

The Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter

Saggittory

SEPTEMBER 1951

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NOTICES

The Annual General Meeting of the Shakespeare Fellowship will be held at the Poetry Society's Room, 33 Portman Square, on Saturday, 6th October, at 3 p.m. After the usual business, Mr. H. Cutner will read some little-known articles of Mr. Thomas Looney replying to his critics. Members are urged to attend.

The Committee of the Fellowship are now delighted to be able to announce that the Fellowship Library, containing most of the published works on the case for Edward de Vere, and many others of interest on the authorship question, is available for the use of members. Books may be borrowed on application to the Clerk to Mr. John Russell, 4, Brick Court, Temple, E.C.4. (Second Floor), Tel. Central 4870. Mr. Russell's Chambers are open for this purpose from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (excepting Saturday) during the Law Term, but hours vary during Vacations, and members will avoid the risk of a fruitless journey if they telephone before making a call.

The Fellowship are most grateful to Mr. John Russell, a member of the Committee, for this most acceptable accommodation.

The Honorary Secretary, Miss Gwynneth Bowen, under the title of *Shakespeare's Farewell*, has published her admirable paper on *The Tempest*, which was heard with such pleasure by the Fellowship. Copies can be obtained from her for a shilling, and it is hoped there will be a large sale.

EDITORIAL NOTES

MORE AND MORE LEAVES

Still they come—new books about Shakespeare. The authors write about him and about, and still, so far as enlightening us on the mystery is concerned, like old Omar, we come out at the same door wherein we went. One knows not whether to be more amazed at their capacity for credulity or their industry as copyists. The method is probably stereotyped by now. Of course, something must be said about the "Gentleman of Stratford," so there must be hasty consultation of Sir E. K. Chambers and perhaps the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Encyclopaedists—with the notable exception of those in France in the eighteenth century who were in unusual circumstances—are cautious and conservative. The contributors are encouraged to plough ancient furrows and the editor to blue pencil any diversion from professorial tracks.

These considerations will not trouble the writers on Shakespeare, even though Sir E. K. Chambers, invited to point out any passages in his voluminous and erudite works showing that William Shakspeare wrote the plays, failed to respond.

Mr. H. Cutner, elsewhere in this issue, ably reviews *Shakespeare of London* by Marchette Chute. The lady follows the usual pattern. "His contemporaries called him 'gentle Shakespeare,' and he deserved the title." Perhaps not in Stratford-on-Avon, where he figured as a plaintiff and a purveyor. He seems to have left his gentility behind in London! Once again we get Greene and Chettle—the convenient reference for the excellent character of the gentle one! The credulity of Miss Chute is revealed in the following passage:

"Drayton and Chapman had no special incentive to do good work for Henslowe. They wrote plays for him only because they needed the money, and there was no pride in the work or any liberty of action. Their position was exactly the reverse of Shakespeare's, who wrote his plays under no financial pressure at all and had complete freedom in his choice of materials. As the enormous variety of his plays shows, he was never under any obligation, if he had a success, to follow it with another play of the same kind. He could range where he wished, experiment as he pleased."

Just the liberty one would expect in a concealed aristocratic writer, but rather surprising if permitted to the Stratford actor. Moreover—like all the other orthodox writers—Miss Chute does not discern that the more of a *rara avis* she makes the Stratford bird, the greater the difficulty in explaining the way in which it escaped notice. There was much admiration, but *no amazement*. Matthew Arnold, in his poem in commemoration of the tercentenary of Shakspeare's death, referred to our immortal bard as "like a strange bird"; which came

"Into man's poesy, we know not whence."

The strangeness was not apparent to his contemporaries. "Shakespeare's company did him one further service as a playwright . . . They kept the original text of all his plays intact." How comes it then that there has been so much discussion about emendations and obscure passages; how did they mistakenly include the whole of *Titus Andronicus* as their friend's work? He must have been an elusive fellow to deceive them in that way. There are more groundless assumptions. We are told Shakspeare learned French in London. It is more interesting to be informed that he would not have been taught geography at Stratford. Miss

Chute does not explain how notwithstanding he knew so much about Italy. "The actors were made increasingly welcome at Stratford, and soon they were coming at the rate of two companies a year." Of course, there is no explanation of why Shakspeare never took his company there.

Some concessions are made to criticism. On the handwriting, Miss Chute dissents from the opinion of Prof. Sisson.

"But the earliest known specimen of Shakespeare's writing dates from the 11th of May 1612, and is only the abbreviated scrawl of his signature. Only four other examples of his signature are extant, and the three on his will do not even look like the writing of the same man."

