

The Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter

APRIL 1951

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NOTICES

The following are three important announcements:—

1. Saturday, 14th April, 3 p.m.—Lecture by Dr. J. R. Mez on "The Oxford Theory in Switzerland."
2. 7 p.m.—Shakespeare Trial.
3. Monday, 23rd April, 7 p.m.—Shakespeare Fellowship's Annual Dinner.

1. We hope for a particularly large attendance of members to welcome Dr. Mez, who has done splendid service to the Oxford case in Switzerland by broadcasting and writing in the Swiss *Radio Times*.

2. The trial will take place at St. Mark's Hall, Cobourg Road, Camberwell. Those attending should take Bakerloo Tube to Elephant. Then 53, 53a or 63 bus, alighting in Old Kent Road at next stop past the Dun Cow Tavern. Cobourg Road is on the other side of the road. For William Shakspeare, Mr. William Margrie will appear. For Edward de Vere, Mr. William Kent. Judge: Mr. W. J. H. Hahn, F.L.A., the Librarian of Camberwell. As the audience will comprise the jury, it is hoped that many members of the Fellowship will attend. Those who come to Dr. Mez's lecture can have tea together, and proceed as a party to the trial.

3. The Dinner will be held at the Junior Carlton Club, Pall Mall. Amongst the speakers will be Mr. Edmund Blunden, Mr. Christmas Humphreys, and Dr. J. R. Mez. Evening dress is optional. Tickets (13/6) can be obtained from the Honorary Treasurer.

EDITOR'S NOTES

SHAKESPEARE AND THE ENCYCLOPAEDISTS

It is always interesting to read the encyclopaedists on the bard, even if they tend to become monotonous. Robert Greene, the first anchor of the faith, and his *Groatworth of Wit*—though this would be just as apt if "Shakespeare" had been a pseudonym, as to which its dying author might well have been ignorant; the dear young Earl of Southampton and his affectionate patronage—though no evidence of it exists, as Mrs. Charlotte Carmichael Stopes had candidly to avow; the retirement to Stratford, and its probable date. These all come pat—proceeding from previous encyclopaedists. There is, of course, no need to investigate; they were in the apostolic Stratfordian succession and must have been right!

In the new edition of *Chambers' Encyclopaedia*, to which the Editor of the *News-Letter* has contributed

an article on London, Dr. E. M. W. Tillyard, Fellow of Jesus College and University Lecturer in the University of Cambridge, has written on "Shakespeare." There is no sign of delving here. Indeed, when one reads the sentence: "In 1569 there was a Roman Catholic revolt against Queen Elizabeth, and Shakespeare must have heard later in Stratford Church a new homily against rebellion written on that event," one wonders if the doctor was short of matter. The statement is irrelevant. We do not know that either John or William Shakspeare had rebellious tendencies, and we do not care. Referring to Chettle, as animadverting upon Greene, Dr. Tillyard writes: "An apology for this aspersion mentions Shakespeare's upright dealing and facetious [i.e. urbane] grace in writing and the patronage he enjoyed among the nobility." Anybody who referred to Henry Chettle's *Kind-Harts Dreame* would be surprised to find the name of Shakespeare absent, and would justifiably say that Dr. Tillyard had misled his readers. An inference is not a statement. Dr. Tillyard—and the contributor to the second encyclopaedia to be considered—may be surprised to learn that in the 13th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1926) Sir E. K. Chambers said: "It is most improbable, however, that the apologetic reference in *Kind Harts Dreame* refers to Shakespeare." True, in *William Shakespeare: a Study of Facts and Problems* (1930) he receded from this position and advanced it as a possibility. As, however, he makes no allusion there to a previous opinion, nor to Chettle in the latest edition of the *E.B.*, perhaps the candour that crept into the article in 1926 he now seeks to cover for reasons best known to himself. At any rate, Chambers does not say Chettle mentioned Shakespeare. It is pleasing to find Dr. Tillyard writing that "the gap between 1580, when Shakespeare would have left school, and 1592 has been filled by legend." Some of us would add "and between 1592 and 1616." Also, it is gratifying to know that, in estimating dates, Dr. Tillyard has regard to "allusions within the plays to contemporary events or writings." Unhappily for Dr. Tillyard, this process is fatal to his "Shakespeare". "Only the strongest evidence can compromise the authenticity of any part of" the First Folio, because of the fathering of Heminge and Condell. Yet many scholars have felt that the two actors had been misinformed as to the authorship of *Titus Andronicus*, the *Henry VI* trilogy, and *Henry VIII*. Indeed, Dr. Tillyard, who almost entirely ignores the disintegrators and makes the barest reference to the possibilities of collaboration, is constrained to say: "Opinion differs on whether *Henry VIII*, included in the First Folio, is all Shakespeare." It would be more true to say that critical

opinion is near to unanimity that it is not. Strange that Shakspeare's two friends did not know all this!

