

The Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter

APRIL 1948

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

On Saturday, 10th April, at the Poetry Society's headquarters, 33 Portman Square, W., our President, Rear-Admiral H. H. Holland, C.B., will address the Shakespeare Fellowship on the subject: "Shakespeare's topical references to his own Plays." It is hoped that there will be a large attendance, as this is his first Presidential Address.

The Editor of the *News-Letter* for ten successive years, on "Shakespeare Day" in Southwark, conducted a party round Bankside. After his conversion in 1936 he always started with an Oxfordian prologue, and is glad to say there was no diminution in the size of his parties, nor any sign of offence. It is a useful counterblast to the official tour conducted by Canon T. P. Stevens, who snipes at the heretics when they cannot return his fire and declines to meet them where they could retaliate. There will be another ramble on Saturday, 24th April, under the joint auspices of John o'London's Circle and the Shakespeare Fellowship. Admission will be free to members of the latter; visitors will be charged one shilling. Tea will be arranged. Those who wish to participate should notify the Editor. The meeting place is Southwark Cathedral (2 p.m.).

On Thursday, 6th May, at Maida Vale, the Editor will debate with Mr. Frederick Nixon, Hon. Secretary of the Johnson Society of London, on the simple issue: "Is it reasonable to believe that William Shakspeare, of Stratford, wrote the Shakespeare plays?" The debate commences at 8 p.m. It will be preceded by a supper (4s.). Further particulars will be supplied on application.

DR. H. M. WOODWARD

It is with much regret that we have to announce the sudden death, on 2nd January, 1948, of Dr. Woodward. He was 73 years of age and for several years had been a member of the Committee of the Shakespeare Fellowship.

Dr. Woodward, whose father was of the same profession, was born at Pershore (Worcestershire), and had a distinguished career. He was educated at St. Edward's School and Keble College, Oxford. Later he became attached to Guy's Hospital. He qualified in medicine in 1904, and in 1908 went to St. John's Hospital, Lewisham, as House Surgeon. He was bacteriologist there for over thirty years, and on retirement in 1946 he was elected to the consulting staff. At the time of his death he had been a Governor for over twenty-five years. During the first World War he served as consultant at the Seamen's Hospital, Greenwich, and as consulting bacteriologist at the Kent and Canterbury and the

Purley Hospitals. He was a Governor of his old school, St. Edward's, and a member of the Board of the House of Charity, Soho Square.

Dr. Woodward had several hobby interests. He rowed stroke for his Oxford eight. He was a member of the University's Dramatic Society. He was keenly interested in the Fellowship, and most generous in contributing to its support. He was a cricket lover, and the Editor recalls with much pleasure many hours spent with him at Kennington Oval in the summer of 1947 when they talked more Shakespeare than cricket.

He was a kindly man, most devoted to his noble profession. When it called him to duty the plea of age never restrained. He lived a full life to the end, and it is probable he would have responded in dying to the words of his favourite bard:

"Men must endure their going hence, even as their coming hither: Ripeness is all."

EDITORIAL NOTES

"SHAKESPEARE SELL OUT"

The above was a headline in the *News-Chronicle* on 21st February, 1948. It referred to the large demand for tickets for the Shakespeare Festival. It might be applied to the virtual abandonment of its god as revealed in the *Stratford-on-Avon Herald* on 19th September, 1947, when the following letter was published:

"WHERE IS THE BREACH?"

"SIR,

In January last you reported Professor Allardyce Nicoll's extraordinary presidential address to the Shakespeare Club. In it he told his doubtless astonished audience that they did not know when and where Shakespeare was born; whether he went to the grammar school; whether he married Anne Hathaway. In short, what he did not know about Shakespeare was astronomically greater than what we did know.

You will not be surprised to know that this address brought great joy to the ranks of the heretics. *Baconiana*, the organ of the Bacon Society, quoted it under the heading 'The Stratford Idol is Cracking.' I am dealing with it in the *News-Letter* of the Shakespeare Fellowship (the organisation that maintains that the real Shakespeare was Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford).

"I have challenged Professor Nicoll to debate on the simple issue: 'Is it reasonable to believe that William Shakespeare of Stratford wrote the Shakespeare plays?' I have offered to debate at Birmingham or Stratford—where the Professor would have many friends and I perhaps none—and if necessary to pay all my own expenses. Yet the Professor declines battle.

"Surely some Stratfordian will enter the breach! Is it to be said that William of Stratford found no champion in his native town, as he found no willingness to perform his plays in his own lifetime? Surely someone will come forward and put the Professor to shame.

Yours, etc.,

WILLIAM KENT."

[" This effusion perhaps calls for a short comment. In the first place, Professor Nicoll's address was hardly 'extraordinary.' He merely distinguished between documented facts and assumptions or traditions. In the second place, what he said had no bearing on the authorship of the plays. In fact, Professor Nicoll said he saw no way of disproving that Shakespeare wrote the plays. It is hardly surprising that he declines to be drawn into public debate, and it will be almost as surprising if any Stratfordian 'enters the breach.' Time enough when there is a breach to enter. There is no sign of one as yet. Indeed, we have been astonished at the poverty of the arguments adduced by Oxfordians and Baconians when invited to speak in the series of lectures at the British Council Centre, and we do not propose to devote further space to the subject, unless facts are put forward in the place of fancy.—Editor, *Stratford-on-Avon Herald*."]]