Here is another remarkable passage:

"As the position of the Shakespeares became increasingly dignified in Stratford, it is likely that most people managed to forget that the head of the family was an actor. He did not act in Stratford. He was William Shakespeare, gentleman, and the way he was making his money in London could be conveniently forgotten."

Surely he had made his money writing immortal dramas? Would Stratford be ashamed of that? This resembles the remarkable passage in Dr. G. M. Trevelyan's *Social History*, in which he wrote as if in his native town Shakspeare was no more than a tradesman. As an actor he was unique; he never wanted admiration in his birthplace although, as Dr. Johnson remarked, it is natural to desire fame there. His neighbours would, at any rate, know how he pronounced his name, and Richard Quiney addressed him in a letter as "Mr. Wm. Shackspeare," not "William Shakespeare," as Miss Chute wrongly says.

There is a strange inconsistency. On p. 250 the reader is informed: "The truth of the matter was that most of the writers of the period were too close to Shakespeare to recognise his greatness"; yet on p. 285 we get this: "By the time King James came to the throne, the publishers openly coveted the name of Shakespeare on their title-pages, since, as the publisher of the unauthorised quarto of *Othello* remarked, 'The author's name is sufficient to vent his work.'" There follows a reference to the spurious plays, such as *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, and a bouquet is offered to Heminge and Condell for bringing "order out of chaos" and producing "a collection of the plays that could be trusted." The professors do not trust it, as already shown. Moreover, one would have thought Messrs. H. and C. might have expressed surprise that their friend should have made confusion more confounded by making no protest about these poor works beautified with the feathers of his great name. He was indeed "the casual Titan," as Miss Chute happily calls him.

Stereotyped, as in other matters, Miss Chute is so in touching on authorship problems. In the cavalier way of the credulous Stratfordian, one slash is enough to dispose of all the sceptics.

"Respect for the literary value of noble birth is impressive in its unanimity but a little hard to explain logically, since the most learned of Elizabethan dramatists was a bricklayer, and the most poetic next to Shakespeare, was the son of a cobbler." So we sceptics, who may regard ourselves as centipedes, really stand on one leg, off which we can easily be knocked at one stroke from a lady. Well, well! What ignoramus on the authorship question such writers proclaim themselves to be. There is not a single answer to any of the twenty questions, which the Editor of the *News-Letter* has put to many of the orthodox contained in Miss Chute's book.

It was interesting to read the reactions of Ivor Brown. This wobbler reviewed it twice—in the *Observer* and the now defunct *Public Opinion*. It was too bad of the editors of those papers to enlist him. It was like asking one soap-manufacturer to assess the quality of another soap. The simile is appropriate: as both Mr. Brown in his book and Miss Chute in her's were bent on soft-soaping the Stratford Shakespeare. Perhaps, however, Ivor Brown did not win the plaudits of Prof. Wilson Knight, who wrote of the lady's effort: "This is an excellent book and surely the best of its kind that has appeared in our generation. . . . It succeeds in making the skeleton of Shakespeare's outward story an embodied reality." So, to Ivor Brown, it was a superfluous work. "We have a figure no more illuminating than the Droeshout engraving or the dreadful head in Stratford Church which has been likened to that of a successful pork-butcher . . . Miss Chute marshals much that will be useful: to the lover of Shakespeare she has nothing new to say." Some may think that this criticism will recoil upon the critic. There is certainly more freshness in Miss Chute's book than in Ivor Brown's, although—here perhaps more credit goes to him—she has much to learn about the Shakespeare problem.

A second book is *In the Steps of Shakespeare*, by Russell Thorndike (Rich & Cowan, 12/6). It has been little noticed in the press. Its objective is topographical, but as there is little topography in the Shakespeare plays, the author's method is to go round England, mentioning the various scenes, and then giving an uninspired comment upon them. The opening paragraphs are intriguing:

"William Shakespeare is without question the most mysterious star in the heavens of the great.

The private and public lives of the few god-like beings who approach his magnitude are recorded in full detail, and therefore not mysterious, whereas very little is known actually about our National Poet. A few legal statements concerning him are all that can be vouched for by the ultra-critical. We actually know more of the father's history than the son's . . ."

Ashley Thorndike (the italics here and later are his) then mentions the Bacon and Oxford cults, and comments: "But so long as Shakespeare exists between covers, and is seen upon the stage, does it matter very much who he was?" This burst

of candour is of brief duration. For the remainder of the book the author remains the good Stratford boy, earning high marks if some deduction must be made for the piece of naughtiness with which he commenced his essay.

It would be impossible to give him a high mark for his London topography, and it is surprising to find the author referring as still existent to a stained glass window in Southwark Cathedral which was destroyed by bombs ten years ago. Of course, when the reader comes to Chapter 12—"The Scenes that are laid in Warwickshire"—he will be full of expectation.