The articles in *Everyman's Encyclopaedia* are all anonymous. The amazing statement is here made that Greene's pamphlet was a forgery. Who started this hare? The *Cambridge History of English Literature* says "autobiographical touches are unmistakable"; A. H. Bullen's article, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, says: "There is not the slightest ground for suspecting the authenticity of the tract." Chambers throws no doubt upon it, and Chettle's words ("To the Gentleman Readers") seem conclusive:

"It was ill-written, as sometimes Greene's hand was none of the best . . . I writ it over; and as neare as I could followed the copy; onely in that letter I put something out, but in the whole booke not a worde in; for I protest it was all Greene's not mine or Maister Nashe's, as some vainly have affirmed."

Oxfordians are indifferent to the suggestion of forgery. If it was such, how can it help the Stratford case? What could be the motive of the forger?

John Shakespeare, we are told, "lived in Henley Street in a house now much restored, known as the Birthplace." John owned several in that street but—on the authority of Mr. Levi Fox, Director of the "Birthplace Trust"—it is conjectural as to which he was occupying when his son William was born. "Everyman" has not gone very deeply into the matter. Here is "Everyman" on Chettle:

"The printer, who was also a hack writer, issued an apology by the end of the year in which he denied its authorship. The reference is important, as it indicates that Shakespeare was established as an actor and playwright, and able to do anything in the theatre."

The phrase "denied its authorship" is obscure. In view of the above quotation, it cannot be held that he denied the authorship to Greene. Presumably it means that some had ascribed it to Chettle.

The "1663 Folio," we are told, "included six plays that had been published during Shakespeare's lifetime bearing his name or initials though none was by him." Most strange! What a soft fellow this W. S. was, despite his dealings in stone, stockings, malt, and tithes! If Everyman publishes books, would he lie low and say nothing if his name was put on the title page of inferior work? It really does sound as if the author were dead. In 1663 too, Lady Bernard, a grand-daughter of Will of Stratford, was alive. It is regrettable that she took no pains to find what Grand-dad really wrote.

On the Sonnets, there is no reference to W. H. but only to T. T. Surely W. H. is the crucial person. This allusion is followed by the comment: "There are various explanations of the dedication, none satisfactory." Some of us think there is one very good explanation of the *unmentioned* dedication. William Hall—accepted by Sir Sidney Lee—lived in Hackney where de Vere died.

Referring to the Stratford monument: "the illustration in Sir William Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656) was undoubtedly inaccurate."

Yet it was repeated in two editions of Nicholas Rowe's *Shakespeare* (1709 and 1714), and went unchallenged for over sixty years. Furthermore, a recently published note of John Aubrey confirms Dugdale.

Referring to the pseudo-Shakespeares, as one orthodox gentleman has delightfully called them—what a boomerang epithet that!—we are told their supporters "rely mainly on the presupposition that a young man from Stratford-on-Avon who became an actor could not possibly have possessed the knowledge or intellect to enable him to write such marvellous works." Nothing of the kind. Everyman may be surprised to know that in the Editor's debate with John Brophy this point was not introduced. If there was ample evidence for authorship, doubts about education might be dispelled. The blank years—and here there is endorsement of Dr. Tillyard as to ignorance of Shakspeare's early life—might be filled in with self-education, although such a course would have called for more comment than now. William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby, is not mentioned. It is evident the writer here—as on the Stratford monument—has only that cursory knowledge of the controversy which is characteristic of those of the orthodox persuasion.

However, we like this: "There is dispute about the plays, especially about their chronology, as there is about everything else connected with Shakespeare." The revised edition of the Editor's *Encyclopaedia of London*, which will appear in May, has several references to De Vere as "Shakespeare," so one of Dent's Encyclopaedias will contradict the other!

Let the orthodox books and articles grow from more to more for less of reverence in us dwells—for their Shakespeare! So far are they from giving life to him, that they can be described as a mountain of mummy. For a few more weapons for the arsenal of us sceptics, Dr. Tillyard and *Everyman* must be thanked.

E. E. KELLETT

Since the last issue of the *News-Letter* readers may have read obituary notices of this prolific and able writer. Perhaps the best known of his many books were *A Short History of Religions*, *The Best I Remember*, and *Ex Libris*. Mr. Kellett had been Anti-Stratfordian for many years. In a letter to the Editor, dated 16th April, 1945, he wrote: "Like you I find myself growing more and more heretical. Shakespeare I have almost given up, not for Bacon but for De Vere." When a copy of the Fellowship pamphlet was sent to him, he intimated that his scepticism of the Stratford case had deepened.

MEETINGS

There was an unusually good attendance at the Annual General Meeting on 7th October, 1950, due to a mention of it in the *Listener* in the course of correspondence arising out of Mr. Giles Dawson's talk in the Third Programme. Amongst those who

listened to the Editor's animadversions thereon was Mr. Christmas Humphreys, who has joined the Fellowship and declares that he is 100 per cent. Anti-Stratfordian and 95 per cent. Pro-Oxford. A warm welcome was given to the new Secretary, Miss G. M. Bowen, and sincere thanks extended to the retiring Secretary, Mrs. Robins, who, with her sister, Miss H. Amphlett, has worked untiringly for the Fellowship. The other officers were re-elected and on the committee a new member is Col. John Russell.