The Editor of the *News Letter* replied to the editorial note at some length, and enclosed a questionnaire. Of course, both were ignored. He said :

" I am exceedingly obliged to you for publishing my letter. By so doing you have performed a most acceptable service to all Shakespearean sceptics.

" I am not unmindful of the editorial comments on my 'effusion.' Who will pay heed to these? I fear there are similetons enough in Stratford—one is tempted to suggest there was once a large scale migration from Gotham—but Sodom had ten righteous men, and I am sure Stratford has more wiser ones who will tell themselves the editorial opinion is worth NOTHING. Why?

" Because the editor is 'cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd bound in'—his editorial chair. The Editor's bread and butter depends upon his orthodoxy: his job goes with his faith. Probably there is nobody else in Stratford of whom this could be said. I have no doubt the Vicar would find things uncomfortable if he became infidel to the faith, but he could hardly be sacked on this ground. The Bishop might say that Shakespeare was not a god in the Christian pantheon, and no belief in him was required by any of the 39 articles, but the editor of the organ of the town! If he allowed scepticism to come creeping into a leading article, or published letters from doubters without pouring scorn upon them, he might as well pack his trunks. In short, compulsory believers will hardly count with the thoughtful.

" Now, thanks to you, all Stratford knows that the President of the Shakespeare Club declines to debate, and that no champion will appear for William Shakespeare, not even the editor."

The attitude taken up by the Shakespeare Club should be recorded. Regarding the proposal that they should stage a debate, the Secretary wrote as follows: " You might as well ask the Fabian Society to publicise views about the benefits of *laissez faire* and free enterprise in economic affairs." The Editor replied as follows :

" I note that you 'are not armed' for a combat on the Shakespeare question. I am a little surprised by this. I think if I were secretary of a Club maintaining a hypothesis that has long been in dispute, I should feel called upon to acquaint myself with the pros and cons. It looks as if you know nothing about them. No doubt a belief in the Shakespeare myth is part of the Stratford properties, inculcated with mother's milk.

" I am interested in the objects of your Club. Part are quite acceptable by the Shakespeare Fellowship. 'To read, study and discuss the works of William Shakespeare.' Where we differ is in our refusal to be interested in William Shakspeare. The solution, in my view, is that William Shakespeare was a *non-de-plume*, and your man had nothing to do with the writing of the plays. I challenge you to show that he ever claimed to have written them. I think he would think his fellow townsmen a lot of simletons.

" This simplicity is manifest in your remarks about the Fabian Society. Of course, it would not father a lecture on the subject you mention, but I have not

offered your club a lecture, but a debate, a very different matter. In a debate your side would be put and your unwillingness to put it when denial awaits shows how weak it is. I am sure in its history the Fabian Society has held many debates. Do you suppose that if Sir Ernest Benn, a prominent individualist, challenged the F.S. to debate on Individualism *v.* Socialism the F.S. would not find a champion? The idea is absurd. If the F.S. failed to provide one there would be a cry of 'Shame' upon it from many members. I for one should raise that cry at Stratford if I was a member of the Shakespeare Club."

There was, of course, no further correspondence.

So we sceptics can show that all the Stratford literati, including the Shakespeare Club, blindly follow a myth.

A LIBEL ON STRATFORD?

There must have been more fluttering in Stratford dovescotes—if it is right to compare so innocent a bird with the craft of the Shakespearean songsters there—caused by a letter from Mr. E. D. Johnson, a Birmingham solicitor, and a keen Baconian, in a controversy in the *Birmingham Daily Post* regarding the authenticity of the alleged birthplace of the bard. He was answered to the best of his small ability by Mr. Levi Fox, M.A., F.R.H.S., the Director. The Editor of the *News-Letter* also wrote. He received a courteous letter from the Editor of the Birmingham paper intimating that honours seemed equal so far and he could not therefore publish anything further. The Editor of the *News-Letter* then wrote to Mr. Fox, who replied that he did not enter into controversy. The Editor retorted that this would not do, as he had just engaged in one! This concluded the correspondence so far as the present Editor was concerned. Now it appears from the January issue of *Baconiana* that Mr. Johnson wrote to Mr. Fox and told him that he had publicly accused the Shakespeare Trust of obtaining money under false pretences, and suggested that the Trust should bring an action against him for libel when the whole question could be ventilated in the Law Courts and the public be told the facts. We need hardly say the challenge has been ignored. Nothing would more damage the tourist trade at Stratford than an action of this kind, which would not lack newspaper publicity extending probably to America. There is no doubt that all the anti-Stratfordian forces would join in contributing to a fund for the defence if the Stratford mythicists decided to measure their strength against them in a court of law.

All anti-Stratfordians should note that they can now broadcast the fact that Stratford cannot defend its faith in William Shakspeare as author of the Shakespeare plays on a public platform, and dare not defend a charge of making money under false pretences in a public court.