"There are three localities used as scenes in this county, although it gave the poet more inspiration than any other county. The Forest of Arden, and the woods near Athens are in spirit Shakespeare's home woods."

Ashley Thorndike has fought his doubts and gathered strength—from Stratford. There is no comment on the absence of any scene in Stratford or on the banks of the Avon. Here he differs from Miss Chute, who could not contemplate young Will being allowed to play truant from Stratford Grammar School to visit Kenilworth in 1575. Not so Mr. Thorndike: "Since Stratford-on-Avon is only some twelve miles from Kenilworth, we may be sure that somehow he managed to get over there to witness the pageants and plays which, in honour of the royal guest, were open to the countryside." The author naïvely accepts Aubrey's story about killing calves "in a high style" with oratorical accompaniment. Referring to some of the tributes to Shakespeare, Ashley Thorndike says:

"*Honest. Open and free nature. Excellent phantasy.* How could he then have been such a charlatan as to be praised for work he did not do? Had he been of such a nature, would such tributes have been spoken of him by discerning men?"

It would puzzle this writer to show that William Shakspeare ever was praised for literary work or that "discerning men" knew of it. It is remarkable that the meticulous tracers of his steps like Leslie Hotson never find him writing or associated with writers. Ashley Thorndike refers to "*Gentle Shakespeare*," yet be it noted, writing of Macbeth, he says: "A lot of controversy has arisen as to whether Cawdor was guilty by reason of Macbeth alluding to him as "*a prosperous gentleman*," but surely the word *gentleman* can be taken in the sense of *nobleman*." Ashley Thorndike refers to the fact that "Professor Raleigh . . . has wisely pointed out that Shakespeare has 'an unerringly sure touch with the character of his high-born ladies,' and it is good to think that he learnt this from the gentle refinement of his mother." It may be good, i.e., emotionally satisfying to think thus, but nothing whatever is known of the character of Mrs. Shakspeare. Ashley Thorndike aptly quotes Dr. Johnson: "It is more from carelessness about truth than from intentional lying that there is so

much falseness in the world." This should be marked and inwardly digested by a writer like this who wants his readers to believe he is so impartial he does not really care who wrote the plays, yet can harbour any sort of speculation that favours the author coming from Stratford.

Another book may be mentioned which, not primarily concerned with Shakespeare, introduces Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford. *The England of Elizabeth*, by A. L. Rowse, Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford (Macmillan, 25s.), is of a much higher calibre than the two books already mentioned. It is a learned work, showing the deepest research, and will be regarded for a long time as authoritative. It is for this reason the more regrettable that the author should display such prejudice towards those who proscribe the Stratfordian faith regarding Shakespeare. To stigmatise them as lunatic is childish; it resembles the "silly fool" which one boy will call another. Probably it derives from ignorance, for Mr. Rowse's flair is evidently for history rather than literature, and he does not display any awareness that he comprehends the Shakespeare problem or has been behind the literary scene of the Elizabethan era. Nobody would say anything could be beyond his depth, but it may well be without the scope of his interests. He has not a good word to say for the man some of us think was the real "Shakespeare." Of him he writes: "He spent his entire patrimony and lived humiliatingly on a pension at the Queen's hand." Mr. Rowse apparently does not discern any inconsistency in recording that the Queen was enamoured of the young earl, and that there were "love letters" between them. Yet his estimate of Gloriana is a very high one and the reader is asked to believe she was entranced by an utterly worthless fellow. Further, for his fact-tendentiously selected—Mr. Rowse is indebted to Capt. B. M. Ward's biography. Does he know he was of the lunatic order, being a strong champion of the theory that the spendthrift earl was Shakespeare? It is dangerous to impugn the sanity of your own witness! Surely too it must try the credulity of many readers to believe that the thousand pounds a year that the usually parsimonious Queen paid was only to clear his debts. There is a splenetic sound about this censure—caused probably by the unconcealed irritation that there are Shakespeare sceptics about, and that their searching questions cannot be answered. In our last issue there was published a cogent letter from Capt. R. Ridgill Trout with reference to Mr. Rowse's book in which he has shown that the learned author had no judicial impartiality in this matter.

The latest book on Shakespeare is in Hutchinson's University Library. The author is G. I. Duthie, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt., Molson Professor of English, McGill University. This professor does not attempt a biography. A wise man indeed. Danger lies that way! It is significant that in the bibliography Sir Sidney Lee does not appear. Perhaps he has concluded, with Sir Henry Jackson,

Rowse

Vice-Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, that "the case in favour of the Stratford player has suffered a good deal from the advocacy of Sidney Lee" and regards his famous *Life of Shakespeare* as "twisted by a master artificer into the cunning semblance of a biography," as wrote a reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement*.