On 4th November, Mr. Percy Allen gave a most interesting and informing address on "King Lear and Macbeth in relation to French history." A summary of part of his lecture appears elsewhere.

On 9th December, Mr. H. Cutner, defending Oxford, debated with Mr. C. W. Sykes, author of *Alias William Shakespeare*, the alias being Roger Manners, Earl of Rutland. The Fellowship were charmed by the pleasing manner in which what—to them—was an impossible case was presented. The honours were with Mr. Cutner, but it was agreed that Mr. Sykes had made a delightful contribution to a most interesting meeting.

On 6th January, 1951, Mr. Geoffrey Ashe, referred to in the last issue of the *News-Letter* as a new convert, lectured on "Some Doubts on the Oxford Theory." Some of these doubts were more present in his mind than those of the audience, but he presented his case well, and it was felt that in Mr. Ashe the Fellowship had a valuable recruit.

On 3rd February, Miss G. M. Bowen read an admirable paper on "The Date and Authorship of *The Tempest*." It is possible it will be published in full. If not, a summary will appear in the next issue of the *News-Letter*.

The following meetings were not under the auspices of the Fellowship.

On 27th November, before the Discussion Group of the Royal Empire Society, there was a tripartite debate, Mr. Percy Allen appearing for Oxford, Mr. A. P. Godfrey for Bacon; and Major C. Chamier for Shakspeare. Mr. Allen was in fine form and there is no doubt that, had the audience judged solely on the presentation of the case, he would have won. Mr. Godfrey did not make the most of his brief, and Major Chamier was feeble. Twice he attributed the anonymous *Return from Parnassus* to William Kempe, the dancing actor. In the result about 25 voted for Shakspeare; for Bacon and Oxford honours were about equal; eight or ten votes went to these rival candidates. As, however, the audience numbered about eighty, less than a third were prepared to support the orthodox case.

On 2nd February, Mr. T. L. Adamson addressed a gathering of students at the City Literary Institute. The meeting was a great success, and some present much impressed by the case for De Vere.

On Sunday, 11th February, the Editor debated with John Brophy, author of *A Gentleman of Stratford*, at Trinity College, under the auspices of the Cambridge Heretics. The audience consisted of about a hundred undergraduates. Mr. Brophy knew practically nothing of the subject. Even after the Editor's speech, he said we knew nothing of Oxford! All the questions which he could not answer were

"irrelevant" or "flying saucers." A vote was taken with the following result: For Oxford, 27; for Shakspeare, 24; for a third writer—not named—16; those who did not know were 14. So less than a third supported Stratford. Whilst the Stratfordians and their leader quickly dispersed, Oxfordians rallied round the Editor, looking at portraits, and buying pamphlets until expelled from the hall. The report in the *Varsity* was unfavourable to Mr. Brophy. The debate was referred to in *The News Chronicle* and *Daily Telegraph*. In the latter there was correspondence; two letters from Mr. Brophy and one from the Editor and Mr. Percy Allen. It was most valuable publicity for the Oxford case.

On 13th February the Editor was to have debated at Conway Hall with Mr. Archibald Robertson, M.A. The challenge was given in consequence of an article in the *Literary Guide*, the organ of the Rationalist Press Association, a part of which is quoted elsewhere. It revealed utter ignorance of the controversy, and it was not surprising that Mr. Robertson withdrew from the battle a few weeks before the date fixed. (He has declined any future date on the stock excuse of being too busy!) The Editor therefore gave a lecture on Edward de Vere as "Shakespeare," which was well received. Mr. H. Cutner presided.

The portrait of Anne Vavasor, probably the Dark Lady of the Sonnets, ascribed to Marcus Gheeraerts, is exhibited at the Tate Gallery.

"WAS SHAKESPEARE AN ESSEX MAN?"

By HILDA AMPHLETT

It was under the above provocative title that certain members of the Shakespeare Fellowship gave addresses at Earl's Colne on 13th September, 1950, hoping thus to arouse local interest in the Shakespeare-Oxford controversy.

Canon Monks, vicar of the handsome church at Earl's Colne, assisted greatly in preparing his pleasant drawing-room for the reception of the speakers and audience, and himself acted as chairman.

Mr. William Kent opened the talk by demolishing most effectively the ancient Stratfordian fortifications, and Miss Katherine Eggar surely and soundly built up the case for Edward de Vere.

Many members of the Fellowship travelled into Essex to support the speakers and discuss the problem with any who should prove interested. The attendance of local people was much smaller than had been hoped, but one convert was gained (complete with a year's subscription!)—and Mr. Hunt, the present owner of the modern "Earl's Colne Priory," where once stood the tombs of the de Vere family, kindly took visitors round his estate, shewing them an ancient plan of the old ecclesiastical building, and pointing out where were the remains of the foundations—all that is left of the Priory, save a small side gateway with figures over the pointed arch. The tombs are now removed to the charming little Saxon church of Bures.