THE STRATFORD MONUMENT

Mr. Levi Fox recently accepted the Secretaryship of the Dugdale Society. The Editor wrote to him and asked if the Society had ever considered the question of the Shakespeare monument and its alleged misrepresentation in Sir William Dugdale's *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*. The reply was :

"So far as I am aware the subject to which you refer has not been considered by the Dugdale Society, and I have accordingly no knowledge of the views of its members, either collectively or individually."

The Editor wrote further, and expressed his surprise, and a hope that the subject might be considered worthy of investigation. When the Editor was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries he observed that another Fellow was the present Sir William Dugdale. He therefore wrote to him and pointed out that the reputation of his ancestor had been traduced in the interests of Shakespearean orthodoxy, and asked for his views on the matter. No reply has been received. Obviously Sir William is not prepared to admit anything that will react on the reputation of his distinguished ancestor, but, as a Warwickshire man, he is fearful of handing any weapon to us sceptics.

PRIESTLEY PLAYS THE PRIEST

Elsewhere in this issue Mr. H. Cutner deals with a famous English writer. Our literary gods, like the god of Cowper's theology, move in mysterious ways that hardly dignify their exalted positions. To write weekly in *John Bull* is not, of course, so lowering as it was to the immortal genius William Shakespeare when he bent his energies to selling malt and stone, and consumed valuable time in making an "impresso" for the Earl of Rutland, which might have brought forth more drama. Still, one can but wonder that it is worth Mr. Priestley's while to make himself a one-man brains trust in such a periodical. Perhaps it impresses those of low degree with one's learning, particularly if, as no doubt happens, you are only confronted with select questions which someone—probably the Editor—thinks you know something about. In this case the Editor seems to have been mistaken. Mr. Priestley, as Mr. Cutner points out, obviously knows nothing of the Shakespeare controversy. To suggest that the matter is disposed of by raising the comparison with John Bunyan is to invite the misgiving that either Mr. Priestley does not know Shakespeare or he does not know Bunyan. As he has written of the former in two delightful volumes, *English Humour* and *English Comic Characters*, one is unwilling to assume that his blind spot is in the direction of the former. Probably he has forgotten Bunyan. Perhaps he read *Pilgrim's Progress* as a youth, for as George Dawson said, it was an excellent "Sunday book, as pleasant as any six-days book in the world." There is nothing in it that can surprise anybody. There are many characters, but their idiom is the same. You do not say "How did they know all this?" You do not find them conversing in the language of the Court. In short, there is nothing in any of Bunyan's work outside the range of his own experience. It would interest us to know how Mr. Priestley explains the knowledge of Court life displayed in the Shakespeare plays.

Mr. Priestley was invited to come to a meeting of the Shakespeare Fellowship and explain all this. Of course, he cannot find time. This is typical of some of our public men. They like to play the priest.

They come out with some dogma, and when challenged have no time to defend it against attack. The real reason is they cannot risk the confusion with which their critics would cover them.

Perhaps the B.B.C. Brains Trust has done one thing. It has shown the discerning that men clever as writers, scientists, politicians, doctors, etc., are not necessarily better than others in discussing subjects they have not studied. Probably anyone who has read Professor Gilbert Slater's *Seven Shakespeares*, or even the abridged edition of Sir George Greenwood's *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, knows more about the controversy than Mr. Priestley.

A MONUMENT TO A MYTH

This leads me to a reference to a remarkable work published in 1938 by the Oxford University Press, *Shakespeare: Man and Artist*, by Edgar Innes Fripp, who also, it is believed, resides in the Stratford area. This work (it consists of two weighty volumes showing wide research) has been somewhat overshadowed by Sir Edmund Chambers' great work. It is needless to say that it offers no information about any literary work at Stratford, but chronicles the smallest beer imaginable about the man and the artist. The closest combing of the records reveal not a hint that he did any writing other than six laborious signatures and curiously not one of these achievements can be credited to the inspiration of Stratford.

Readers of the *News-Letter* will be interested in the following extracts from Mr. Fripp's book:

"The King's men toured in the Midlands in the summer of 1622 and visited for the first and only time Stratford-upon-Avon. At Stratford they were paid 6/- for not performing (as was their right) in the Guild Hall."

This is sufficiently remarkable; what follows is even more astonishing:

"What brought them for once and now to Shakespeare's native town and home and burial place? . . . but to pay homage to the man and his monument and to receive 'papers' without a blot on them, from his Widow and Daughter and Son-in-law at New Place?"

When one reads such a passage it is difficult to believe if Shakspeare did write the plays, that any of his humour infected his townsmen. It is funny in the extreme. He was so modest he never induced his company to perform one of his own plays in his native town—an example of the eccentricity of genius quite unparalleled. We are asked, too, to believe that Stratford's most famous son was our greatest literary genius, yet the town turns puritan and will have no plays! We are invited to credit a story that although he had just been described on his monument as "in judgment a Nestor, in genius a Socrates, in art a Virgil," a demonstration of these qualities before his late fellow citizens is forbidden by the Corporation! To put it mildly, Mrs. Shakspeare must have been bitterly disappointed.