PROGRESS IN THE PRESS

This recalls a remarkable passage in the *Times Literary Supplement*, opening a review of Marchette Chute's book:

"It is in keeping with the extraordinary quality of Shakespeare's genius that our knowledge of his life is fragmentary and that in the last resort it is not possible to prove with scientific certainty that Shakespeare of Stratford was the author of the plays. Scholarship, however, cannot reconcile itself to our exasperating ignorance and so long as men rejoice in the products of Shakespeare's genius they will not cease from the mental fight to elucidate the mystery of his existence."

This is a welcome admission, but correspondence from Shakespeare sceptics is still tabooed. The letter of Capt. Ridgill Trout, referred to above, was declined by the Editor.

Far more hospitable is Collin Brooks, Editor of *Truth*, which we want on our side, as Mr. Christmas Humphreys said at the dinner. On 27th April, in that old and admirable periodical, Mr. John Brophy had an article entitled "The Personality of Shakespeare," in which reference was made to the Oxford theory and "a friendly brush with Mr. Kent at Cambridge." A correspondence which ensued was continued until July. In addition to the Editor of the *News-Letter*, a new and enthusiastic member, Mrs. Kathleen Le Riche, contributed two letters. As a result of this correspondence, the Editor of the *News-Letter* challenged Mr. Brophy to a return match and he has accepted. The debate will take place at the City Literary Institute, Stukeley Street, Drury Lane, on Saturday, 13th October, at 3 p.m., when the chair will be taken by the Principal, Mr. A. C. V. White, V.C., B.A.

Further, as a result of a telephonic interview with the Editor of the *News-Letter*, paragraphs appeared in the *Daily Mail* of 25th June. This press representative professed himself as much impressed by the Oxford case. It was said to be "formidable," and quotations from the sonnets were given, with the suggestion that they applied to Anne Vavasour.

There has also been a correspondence in the *Kentish Times* arising out of a review of the new edition of the Editor's *Encyclopaedia of London*. The former's editor represented the book as presenting the orthodox "Shakespeare." A letter from its Editor, pointing out several allusions to de Vere, brought a reply in the form of a leading article. A second letter provoked a second leading article.

When a debate was suggested the Editor of the *Kentish Times* concluded. He intimated that he was not prepared to lay his head upon the block!

STILL BUSY!

A well-known series of books is Hale's on the counties of England. They are poorly edited, and some inaccurately written. In the volume on South London there are about 180 factual errors! It was not surprising therefore to find much ignorance revealed in the volume on Warwickshire by Alan Burgess. Here is what he wrote:

"Poor Shakespeare. Has anyone been more criticised or attacked or reviled than great William? . . . There is an Oxford movement which allots the authorship to Edward de Vere, seventh Earl of Oxford, and another which divides the quarry between Bacon, Marlowe, the Earl of Rutland, the Earl of Oxford, the Countess of Pembroke, and Sir Walter Raleigh. In all these efforts to discredit Shakespeare the fundamental endeavour seems to be the desire to raise the social status of the author and endow him with an education and background far in advance of any that Stratford-on-Avon and its grammar school can provide and, if possible, to add as an extra appendage an aristocratic title. All of the exquisite gentlemen for whom authorship is claimed were born with the requisite silver spoon in their mouths."

In another passage the readers are informed that "Joseph C. Hart came out with a broadside of Bacon propaganda in a book entitled with a certain mystical aloofness *The Romance of Yachting*. The cult was now properly under way! "Further: "To-day Baconians possess a valuable Tudor house at Islington as headquarters."

What a conglomeration of error is here! (1) The Anti-Stratfordian case does not compel denigration of Shakespeare, as neither Mr. Burgess nor anybody else can show that he ever claimed the plays as his. (2) There is no mention of Bacon in Hart's book. One can only assume that Mr. Burgess has not seen it. It did not set the Bacon cult on its way. This was done by Delia Bacon in her book *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded* (1857). (3) The Bacon Society has never owned Canonbury Tower. Mr. Burgess evidently did not even know its name. Is it likely that it would own this historic mansion—the country seat of the canons of St. Bartholomew's Smithfield? It has not occupied it for about twelve years. (4) In writing about silver spoons, he has forgotten that Marlowe was the son of a shoemaker, and Raleigh of a country gentleman. Nobody has suggested so large a group as he envisages. Apparently he has heard of—probably not read—Prof. Gilbert Slater's *Seven Shakespeares*, and is guessing at the contents in an effort to guy it, as Ivor Brown did. (5) Edward de Vere was the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford.