In the evening of the same day the lectures were repeated at Lavenham, in Suffolk, where Mrs. Turner, President of the Women's Institute, had been most helpful in fixing arrangements for the talk to be held in the ancient Guildhall. Prebendary Page of Lavenham Church kindly acted as chairman, and gave a lucid and much needed outline of the de Vere family and its connection with Lavenham before the lecture began. The numbers present probably doubled those at Earl's Colne, possibly because, the title having been altered to "Was Shakespeare Lord of the Manor of Lavenham?" tickled the local pride in their history, or because, at the suggestion of Mrs. Turner, Mrs. Robins enlisted the assistance of the Town Crier to advertise that an event of importance was taking place at the Guildhall that evening.

The clanging bell and sonorous voice of the Crier—a local tradesman—could be heard at intervals from various points of the ancient, quiet town, and doors were opened and heads thrust out to listen—as had happened, on perhaps less happy occasions, from the days when the 16th Earl of Oxford, in conjunction with Thomas Spring, the rich clothier of Lavenham, built the lovely church on the hill (studding the architecture with terrestrial stars as emblems of his noble family), and the fine Guildhall, where, after three hundred years, Mr. Kent and Miss Eggar proclaimed to all that his son was more than an earl, more indeed than Lord of Lavenham Manor; he was the writer of the immortal plays and poems published under his nom-de-plume of "*William Shakespeare*."

A DEFENCE OF DR. HOTSON'S DATING OF SONNET 107

By G. W. PHILLIPS

The date of this sonnet is of crucial importance for our case, and therefore I regret that Mr. Atkinson, in the *News-Letter*, has dismissed Dr. Hotson's arguments as "quite unconvincing."

The *Times Literary Supplement*, on the contrary, ended a very fair review with these words: "But the gem of this collection . . . is the essay on the Sonnets, and of this it is perhaps most laudatory to say soberly that it is *well argued and convincing*, and that it may prove to be the most significant contribution to Shakespearean studies of recent years." (Italics mine.)

Here then we have two contradictory judgments; and which is the sounder I need not decide. For, whatever may be thought of Hotson's *arguments*, his *evidence* anyhow is unimpeachable and perfectly conclusive. As I cannot reproduce it all, I can only appeal to members of the Fellowship to study it themselves.

The reason why orthodox scholars have refused to assign this sonnet to 1588 is obvious. Holding firmly to the dogma that the Quarto order is correct, they are bound to admit that this sonnet is later than the end of the three years mentioned in S.104; and it follows that, if S.107 was written in 1588, S.1 cannot be put later than 1585. But they, no less than Mr.

Atkinson, can see that these sonnets were not written by a man of less than twenty-five; not because a young man cannot write sonnets, but because these contain abundant evidence that they were written by a much older man. So they date them anywhere between 1594 and 1604, i.e. between the thirtieth and fortieth years of Shakspeare's age, because they can never admit that the author was not Shakspeare.

Now Dr. Hotson has presented us with what is probably the most valuable gift ever offered us by an orthodox scholar; for, if it is proved that this sonnet is of 1588, it necessarily follows, as just shown, not only that it was *not* written by Shakspeare but also that it *was* written by de Vere, as will be seen later. I wonder, therefore, that it has had such a cool reception from the Fellowship.

As far as I know, Samuel Butler was the first of the orthodox to assign S.107 decisively to 1588. He was followed by Alfred Douglas. I also assigned it to that year in my book on the Sonnets. I gave some reasons; but Dr. Hotson has given more, which we may now consider. Too much attention has been concentrated on only one of his points—the mortal moon, to the neglect of others quite as important. It will be better to run through them, in the order in which they come in the sonnet.

- (1) "Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
Of the wide world, dreaming on things to
come . . ."

Clearly, both the poet himself, and the prophetic soul of the world, had been expecting something fearful, the fulfilment of some prophecy. There can be only one "soul of the wide world." The prophetic soul of ancient Greece would have been the oracle at Delphi; in Christendom, with which Shakespeare was concerned, it can only be that world-wide spiritual authority which on Mons Vaticanus (Vates—a prophet; vaticinus, etc.) the Mount of Prophecy, presides over Christendom. Whether you accept that explanation or not does not greatly matter; because Hotson has shown by abundant evidence that what the prophetic soul had been concerned with was "the menacing, long-prophesied Eighty-eight."

This "most notorious prophesie" was made in 1475, and known everywhere. It caused great alarm. We are, therefore, in these first lines, at that point in history where this menacing danger had just passed away.

- (2) "The mortal Moon hath her eclipse endur'd."