A third passage from Mr. Fripp's book will justify quotation. He is referring to *All's Well that Ends Well*.

"Her stratagem recalls Laban's trick with Lear on Jacob and Tamar's device with Judah—whose ring like Bertram's is an important piece of evidence. Court gossip added piquancy to the play. Edward, Earl of

Oxford, who married Lord Burghley's daughter, Anne, in 1571, and was father on 2nd July, 1575, of Elizabeth Vere (whom the young Earl of Southampton declined to marry—Shakespeare's sonnet I-XXVI notwithstanding—in 1590) owed his parentage of this young lady, so it was said, to his wife's resort to Helena's deceit. Young Francis Osborne calls it 'virtuous.' The King's ladies and gentlemen . . . were little disturbed by improprieties."

It is interesting to note that Mr. Fripp considers that W. H., the begetter of the sonnets, was William Hall. In this he follows Sir Sidney Lee, but not Sir Edmund Chambers. Surely the pun about all happiness is strongly suggestive. A dedication to a nobleman would have been more lavish, and he could never have been addressed as "Mr." Who could more fittingly be described as a "begetter" than a man who managed to extract precious manuscripts from a nobleman's house? Samuel Butler thought "Mr. W. H." was a plebeian.

A NEW THEORY OF THE SONNETS

In October, 1947, a secondary school teacher—it is merciful to be vague—at the Balham Library delivered an address on Shakespeare's sonnets. He advanced a theory that the man of Stratford was made a cuckold by no less a person than the Earl of Southampton! When the Editor pointed out that Anne would be about 38 years of age when the Earl was 21—on the unchallengeable evidence of the lady's epitaph at Stratford—the ingenious theoriser was plainly abashed. This had not occurred to him. It reminded one of Hesketh Pearson's brilliant surmise that a passage in *Winter's Tale* implied that some amorous swain had been violating the chastity of Anne when that play was written. At that time, on orthodox assumptions, she was considerably older than 38, in fact nearer 60. Our guessers do much to increase the gaiety of Shakespearean sceptics, and for this we say, in the words of Stephano, "I thank thee for that jest," even though unintentional. It is highly probable that Anne was a country girl of no culture, who was not the least likely to interest an earl. It is likely enough also that she never came to London. Still that would not matter. The credulity of the Stratfordians is quite equal to the assumption that the earl went post haste to Stratford on report of Anne's beauty and that the thousand pounds given to Shakspeare was the price of his wife's chastity.

It should be added that in subsequent correspondence it appeared that the school teacher knew nothing of de Vere. A suggestion that he should come to a meeting of the Shakespeare Fellowship and tell us what he thought he knew about Shakespeare was not well received.

THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP'S PAMPHLET

The Fellowship has every ground for congratulation upon the reception of the pamphlet. The number sold to date—about five hundred—is as large as could be expected in the absence of advertisement which could not be afforded. The *Times Literary Supplement* gave it a brief notice; it was not a review. Unfortunately no address was given, and this made it of little value. It is known that enquiries

were made at bookshops for the pamphlet as a result, and Denny's (163A Strand) now stock it. We have had to depend largely upon personal recommendation.

Readers of the *News-Letter* will be interested in the following appreciations:

Mr. Reginald Hine, F.S.A. (author of one of the most delightful and popular books of recent publication, *The Confessions of an Uncommon Attorney*), wrote:

"So far I have only perused your opinion, but one can trace your legal training in every paragraph; and the array of evidence so shrewdly mustered will have convinced all but the die-hard Stratfordians. I congratulate you on (yet another) fine piece of work."

Mr. E. E. Kellert (author of *Ex Libris, History of Religions*, etc., and reviewer in *News-Chronicle, John o' London's Weekly*, etc.), wrote:

"Many thanks for sending me your pamphlet. For a very long time I had been convinced that Shaxper the Stratford usurer was not the author of the plays; who actually was, I cannot make up my mind. On the whole, I think it most likely that De Vere wrote some plays and William Stanley others; but there may be many men who gave different kinds of assistance. I have read Looney's book, but still abler seems to me Lefranc's *Sous le Masque de William Shakespeare*, which puts the case for Stanley with great power. In any case, you want a man of very high rank if you wish to detect the author of *King John* or *Hamlet*."

Dr. F. H. Hayward, ex-school inspector, author, and producer of "Celebrations" of famous men, was also pleased with the pamphlet. He had previously written to the Editor:

"Certainly I feel no enthusiasm for the Stratford gentleman and I wish I had time to give real study to the claim that the most famous of our noble houses gave the real Shakespeare to the world. You may depend that I shall read the Sonnets (in particular) with new interest."

An article in the *New Statesman* on 15th November, 1947, by C. H. Rolph, compared Baconians with flat earthers. The Editor wrote to the writer protesting against this and forwarding a pamphlet. The following is an extract from his reply:

"Due apologies, not for my oblique attack on the Baconians, who seem to me slightly less plausible than the flat-earthers, but for appearing inferentially to impugn the 'intelligence and imagination' of Oxfordians, about whom I knew little or nothing. I've long been sceptical about the Stratford myth. Two books did this to me: Ivor Brown's *Amazing Monument*, and an absurdly imaginative 'Life of Shakespeare' by Hesketh Pearson. So, although I'm a frantically busy man, I've had to read your most interesting pamphlet and the *News-Letter* from cover to cover—couldn't put them down. And now I've acquired another interest that won't be denied, and shall have to go on finding out about the Earl of Oxford, and me not having time to read the front page of the morning paper!