When invited to debate on the subject Mr. Burgess was too busy! Will anybody call for parliamentary intervention to limit the hours of work of Stratfordian protagonists? What lazy wretches we Oxfordians are in comparison!

DR. J. R. MEZ

The Shakespeare Fellowship were delighted to meet Dr. J. R. Mez. At our April meeting he gave the longest address ever in the history of the Fellowship, but length did not weary, nor did his wit decline. His enthusiasm, his eloquence, his gusto, held the audience, as he recounted his experiences in writing, lecturing and broadcasting in Switzerland on the Oxford theory. At the dinner, not satisfied with the contemplated toast to the "Immortal Memory," he delivered a lecture with illustrations, in one of the rooms of the Junior Carlton Club, during the interval. We all look forward to seeing him again.

STANDS STRATFORD WHERE IT DID?

The following remarkable paragraphs appeared in the *Evening Standard* in June, 1951:

"It is a gloomy Festival year for Stratford-on-Avon. This of all towns, after London, might expect to reap the finest tourist harvest from the lavish Festival of Britain publicity abroad. But visitors are far fewer than last year.

Nine out of ten of the small hostels and boarding houses are having a poor season.

Even at the Shakespeare, biggest hotel in the town, pressure is less than last year. Many Americans and other overseas visitors have cancelled their bookings at short notice. Last year the manager could let a cancelled booking at five minutes' notice. This summer rooms have been left empty.

Many people now go by coach or car to Stratford to go to the theatre only. Fewer are staying in the town.

The five Shakespeare show-places, including the birthplace and Ann Hathaway's cottage, are administered by a Trust. They report that from April to the end of June nearly 40 per cent. fewer Americans visited the birthplace.

Last year the birthplace was visited by 156,000 people. The total will not reach 100,000 this year, unless there is an improvement soon."

Can it be that scepticism is creeping in? Blasphemies against the god of Stratford have been heard even in motor coaches *en route* for the shrine.

OPEN FORUM

This is the title of a new bi-monthly magazine, the first issue of which is dated July-August, 1951. It begins its title by a discussion of the Shakespeare question, the subject being treated by Mr. Percy Allen, for the Earl of Oxford, and Mr. R. L. Eagle, for Bacon. No better champions of their respective causes could have been chosen. Mr. Allen put the

case for de Vere very well, whilst Mr. Eagle, as usual, showed himself as the most rational of the prominent espousers of the cause of the great Lord Chancellor. The price of the magazine is 1/6, and it can be obtained at 27 Old Bond Street, W.1.

THE SHAKESPEARE TRIAL

The following is a report from the *South London Observer* of 19th April, 1951:

"LIBRARIAN SHOUTED DOWN IN SHAKESPEARE DEBATE

Camberwell's chief librarian, Mr. W. J. A. Hahn, was unceremoniously shouted down at St. Mark's Hall, Cobourg Road, Camberwell, on Saturday night. As judge in a 'Who wrote Shakespeare's plays?' trial he was giving his summing up. By the odd vote in 33 the audience decided that Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, wrote the plays.

For once Mr. William Margrie was battling on the side of orthodoxy, while Mr. W. Kent championed the theory that Oxford wrote the plays.

When Mr. Hahn opened his summary he said that the trial was a battle of Wills—Will Shakespeare, William Margrie and William Kent. What he didn't tell the jury was that he was a William too.

Reading from a long carefully prepared screed, 'His Honour' gave a resume of the Bard's early career.

The Oxfordites suddenly let rip.

'Is this a summing-up, your honour?' asked one. 'You should jolly well be ashamed of yourself,' cried one of Mr. Kent's henchmen.

'Don't talk such stupid nonsense,' bellowed another. And 'You've been deaf, your honour,' was a further contribution.

Then the reedy voice of Shakespeare's advocate Mr. Margrie, was heard. 'I agree with every word you've said, your honour,' he stated.

Mr. Hahn stuck to his guns about the necessity of providing a 'background,' but apologised for putting over any matter which might be prejudicial to Mr. Kent's case.

The Clerk of the Court, Mr. John Russell, a barrister, then took the count. He first announced the result as a tie, but was soon corrected."

It should be added that none of the interrupters mentioned were members of the Shakespeare Fellowship. They all belonged to the London Explorers' Club, of which Mr. William Margrie, is President. The trial was under its auspices. Another member had interrupted in favour of the latter, before the summing-up commenced. The Judge certainly had a most extraordinary idea of what a summing-up should be, and could be excused only on the assumption that he had never heard one. Furthermore, the "summing up," part of which was left unread, had been written out beforehand, and, instead of a weighing of evidence,

it was a declaration of the Judge's own opinions. A number of members of the Shakespeare Fellowship attended, but were about equalled by the members of the L.E.C. The majority would have been two, had Mr. Russell been able to exercise his vote. Moreover, one member of the L.E.C. confessed to Mr. Kent his inability to follow his leader; he had been reduced to agnosticism.