Scholars desiring to place this allusion as late as possible, for the reasons given above, attempt to refer it to the Queen's death, or give other explanations, even less probable. It cannot refer to her death, because (a) even if eclipse, by itself, could be loosely used to mean death (a use for which I can find no authority in any dictionary) it certainly cannot be so used when immediately connected with the moon; for then we have an *eclipse of the moon*, which is essentially temporary obscuration; (b) since the moon has *endured* her eclipse, she has quite unquestionably come out of it, and has not remained eclipsed.

Now Hotson has reproduced from contemporary sources both pictures of the Armada, in the shape of a crescent moon, and numerous quotations referring to this menacing "moon." He affirms rightly that "the mortal Moon" indicates the Armada, but denies (wrongly) that it meant the Queen. In this denial he differs from almost all scholars, including Prof. Tucker, who says in the Cambridge edition, "The one practically certain reference is of the mortal Moon to Elizabeth." But from Hotson's evidence it is perfectly clear that, to any contemporary, the mortal Moon would have indicated both the Armada, and the Queen. But it was the Queen, not the Armada, that had *endured* the eclipse. The Armada was not eclipsed, but destroyed. Moreover, a crescent moon cannot suffer eclipse.

An eclipse is caused by the shadow of one planet falling on another planet, i.e. by another celestial body of equal rank. We are therefore now at that point in history where the shadow of disaster cast upon Elizabeth by the existence of a rival Queen, Mary Stuart, who had bequeathed her right to the throne of England to Philip of Spain, had finally passed away.

(3) "And the sad augurs mock their own presage."

There are no augurs but Roman augurs. No other *augurs* exist. They were Roman priests who foretold the future.

The Roman priests (those horrible people!) and the "Romish holie League" had foretold victory for the Armada—else it would not have been sent—and destruction to Elizabeth. But now they are sad, and mock their own presage.

(4) "Incertainties now crown themselves assur'd."

Till the judicial murder of Mary Stuart, and the defeat of the Armada, Elizabeth, her ministers, and her supporters had been utterly insecure. But now she can fix her crown firmly and securely on her royal wig. Nor was there any other occasion during her whole reign of which this could be said.

(5) "And peace proclaims olives of endless age."

Hotson has shown that immense relief prevailed in England at the avoidance of war in *England*. Naturally, it had been expected that the invaders would land, and that there would be war here.

Also, it can be said that between Elizabeth and Mary there now was the peace of the grave, which can be called endless.

(6) "Now with the drops of this most balmy time."

Hotson appositely quotes Warner,

"*Elizabeth*, who with her English balme,
Then much the poysnous biting of that *Spanish*
aspe did calme."

And Dekker,

"The time! O blessed time! Balme to our sorrow!"

(7) "My love looks fresh, and death to me subscribes."

Those who subscribed the Bond of Association undertook to put to death anyone who plotted against the Queen, and anyone on whose behalf

they plotted. They therefore subscribed to Death but the poet says "Death subscribes to me, for I shall live in spite of him."

Reverting now to the eclipse, I must mention that Hotson tells us what the astronomers had said, namely: "in the selfsame yeere 88 . . . the Sunne shall be eclipsed the 16 day of *February* at the change; and shortly after, at the very next full, namely the second day of *March* there shall follow a Totall Eclipse of the Moone" and a second "vniuersall Eclipse of the Moon this 88 to befall the 26. day of August." Three eclipses in one year, two of them total! He does not say whether these eclipses in fact occurred, but that is of no importance. The point is that it is now shown that they had been predicted, and were expected; and would certainly be held to bode ill to the Queen. So it is all the more to the point to say that she has endured the eclipse predicted for her.

To this I add from Fugger, *News Letters*, II. 163, of June 23, 1588, "On two consecutive days the sun and moon have been quite bloody. What this signifies the merciful God alone knows." Thus there were "signs in the sun and in the moon, and upon the earth distress of nations," and many people must have thought the end of the world to be at hand.

Before Hotson's excellent essay appeared, I was myself positively and completely certain that this sonnet was written after the defeat of the Armada, but before the celebration of the victory in November; and that it was immediately followed by S.125 in which the poet says "I bore the canopy."

This positive certainty of mine was based upon a most minute and industrious study of the Sonnets, prolonged over many years; and I found myself able to repeat the whole series, as I had arranged it, without referring to the book. But, however great my own certainty may be, or however well founded, I cannot convey it to others, for two reasons: first, because I should have to get them to follow me through a long and rather complicated course of reasoning, which I have had no opportunity to present; and secondly, because they might not have the patience to follow it.

I was therefore delighted to see that Hotson had proved my conclusion about the date of this sonnet in a much simpler way, and by new evidence which seems to me entirely conclusive.

If his proof is accepted—and it certainly cannot be disposed of merely by dismissing his arguments as unconvincing, without one word about his evidence—then it will follow that the canopy referred to in S.125 can only be the canopy borne over the Queen in November. Thus we kill two birds with one stone; for we know that de Vere was one of the bearers of that canopy, and consequently was the author of the Sonnets, and the plays which are from the same hand; and we know that Shakspeare did not write these sonnets before he was twenty-five, nor is there the least probability that he bore that canopy.