"I'm assuming, uncomfortably, that the invitation to speak at the City Literary Institute is just angry rhetoric. Even if it's not, it is declined with absolute horror. So you could if you chose, comfortably rub your hands over the thought of having put one more philistine in his place; but what I think you will do is to rejoice that one more heathen has gone off to the bookshops in search of Looney's *Shakespeare Identified*."

Edmund Blunden also expressed his appreciation of the pamphlet, and dissatisfaction with the orthodox case.

Several orders have come from U.S.A. From

Messrs. Simon & Schuster, Publishers, of New York (Mr. Schuster has joined the Fellowship); from Mrs. G. Walter Holden, of Denver, Colorado, who says, "I am immensely pleased with the pamphlet. It is a fine convincing condensation of the evidence." A third appreciation from a transatlantic source is from Mr. J. L. Madden, of the Catholic University of America. The pamphlet was sent to him in consequence of his enquiry to the Editor about the Elizabethan houses in Holborn, referred to in the latter's *London for Shakespeare Lovers*. He, of course, was not aware of the author's change of views since 1934, when it was published. Copies have also been sent to John L. Astley Cock, M.A. (Cantab.), Associate Editor, Religion and Education, of the *Chicago Tribune*.

APOLOGY TO AMERICA

In the Fellowship's pamphlet it was stated that all spare copies of Captain Ward's *Seventeenth Earl of Oxford* had been bought up by the American Branch. This statement, due to a misunderstanding, is regretted. The Editor has since been informed that it was at Captain Ward's own request that Mr. Barrell kindly bought up all the available surplus copies of his book. They were safer on the other side of the Atlantic with bombs about. As members are aware, it has been possible to get a few copies from the publishers. These are now obtainable from the Hon. Secretary for 21/8 including postage.

REPORTS OF MEETINGS

There was a record attendance at the Annual General Meeting on 27th September, 1947, to welcome the announcement that our President, Rear-Admiral Holland, would continue in office. He opened the proceedings with a sympathetic reference to the death of Mrs. Turner Clark, a great loss, not only to the American Branch of the Fellowship, which she founded, but also our Fellowship, of which she was a valued Vice-President. To fill the vacancies caused by the death of Mrs. Clark and the regretted resignation of Mrs. Long, Messrs. W. Kent and T. L. Adamson were unanimously elected Vice-Presidents. The Executive of the Fellowship—Mr. W. Kent, Hon. Editor of the *News-Letter*; Mr. H. Cutner, Hon. Treasurer; Mr. T. L. Adamson, Hon. Secretary; and Mrs. Robins, Assistant Hon. Secretary—were confirmed in office, and the other members of the Committee, Dr. Woodward and Mr. Shera Atkinson, were re-elected.

The Treasurer reported that the finances were in good condition, and that the sale of the pamphlet was steadily growing.

A helpful discussion on future activities ended a stimulating meeting.

An open meeting on "Lord Oxford as Shakespeare" was held at the City Literary Institute on 8th November with Mr. T. L. Adamson in the chair. The audience numbered about fifty. Mr. W. Kent spoke on the literary side and Mr. Cutner on the evidence of the portraits, with illustrations on the screen. Both speakers were in good form, and aroused

the interest of some listeners who had not previously heard of Lord Oxford. There was an interesting discussion afterwards. As a result of the meeting the membership of the Fellowship has increased by two.

An audience of goodly size was sadly disappointed at 33 Portman Square on 29th November, 1947, because Dr. R. G. Watkin, due to speak on "Others Work in the Shakespeare Plays," could not attend owing to illness. A full summary of what he proposed to say was read to the meeting, and there were many interesting comments.

Dr. Watkin's main points were that the Cambridge bibliographers accept the Folio, save for *Henry VIII* and *Pericles*, as virtually traditionally Shakespeare's, and that J. M. Robertson's campaign forty years ago to substitute argument and evidence for mere "swagger," as exhibited specially by Professor Churton Collins, who dismissed critics of orthodoxy as "paradoxers, iconoclasts, and illegitimate practitioners," was called for. Dr. Watkin did not agree with Robertson's absolute rejection of *Titus Andronicus* from the canon. Robertson was virtually the father of the scholarly Arden edition of the Plays, yet a list from the words in the sonnets in that edition, found worthy of attention, contains three from the play he rejects. Shakespeare (or Oxford) had presumably a hand in the revision of "the most brutal tragedy of the era."

The list of distinctive words shows the sonnet writer possessed of a large hand (as we would expect) in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, but surprisingly little share in *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, and *The Tempest*, and not the whole responsibility for *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*. These results agree only partly with Robertson's from his tests.

Satisfactory from the point of view of Oxfordians is the finding that the sonnet writer had some hand in all of the plays of the Folio.