HALL'S CHRONICLE AND SHAKESPEARE

In view of the resurrection of this subject in the press in the spring of 1951, due to a television of the book, the following is worth reproducing:

"Nine years ago we knew that Alan Keen had discovered a copy of Hall's *Chronicle* with numerous marginalia believed to have some connexion with Shakespeare's second historical tetralogy. Now Moray McLaren has produced a book ('By Me . . .', a report upon the apparent discovery of some working notes of William Shakespeare in a sixteenth-century book: John Redington, 1949), in which the marginalia are claimed to be in Shakespeare's hand. He usefully gives an appendix in which the notes relating to the subject-matter of *Richard II* are set out, along with the passages from Hall that they annotate and the corresponding lines from the play. It might indeed have been better at this stage to have devoted the book to a reproduction of all the 406 notes: a basis for judgement would have been more securely provided in this way than by McLaren's rather impulsive pleadings. Space is given, for example, to the arguments that the annotator was 'poetically minded' because he writes the words 'Prisoners pitifully slayne,' and that he was not unfamiliar with the theatre because, like the author of *Thomas of Woodstock*, he used the name 'Woodstock' for Gloucester. Certainly there are interesting points of contact between some of the marginalia and passages in Shakespeare; there is, too, the sketch of a large-nosed face against Hall's account of the soldier hanged for stealing the pyx; but many other parallels adduced by McLaren are altogether nugatory. Nor is it helpful to read that, if Shakespeare was a schoolmaster, he would have had to use Hall as a text-book for the teaching of English history. Nowhere is it sufficiently recognised that the marginalia could be the work of a man who enjoyed annotation for its own sake, and perhaps of one who had already seen or read the relevant Shakespeare plays. But no decision can be reached until the annotations as a whole have been given to the public."

From *Shakespeare Survey: 2, Shakespeare's Life and Times*, reviewed by Clifford Leech.

SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP DINNER

Another successful annual dinner was held at the Junior Carlton Club on Monday, 23rd April. This venue was obtained through the good offices of Mr. John Russell, a member of that club. It

was also through Mr. Russell, who presided, that a boar's head, skilfully made in ice by the chef, was wheeled round the dining room.

Dr. J. R. Mez proposed the immortal memory of Shakespeare. He expressed his gratitude for the privilege of finding himself the first representative of the Oxford thesis from the Continent, one which he had broadcast over the Swiss National Broadcast in 1950. This group, he considered, was the vanguard of one of the finest movements in literary history, united by the idealistic motive of the quest for Truth, "to discover Truth (Verum)" wherever it may be hidden. "I felt attracted like a moth to the light," he said, "when I came all the way from Lugano to address this banquet, which has been called to honour the memory of one of the greatest men in literary history, a man whose works have become the common property of all mankind."

"I wish I were Cicero or Demosthenes in order to command eloquence sufficient to do justice to the greatness of the task we are engaged in: the members of this Fellowship are the pioneers in one of the most fascinating discoveries in literary history, made by John Thomas Looney. 'If anybody should feel inclined to smile at his work, I warn him not to do so,' exclaimed Bruno Basso, a well-known reviewer of the *New York World*. One may ridicule his name, or ignore his book, but nobody has so far refuted it.

"It may take years before the Stratford myth will be dispelled, but the day is sure to come when the convictions of those assembled here to-night will be the common property of the educated world. We pay our respects to-day not only to Mr. Looney, but also to all those gallant thinkers and writers, like Sir George Greenwood, Frank Harris, Canon H. G. Rendall and the numerous other authors who have helped to throw a new light on the identification of the great poet.

"For generations we have been led to accept the notion that a simple man from a small community, with scarcely any education, with no contact with court life, with no knowledge of jurisprudence, no foreign travel, by the sheer force of intuition and genius could have produced the greatest dramas and poems of the world's literature. But genius can never teach a man history or geography or foreign languages or the laws of poetry. Genius can only be introspective, but never retrospective.

"One after another of the famous biographers of Shakespeare from Rowe to Lee, Ivor Brown and others, have submitted to the unthinking and glib masses artifices and inventions born of their imagination, and instead of critically reading and thinking, instead of proudly exclaiming like Julius Caesar, 'I came, I saw, I conquered!' these learned university authorities have had nothing to tell us about Shakespeare's life history than the meek and humble phrase: 'I came, I saw, and I concurred!'