I sincerely hope, therefore, that more attention will be paid to Dr. Hotson's book than it seems to have received, if one may judge by the comments on it in the *News-Letter*.

KING LEAR IN RELATION TO FRENCH HISTORY

By PERCY ALLEN

From the age of fifteen until the opening of the Second World War, I was a frequent visitor to France, and always a close student of French history, specialising upon the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I am therefore in a better position than many to perceive the close connection between French history and several of the best Shakespeare plays. Most readers of this article will be already aware that *Twelfth Night*, for example, dramatises the Elizabethan-Alençon marriage negotiations of the late 1570's, and that the *Hamlet* story comes directly from Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*. The French plot of *Love's Labours Lost* is known, and academically recognised, all the world over.

From an Oxfordian viewpoint, there is nothing improbable in all this. Contemporary happenings in France, whose Queen Mary had become Queen of Scotland, were a subject of profound interest at the court of Whitehall. Its most gifted courtier—ministers apart—Lord Oxford, had stayed in France, as guest of King Henry III at the Louvre palace; knew the French language intimately, and was altogether a "Frenchified" courtier. English literature and drama of the late sixteenth century teems with French subjects. Shakespeare's rival poet, George Chapman, devoted three of his best plays to Bussy D'Ambois and Marshall Biron. Marlowe wrote *The Massacre in Paris* (St. Bartholomew); and France and Italy, not England, were the then recognised centres of European culture.

The links between *King Lear* and French history were first brought to my attention by Miss Lilian Winstanley, in her valuable book, *Macbeth, King Lear, And Contemporary History* (1922), which showed me that Gaspar de Coligny, the French Huguenot leader, was certainly a part original of *Lear*. Knowing that the Colignys were a powerful Burgundian family, wielding almost kingly authority in their province; and knowing too that the Duke of Burgundy figured in the first act of *Lear*; and also that Oxford's favourite uncle, Arthur Golding, had translated Jean Hotman's *Life of Coligny* into English, I read, in the British Museum Reading Room, the original edition of 1566, and found that the first line of the book mentioned the Colignys as coming from "the province of Bresse in Burgundy." Other clues to *King Lear* were unmistakable; and I soon saw that the tragedy, in effect, dramatised poignantly the terrible civil wars of religion in France, with Regan-Goneril—a character duplicated with dramatic purpose—standing for Catherine de Medici (Regina), Queen-Mother of France, and the leader of the Catholic faction in the State. Edmund stands for the powerful Catholic Duke of Guise, Albany for Charles IX. King of France; and Cornwall for his successor on the throne, Henry III. who was strongly Catholic. The Huguenot party are represented in the play by Coligny (Lear), and Edgar, another Huguenot leader, Henry of Navarre, afterwards King Henry IV of France. The blinded Earl of Gloucester stands symbolically for France, blinded by wars and

miseries; and Kent, hovering in disguise, almost throughout the play, is the secret author of the tragedy, Edward de Vere, strongly sympathetic, as Protestant England was, towards the Huguenot party. Kent ciphers Vere in two simple Elizabethan ciphers.

A crucial point of evidence showing that *King Lear*, though nominally set in England, is based on the life of Gaspar de Coligny in relation to the French civil wars, is the storm on the heath, which, though in part a symbolic tempest in the play, is historically a violent storm which overtook Coligny and his company in 1568 when on their way to the castle of Tanlay, in north Burgundy. This castle I visited in May, 1932, and there was shown, on a vaulted ceiling, a painting of a large group, in the centre of which was Coligny as Neptune (he was Lord High Admiral of France), with long white hair and beard, precisely as Lear is traditionally made up on the stage; with Catherine de Medici (often called the "Man Woman") as a two-headed monster, beside him, and around them practically all the remaining figures which complete the cast of *King Lear*, including the Duke of Guise and Charles IX, the latter naked, to represent the nudity of France. Incidentally, the symbol of the precipice (Dover cliffs) down which blind Gloucester tries to throw himself, is a metaphor frequently used by contemporary theologians, when picturing the terrible dangers with which France was then beset.

Equally convincing are many other details in the tragedy. Lear's complaints against Goneril and Regan, concerning the repeated diminution of the number of his knights, are lifted, almost verbatim, from Coligny's similar protests to Catherine de Medici; and similarly the characters of, and the bitter quarrels between Charles IX (Albany) and Henry III (Cornwall), are described in the play with complete historical accuracy. Cordelia is a composite of Coligny's daughter, Louise, and Jeanne de Navarre, the militant mother of Henry IV of France.

I omit, for want of space, the complete proofs I possess, that the English author of *King Lear* was thoroughly familiar with Agrippa D'Aubigné's fine epic poem, *Les Tragiques*, written some half-century before, but not published until 1616, when it appeared anonymously. D'Aubigné was Ecuyer to Henry of Navarre; and it was probably he who gave to Oxford a MS copy of *Les Tragiques*, when the Earl met him, as no doubt he did, at the Louvre court in 1575. Will of Stratford was not familiar with the French language, and had never been to France. For full details I refer readers to my book, *Plays of Shakespeare and Chapman in Relation to French History* (1933).