MR. J. B. PRIESTLEY ENTERS THE ARENA

In *John Bull* for 12th July, 1947, the famous broadcaster, novelist, and playwright gave his opinion in answer to the question whether there is "any good evidence" that the plays of Shakespeare were written by Bacon. Mr. Priestley is ready to answer any query, and this is an easy one—for him! It is obvious that "a man of the highest literary genius like Shakespeare" can easily pick up "whatever is useful to him such as the jargon of any trade or profession." Moreover, "Shakespeare's contemporaries accepted his authorship of the plays cheerfully enough."

When it comes to "the evidence from cyphers and codes, this is just ingenious bosh." Mr. Priestley "undertakes to prove," using such methods, "that the plays were really written by Philip II of Spain or the Emperor of China."

No doubt this would have been the identical reply in the case of Oxford or any other claimant; but whether Mr. Priestley really believes he has disposed

of the case against Shakspeare, of Stratford, is difficult to say. For indeed it is hard to imagine a more hopeless or childish argument. He begs the whole question by calling the Stratford man "the highest literary genius"—the very point he has to prove; and it is obvious he has never studied the cyphers and codes in the plays. As for showing us that Philip II or the Emperor of China really wrote the plays—this readiness to do so is constantly being urged by the orthodox though under no circumstances do they ever do it. It is one of those futile and idiotic boasts which is put in to clinch the argument and tickle the fools who believe it.

The truth is that Mr. Priestley appears to know literally nothing of the problem, and the way he gave his "opinion" proves this to the hilt. That most of the readers of *John Bull* will agree with him may be true, but the few who take the trouble to look into the problem for themselves, including the reader who asked the question, will certainly wonder how a man with the intelligence and clear insight into humbug possessed by Mr. Priestley can still delude himself that the man of Stratford wrote the plays of Shakespeare. Years ago some of us had a similar wonder—how a man with a genius for story-telling like Sir A. Conan Doyle could ever believe that real six-inch fairies and elves could skip from flower to flower in a Yorkshire dale and be photographed. Alas, wonders never cease!

H. CUTNER.

SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON AS SHALLOW

Our readers will be interested in the following letter which was sent to the *Times Literary Supplement* by one of our members. It was not published.

"SIR,

In his life of Sir Christopher Hatton, Mr. St. John Brooks comments on the biography by Lord Campbell: 'He was in truth, says Campbell, a noted roisterer and swashbuckler, hearing the chimes at midnight, knowing where the *bona-robas* were and sometimes lying all night in the Windmill in St. George's Fields. This is, of course, only Campbell's paraphrase of Shallow's life at the Inns of Court, as he tells it in *Henry IV*, to which play Campbell refers us for his local colour.'

"It is indeed an amusing coincidence that Campbell should thus have embellished his story with undisguised borrowing from Shallow's account of his own wild youth, for the facts put forward by St. John Brooks make it pretty clear (whether he realised it or not) that the original of Justice Shallow was—not Sir Thomas Lucy, nor Justice Gardiner, but Sir Christopher Hatton himself.

'Hatton's great-grandmother, Elizabeth Holdenby, is said to have had for maternal grandfather Sir William Lucy; and the Holdenby's certainly impaled the arms of Lucy, the famous "lucres or pikes, haurient Argent" on which Shakespeare may have punned.'

"Christopher Hatton inherited the Manor of Holdenby in Northamptonshire, and the arms of Holdenby were among his many quarterings. He took great interest in tracing his ancestors, and eventually succeeded in establishing a pedigree which went back to the Norman Conquest. He never married and, lacking an heir, adopted his nephew, William Newport, persuading him to change his name to Hatton. This William was the son of Christopher's sister, Dorothy, and Joan Newport of Hunningham, Warwickshire. He may well have been the prototype of Slender.

"In 1583 Hatton actually brought a suit in the Court of Star Chamber against 'certain persons whom he accused of poaching on his preserves, killing his deer, breaking them up, and taking away the carcasses.' (This incident occurred at Corfe Castle in Dorset, which had been granted to Hatton by the Queen.) When Shallow threatens to take precisely the same action, Falstaff's comment is—'You'll be laughed at,' which he has been ever since.

"In September, 1586, when England was already in the throes of preparing for the Spanish invasion, Hatton was constituted Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire. In this capacity he was instructed in the following month to enrol 1,000 foot of the most substantial householders in the county. I do not know whether Hatton was also a Justice of the Peace in the county of Northamptonshire, but the substitution of Gloucestershire would be understandable.

GWYNNETH M. BOWEN."

THE SHAKESPEARE MYSTERY II

Since the connection of the Oxford and Pembroke houses is established, it remains to trace the course of the alliance in the known history of the principal characters: Edward de Vere, Lord Oxford; and Mary Sidney, Lady Pembroke.

A few dates are useful. De Vere was born in 1550. Mary Sidney was born in 1561.

In 1571 de Vere was an outstanding personage at Court, a favourite of the Queen, a champion in physical prowess. His marriage in that year to Lord Burleigh's daughter was attended by the Queen.

