giving a lecture series through the southern states, Florida, Georgia and California . . . and I trust it will produce some new members for us. . . We are making a strong impression on the big public university and college libraries over here. Some fifty of them have now purchased complete files of our publication."

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In the current (May) issue of *Light*, the organ of the *London Spiritualist Alliance*, 16, Queensberry Place, S.W.7, appears an article, by Percy Allen, on "*The Psychic in Shakespeare*."