GREENE'S GROATSWORTH OF WIT

The following is an extract from a letter from Dr. Abraham Feldman, of Pennsylvania, to whom reference was made in the previous issue.

DEAR FRIEND KENT.

Your letter was a happiness such as I rarely find

in these costermonger and worse-monger times. I hope that we can sustain correspondence long and merrily. Since I read your *London for Shakespeare Lovers* and the finest pamphlet in defence of the Oxford cause, I have wished to write to you. Less congenial business interfered.

About the *Groatsworth of Wit*: questions of chronology and authorship aside (my friend C. W. Barrell believes that Henry Chettle wrote it), the significance of the passage appears to me rather plain. The author urges three University poets to quit writing for the vulgar players, because the latter will abandon them in time of money distress, just as they have allegedly deserted Robert Greene. The poets are advised to pursue "higher" literary ideals than those of blank-verse plays. For a novice author has risen among the actors, who thinks he can drum out a decasyllabon as well as any of the three (Marlowe, Peele, and Nashe). And the novice is further described as a fellow with the heart of a tiger under his histrionic hide. Greene leaves no doubt as to what he means by "tigers heart"; he means the heart of a usurer. For he warns his three colleagues that they are not husbandmen, thrifty souls capable of competing with the upstart jack-of-all-theatrical-trades. This jack is identified by the unmistakable pun "Shakescene." He is William Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon. It is clear from the *Groatsworth* that Greene did not know Shakspeare except as an actor and a money-lender, contemptible in both professions. At the time of composition of the open letter to Marlowe, Peele and Nashe, the name of Shakespeare had apparently been freshly sounded in London theatrical circles as the author of heroic plays. Of course it was at once taken to mean the man from Stratford, a silent but amiable, shrewd yet obliging member of an unknown troop, probably Derby's. At least Greene took it so. Having been abandoned to misery by the players, he could not be expected to know better. He seems to have been abandoned by the playwrights too, except perhaps Nashe, who denounced the *Groatsworth* as "a scald, trivial, lying pamphlet."

In the spring of 1592 the name of Shakespeare was attached to heroic dramas, very likely those of the War-of-the-Roses cycle. There is definite evidence that only one man of the period thought it was William the maltster of Stratford who wrote them, the outcast Greene. What Marlowe, Peele and Nashe thought of it, they kept to themselves. But why should Greene have believed the usurer capable of a play like *Henry VI* (Part 1, 2, or 3)? My answer is, Greene was as wretched in dramatic criticism as he was in heroic verse. He looked on Shakespeare's chronicle tragedies as bombast and fustian, of the sort he had himself produced in attempts to profit by Christopher Marlowe's fashion. To Greene's ear, apparently, any poetry beyond the pastoral and medieval-romantic veins which he shone in was mere noise. His opinions of Marlowe's art and Shakespeare's are worthless. For an intelligent view of what the latter was doing in the early 1590's, we must turn to Spenser's "Colin Clout's Come Home Again."

If the pontiffs of the Stratford fetish had devoted a fraction of the heaps of paper they produced about

the *Groatsworth of Wit* to the question, what did Greene mean when he spoke of their Shakescene's tigerish heart? they would have been more amusing. A groat for your thoughts on this question, professors, a groat for your thoughts!

PROVINCIAL DIALECT IN SHAKSPERE'S DAY

By H. CUTNER

In all the innumerable books I have read on the Shakespeare problem, I cannot recollect one dealing with the kind of English that was spoken in Warwickshire in the sixteenth century. Obviously the people who could then read and write were mostly Londoners and University men, and their English was that spoken by the aristocratic classes. But if in spite of our own widespread education dialects persist as different as those spoken in the wilds of Cumberland and Cornwall, often extremely difficult for a Londoner to understand, what must it have been in Shakspeare's day?

In an old work, published early in the nineteenth century, called *The Graphic Illustrator*, I noticed an interesting article on the kind of English spoken in Somerset (and therefore very much like that in Warwickshire) in the eighteenth century. Here is a specimen (a farmer talking to his man) and Stratfordian scholars will no doubt be able to find plenty of reasons why their hero never spoke a dialect at all; but, as befits a genius, came into the world full-endowed with the English displayed in *Love's Labours Lost* and *Hamlet*:

Larence! why doos'n let I up? Oot let I up?
Naw, I be a sleapid, I can't let thee up eet.

Now, Larence! do let I up. There! bimeby maester'll come, an a'll beat I athin a ninch o' me life; do let I up!

Naw, I wunt.

Larence! I bag o'ee, do let I up! D'ye zee! tha sheep be all a breakin droo tha hadge into tha vive-an-twenty yacres; an Former Haggit'll goo ta La wi'n, an I sholl be a kill'd!

Naw, I wunt—'tis zaw whit: besides, I hant a had my nap out.