Mary came to England from Dublin, where her father ruled Ireland. There was a revolt of the nobles in the North, and their leaders, the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Northumberland were executed. The former was a cousin of de Vere, who ran great risks to save him; the latter was Mary's grandfather.

1572-76. Mary was growing up at Court a beautiful and brilliant girl, while de Vere was travelling in France, Germany, and Italy.

1577. Mary's uncle, Leicester, arranged her marriage to Lord Pembroke, and owing to the poverty of her father, paid the dowry for her. Pembroke was thirty years her senior, and had had two wives without issue. Mary produced two sons and then centred her interest on her brother, Philip Sidney.

Philip was a poet, engaged with his intimate friend, Edmund Spenser, in founding a new school of poetry. He was also an ambassador abroad, and played a part in the burning political question whether Elizabeth should make an alliance with France or with Spain by her marriage. Philip took one view, de Vere another; and Philip, being banished from Court, took refuge with Mary. Here Mary and Philip wrote *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, a volume of poetry and prose of high contemporary renown.

1586. While Philip and de Vere differed over Elizabeth's marriage, they were good friends in general, and both served in the war against Spain in Holland. Philip was killed near Arrhem, and de Vere was recalled by the Queen and employed on Secret Service with a grant of £1,000 per annum.

presumably owing to the threat of the Spanish invasion.

1588. When the Armada came Lord Oxford fitted out his own ship and took part in the battle in the Channel.

1590-1600. Relations between Lord Oxford and Lady Pembroke must have grown closer in the next few years, for their respective sons and daughters became engaged as they grew up.

The name of Shakespeare was published first in 1593 in *Venus and Adonis* and again in 1594 in *Lucrece*. The practice of the day suggests that this was a pseudonym, and its assumption by de Vere is also probable from a curious coincidence. Fifteen years before, de Vere had gone to Cambridge with the Queen, and the address of Welcome contained a reference to de Vere—"Thy countenance shakes a spear"—and urged him to quit literature for the war.

This pseudonym would make a strong appeal to the Champion of the Tilting Yard. Gabriel Harvey was the orator; he was a don of distinction in the University. Later he was a guest at Wilton House, and described Lady Pembroke as "the wittiest, the bravest, the invinciblest of gentlewomen," and included her with Chaucer and Spenser among the "divine poets" and praised her ability to "publish many works."

Canon Rendall wrote: "Her house at Wilton became the recognised rendezvous of leading wits and scholars, men of such varied types as Gabriel Harvey, Samuel Daniell, Nicholas Breton and others."

At this time Lord Pembroke was ageing fast. He died in 1601; and it is clear from his Will that he did not share the general admiration of his gifted wife, for he deprived her of any reasonable provision. Lord Pembroke was absorbed in building a royal palace at Wilton, which, in fact, held the entourage of Queen Elizabeth, King James and King Charles in successive visits.

Now let us consider the people whom Lady Pembroke in her zeal for poetry would have gathered round her. Lady Pembroke and Lord Oxford would have been the chief managers, for contemporary critics held Oxford to be amongst the best playwrights of the day. They had many willing helpers, firstly from their own families:

Lord Derby, a prolific writer, who kept his own company of actors. *Love's Labour's Lost* was based on an incident at the Court of Navarre, where Lord Derby was a guest soon after.

Lord Rutland (married to a niece of Lady Pembroke).

Sir Walter Raleigh, a special friend of Lady Pembroke, whose intercession with King James saved his life in 1604. Several passages seem to be derived from his voyages.

Samuel Daniell, who succeeded Spenser as poet laureate, and was Master of the Revels at Court. He avowed that it was Lady Pembroke who taught him to write poetry.

Nicholas Breton also a poet of high repute.

To these should be added some men of humbler rank who were on the pay-roll of Lord Oxford, who is

known to have spent much of his wealth on his retinue of writers and actors.

John Lyly, author of *Euphues*, and a petitioner to the Queen for the post of Master of the Revels.

Anthony Munday, who acted in Oxford's company, and was later a playwright for Lord Pembroke.

Women were debarred from acting in public, but the daughters of Oxford delighted in taking part in Court Revels.

So let us translate this dry catalogue into living creatures and imagine the scenes enacted at Wilton House. When the old Earl was immersed in his architectural plans and problems, he resented the frivolity of his high-spirited young wife in collecting a boisterous crowd of her relations and friends, and making his gardens and woodlands a theatrical stage for her masques and revels.

They revised and amended tragedies and comedies which had been in circulation in previous years and added others of their own composition.

Hamlet, for instance, is assigned by the competent researches of Dr. Cairncross to the year 1589, but the local colour of the palace scene was missing until supplied by Lord Rutland on his return from his embassy to Denmark. *Midsummer Night's Dream* was written specially for the wedding in 1595 of Lord Derby and Oxford's daughter.

SIR HENRY LAWRENCE.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SONNETS

The 1609 volume could not so effectually have masked the author, and the other persons concerned, unless it was designed, and they were arranged, for that purpose. If the marriage sonnets, instead of beginning the series, came near its end (after Son. 104), its whole perspective would be changed and the whole situation transformed. We should meet a child, not a youth; and love for a child needs another explanation than that accepted hitherto. It is therefore important to discover the true order, and to prove it. Is this possible?