"So far, the uncavalierly Looney and we have not been successful: we have been merely right, we feel. And we shall see to it that our labours will not be 'Love's labour lost.'

"For we know to-day that Edward de Vere's personality has been artificially clouded and hidden behind a veil, but the evidence on which our case rests, regarding the true identity of the man Shakespeare, is more firmly established than those not to admit who prefer to ignore it: we have the testimony of contemporaries that he was the 'greatest for comedies' in his days; we have his admission that he wrote under an assumed name, in his Sonnets—those immortal poems which refresh and breathe the life of an aristocrat, of the Court, of the authority that tied his tongue, that speak of coats-of-arms and monuments to royalty,—now on earth could a man from Stratford excite him "Wer't ought to me I bore the canopy"; we refer to hundreds of coincidences of his writings with his biography, we now can marry the poet's life to his works, and, last not least, we have the proofs that practically all known "Shakespeare" portraits originally depicted another man: Edward de Vere. We know that the poet had sojourned in Italy, and how he personally had been impressed by Italian art, or by the golden moonlight, the blue waters and the gondolas of the Canal Grande of Venice, and we know that he had studied English Law at Gray's Inn—a hundred of details completely out of reach for a citizen of Stratford in those days.

"It would almost be like breaking faith to the poet's memory if we continued to abandon the past to the darkness of tradition. Four centuries have passed since he was born, and to this day he fills us with his all-embracing knowledge, the intensity of his passion and suffering, his perfection and philosophy with boundless admiration.

"Thus we cannot be satisfied until we have done justice to this great Englishman by solving the mystery of his life and existence. For he himself implores us, from fear that he might remain obscured to future generations, through the mouth of dying Hamlet: 'Oh good, Horatio, what a wounded name, things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!'

"Here then goes my toast to the immortal memory of the great friend of the Muses, the poet-artist among all poets, the philosopher and historian, the musician and scholar, a great Queen's friend and advisor, the foremost dramatist of his age, the outstanding man of the Renaissance in England: Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford!"

Mr. Edmund Blunden, who proposed the toast of the Shakespeare Fellowship, according to the *Daily Telegraph*, sat on the fence for half an hour. This was truly said, but he was not invited as a convert but as an open-minded man. This he revealed himself as being, and it has been confirmed in a subsequent letter to the Editor of the *News-Letter*. Unlike the Baconians, in having as guest this distinguished poet and prose-writer, we did not have a man who knew nothing of our case and had to look it up. The toast, proposed by Mr. Blunden, was replied to by Mr. William Kent. Capital speeches were made by Mr. Christmas

Humphreys, in proposing the toast of the guests, and by Sir Charles Petrie, in replying.

The thanks of the Fellowship are due particularly to Mr. John Russell, Mrs. Robins, Miss Amphlett, and Mr. and Mrs. Adamson for various services rendered.

SHAKESPEARE OF LONDON

By H. CUTNER

In the second edition of Charles Knight's *William Shakspeare, A Biography*, published in 1851, he quotes again the opinion of George Steevens—"All that is known with any degree of certainty concerning Shakspeare is, that he was born at Stratford-on-Avon—married, and had children there—went to London, where he commenced actor, and wrote poems and plays—returned to Stratford, made his will, died, and was buried." Knight thought this an exaggeration, for he felt that we do know more concerning Shakspeare than we know of most of his contemporaries of the same class; and on the strength of this (which was really not very much) he proceeded to write his biography, filling about 330 pages of most interesting and valuable information about almost everything except Shakspeare. Like so many of the bard's biographers, Knight was evidently quite bewildered at some of the things he found out—for example, he was not at all sure that *Venus and Adonis* was the work of a young poet; if it was, it must have been worked up, for it required long and habitual practice to attain such mechanical facility in versification.

Like Knight's, in some ways pioneer work, one feels that Miss Marchette Chute, in *Shakespeare of London*, is full of very interesting matter on London and its actors and theatres in the reign of Elizabeth with a little about Shakespeare (Knight always spells it Shakspeare) thrown in because she had to. She appears to have read widely—or at least glanced at—many books on Shakespeare she found in the New York Public Library, and she gives a formidable bibliography. Most of these books on Shakespeare, when it came to accounting for the plays and their authorship, merely copied from each other; for if there is one thing which cannot be controverted it is that we simply do not know how, whether, or in what circumstances, Shakspeare of Stratford ever wrote a play. All we can say for certainty is that the best portions of most of the plays contain internal evidence of having been written by one man—but who that man was *with absolute certainty* we do not know. And there is nothing whatever in Miss Chute's book to tell us.