Larence! I da za, thee bist a bad un! Oot thee hire what I da za? Come now an let I scoose wi'. Lord a massy upon me! Larence, whys'n thee let I up?

Caz I wunt. What! muss'n I ha an hour like wither vawk ta ate my bird an cheeze? I do zu I wunt; an zaw 'tis niver-tha-near to keep on.

Maester tawl'd I, nif I war a good bway, a'd gee I iz awid wasket; an I'm shower, nif a da come an vine I here, an tha sheep a brawk into thy vive-an-twenty yacres, a'll vieng't awa vust! Larence, do ee, do ee let me up! Ool ee, do ee!

Naw. I tell ee I wunt.

There's one o' tha sheep 'pon is back in tha gripe, an a can't turn auver! I mis g'in ta tha

groun an g'out to'n, an git'n out. There's another in tha ditch! a'll be a buddled! There's a gird'l o' trouble wi' sheep! Larence; cass'n thee let I goo, I'll gee thee a ha penny nif oot let me.

Naw, a can't let thee goo eet.

There is a great deal more—even more incomprehensible, but the above gives one a fairly good idea of what the English language was like in Somerset and Warwickshire in mid-eighteenth century; and, in all probability, a good deal of almost the same dialect can still be found in the more remote country villages.

It is not an unfair question to ask, therefore, what must it have been in mid-sixteenth century? For it must have been the kind of English that Will Shakspeare heard all around him, and he could never have shed some of the "twang" for the rest of his life. In fact, it is doubtful whether London actors could really have been understood at Stratford—any more than some of our English films are properly understood in the Middle West of the United States.

Does anyone know for certain the kind of English that actually was spoken in Stratford-on-Avon, say about 1575?

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To The Editor, *Shakespeare Fellowship News Letter*.

24th November, 1950.

Dear Sir,

It is scarce fitting that a layman take up the cudgels against so brilliant a scholar as A. L. Rowse, the author of *The England of Elizabeth*. Prejudice of precursors and definite distortion of facts, cannot however be allowed to pass. The book itself is a scholarly work with a wide view, and little more need be said than that. When the author, on page 257, accuses the 17th Earl of Oxford as "a special case of foolery and irresponsibility, light-headed,—a fop, etc.," he is carrying the machinations of previous historians a little too far. If the learned writer will peruse with an open mind, the various letters of this brilliant young man, in the Cecil, Salisbury, Hatfield and other correspondence, he will be convinced, and I feel sure will immediately acknowledge, that the words of Camden, and the far more damaging words of the arch-enemies of Oxford, viz. Arundel and Howard, are not only suspect, but definitely evil, and "the evil that men do lives after them."

The enormous fine inflicted on the 13th Earl of Oxford by Henry VII, was perhaps the first step to the ruin of this wonderful family of the De Veres. The results of this were not to be seen until the death of the 16th Earl. Edward de Vere, a boy of 12, did not know of this until some years later. It was the policy of that old Polonius, Burghley, who had a marriageable daughter, once affianced to Sir Philip Sidney, and who knew of the Queen's growing interest in the lad, to keep this knowledge from him. There is a letter extant, showing that before going abroad in 1575, Oxford made a definite assignment with Burghley, and others, to sell his lands "in order to pay his just debts." Whilst overseas he sent similar letters. These letters deny absolutely

Camden's oft-quoted statement that "he squandered his patrimony." The intrigues at court, later horrible accusations of Howard and Arundel, and the rumours as to his wife which were spread through the court, and which, he unfortunately believed, made it impossible for an earl, who was proud of the honour "of his good name" to take other action, if he doubted the legitimacy of his wife's child. When this was cleared, he returned to her. Part of this was the undoubted policy of Burghley to get the enormous estates into his hands, not only to protect his daughter, but to increase his own prestige. "The De Veres," Mr. Rowse writes, "were never a rich family, and their lands were not extensive." They held Kensington, they had lands in Cambridge, Chester, Wiltshire, Cornwall, Suffolk, and elsewhere, to say nothing of the great Hedingham estate stretching over practically the whole of the north-east corner of Essex from Colchester to Dovercourt. As to his "living on the Queen's bounty," there is another side to this story, which cannot be told in a short letter to the Editor.

R. RIDGILL TROUT (Capt.).

Apart from the special case of the Bible, no other collection of writings known to the world of letters has led to so many doubts and difficulties as those commonly credited to Shakespeare.

ATHENAEUM

(30th October, 1915).

GEM OF MYTHOLOGY

I mean by my heresy the opinion that the Shakespeare plays . . . were written by Shakespeare of Stratford and not by Bacon, Oxford, or another.

Why "Heresy," you ask? I reply: because today, to pass muster with intellectuals, you must hold that the plays were written by well—anyone you like, provided it is not the "Stratford clown." So, as an obstinate Stratfordian, I am by modern intellectual standards a heretic and out of court.

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

(*Literary Guide*, February, 1950).

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