Sir Denys Bray did yeoman service by his theory of the rhyme-link; but his order, restricted by the assumption, for which no evidence exists, that Shakespeares Sonnets were by *William Shakespeare* (identified with Shakspeare), solves no problems, and adds another sixteen to the nineteen abrupt or pointless changes of pronoun in the Quarto.

Since the true order could, given the requisite conditions, be restored with certainty, I experimented on the following theorem. Let it be supposed that the poet wrote the sonnets of his first series as stanzas of one poem, on one theme, with continuity of sense and of rhyme, and without abrupt and pointless change of pronoun.

These conditions can be fulfilled only if he fulfilled them. Unless he composed a consecutive poem, it cannot exist. Nobody could make one out of the sonnets of Spenser, Milton, or Keats. Some of his sonnets are inseparable—there are eighteen "recognised pairs" and one triplet—and these are always rhyme-linked. If they were not, no link could be supplied. So, if sense and rhyme must always be

united, he must unite them. Nobody else can. He must use the right pronoun, if the right one is to appear. Just as pieces of various shapes, which may, or may not, be pieces of one puzzle, will fit and form a picture, if they were designed to do so; but if they were not, they will not fit, nor form one, because there was none to form; so, if the sonnets fit this intricate pattern, it is because he designed it and made them fit. Alone, the rhyme-link is fallible; but the guidance of sense, rhyme, and pronoun concurring is practically infallible. But should mistakes occur, they can be removed by other tests.

Comments on the soundness or unsoundness of this argument would be valued, but actually the order thus constructed (printed at the Shakespeare Head Press, 1934, and in *Sunlight on Shakespeares Sonnets*, 1935) has since received surprising attestation by two word-sequences discovered in the alternate sonnets. They appear to give the order, the author's own certificate, and to be worth recording.

Now, if it is thus certified, this order provides a chronology exact enough to test severely any claimant to the authorship. It fully confirms Oxford's claim, wherever biographical facts are available, but as it shows the sonnets to have been written expressly to leave to future ages a record of the poet's son (who would otherwise be unknown as such), it follows that, if Oxford was the poet, he must have had a son exactly fitting all that the sonnets say, whether or not there is elsewhere any record of the fact.

They require this son to have been born in 1575, of a true but unrecognised marriage, and I tried to show (in *Lord Burghley in Shakespeare*, 1936) that this is likely on the evidence. After his mother's death he was in his father's home from 1582 to 1592, at first as his page. He became a player, and patron and friend of poets, especially Mariowe. Being *filius nullius*, entitled to no surname, he was known as Will, simply; but privately used his mother's name (Mr. W. H.), and publicly his father's pseudonym, Shake-speare (Mr. W. S.—Will Shakespeare).

All this is incompatible with the theory proposed some years ago by Mr. Percy Allen that the mother was Queen Elizabeth, and the more recent theory that she was Ann Vavasor. Her son, Edward Vere, cannot unfortunately fit into the picture at all; nor does she do as the Dark Lady.

To prove the existence of this son, and his identity, seems important, and much fuller proof could be given than is possible here. This awaits publication, but it would be an advantage if it could first be submitted to the consideration of the Fellowship, or of any members who may be interested.

G. W. PHILLIPS.

As the result of an article in the *New York Tribune* on 8th June, 1947, on the Oxford theory there followed some sympathetic correspondence. Mr. Charlton Ogburn wrote as follows:

"During the last ten years I have read, I dare say, all the results of the research which have been published. My experience in weighing evidence comprises thirty odd years in the active practice of law where I am constantly having to determine the validity of evidence.

In my opinion there is no question whatever that Edward de Vere was the author of the sonnets, the other poems and the plays (with a little collaboration on some of the plays). My own statement, therefore, would have been a little stronger than Mr. Burgess's 'something greater than probability.'"

Our valued member, Mr. T. M. Aitken, B.Sc., A.M.I.C.E., contributed to *The International Women's News* for October, 1947, an article entitled "A Puzzle for the Learned." It dealt with Lady Pembroke and her share in the production of the First Folio.

GEMS OF MYTHOLOGY

In fancy we can see him while horns rouse workers and the cocks are crowing, stripped to the waist, and having a good wash in the pump in his father's backyard. Anon he presents himself to his mother ready for school, and when she has seen that her darling's hair is well brushed, his gown clean, his flat cap free from dust, and his white collar neatly tied, she gives him a kiss and a hug, which he returns with greater heartiness, and then away he runs, having a nod and a good night for the tired watchman as he goes out and for the coming workpeople many good mornings. And they all have a pleasant smile for cheery little Will.

Shakespeare's Life by A. H. Wall.

* * *

At Snitterfield his grandfather would be proud enough of the curly-headed youngster with the fine hazel eyes.

T. Spencer Baynes, L.L.D.
(Article on Shakespeare in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Ninth Edition, 1889).

* * *

Teacher, lawyer, butcher. These stories may be taken to indicate what is no doubt true, that at a time of domestic need the poet was ready to turn his hand to anything that offered.

Ibid.

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