She claims that Shakespeare was a great actor, constantly employed as an actor, and making his fortune that way and that way alone. His plays were produced because his company wanted plays, and they were thrown off quite easily, no one being in the least surprised—not even the author himself. He made very little money out of them.

He had a magnificent speaking voice—probably shedding his Warwickshire accent in a day or so!

—and, to learn the ruthless technique of fencing, he had to go through long gruelling hours of work. (In between bouts, no doubt Shakespeare would add scenes to *Love's Labour is Lost* or *Hamlet*.) As a matter of fact, a busy actor like Shakespeare did not have much time to write plays, which accounts for the fact that he only churned out a mere 37 instead of managing 220 like Thomas Heywood. Of course, in his late twenties, Shakespeare was not yet ready to write *Hamlet*, which neatly disposes of Prof. Cairncross who insists that *Hamlet* was written when Shakespeare was twenty-four or even less. The trilogy of *Henry VI* was the work of an ambitious young man, while *Love's Labour's Lost*, though it cannot be dated, was based on the *News* pamphlets sent to England to relate the story of the wars in France. As these ceased in 1593, *Love's Labour's Lost* must have been written before that date. Miss Chute is so certain of the consummate genius of the young actor that she insists that he could enter the aristocratic life of the city [London] with the same ease that he could enter into Plautus or *Henry VI*. Just child's play, in fact!

Finding that writing poems like *Venus and Adonis* did not pay, he concentrated on plays from 1594 to 1610, which years were of a creative violence unparalleled in literary history, and acting all the time. She dismisses with contempt (in a note) the Bacon, Oxford, and Stanley theories, putting them down to our fondness for our aristocracy which, as a democratic American herself, she understands perfectly. No one knows, she declares, whether he had collaborators; and his fellow actors preserved the original texts of his plays intact, producing them integrally in the First Folio. She knows for almost a certainty that the original script was not copied out for the prompter—the loose sheets being stitched together and enclosed in a wrapper. It appears also that a genius like Shakespeare was incapable of considering himself superior to his fellow actors and, as for that storing malt story—well, it was done by everybody; everybody in Stratford was being illegal or at least as illegal as possible.

There are hundreds of similar statements and judgments in the book all carefully culled from as many authorities, and Miss Chute maintains that what she says about the life of Shakespeare is based entirely on contemporary documents; none later than 1635. In fact, her book is what one might well call fundamentalist—though it is true that she puts in an Appendix some of the stories about Shakespeare as being apocryphal. Those she herself relates in the text are all, all Gospel truth!

Any discussion on the canon of Shakespeare (like the very notable work of J. M. Robertson from the orthodox standpoint) appears to have been quite beyond Miss Chute's capabilities. She does not seem to have bothered in the least with the very definite arguments which have been advanced against the orthodox position, say from an agnostic like Sir George Greenwood. It is doubtful if she would have understood them.

Here are the very numerous books of Stratfordian experts—they say that William Shakespeare wrote the plays, and that is good enough for her. Besides, is not the name Shakespeare in the Folio? Is not the portrait in that famous work vouched for by Jonson? Were not Heminge and Condell fellow actors and friends with the Man of Stratford, and ought not they to have known? Whenever Miss Chute touches on a controversial point, she falls back upon the orthodox professors and their arguments. Readable and interesting as her book is, from the point of view of the Shakespeare problem it is quite worthless.

One other point. She makes dozens of statements for which, of course, she must have had authority, but as she gives no exact references it is quite impossible to check her. This is indeed one of the gravest faults of her book.

THE SCALES OF JUSTICE

By B. R. SAUNDERS

"The bloody book of Law you shall yourself read in the bitter letter."

Othello, 1.3.67.

In Shakespeare's works there are three references to the Sagittary.

(1) *Othello*, 1.1.173.

Lead to the Sagittary the raised search and there will I be with him (*Iago*). (2) *Othello*, 1.3.136.

I do beseech you

Send for the lady to the Sagittary,

And let her speak of me before her father.

(*Othello*); (3) *Troilus and Cressida*, 5.5.14.

The dreadful Sagittary appals our numbers.

(*Agamemnon*.)

In Alexander Dyce's glossary there is a lot of information on the subject; under the heading Sagittary: "It was a mervayllouse beste called Sagittayre that behynde the myddes was a horse and to fore a man . . . and shotte well with a bowe."

This description applies to the *Troilus and Cressida* dreadful Sagittary and fits in very well with the context; but that it does not apply to the Sagittary mentioned in *Othello* is indicated by the following description in Dyce's glossary under a separate heading . . .

'The Sagittary is generally taken to be an inn . . . It was the residence at the Arsenal of the commanding officers, of the navy and army of the republic of Venice . . . The figure of an archer with his drawn bow over the gates still indicates the place.'

Unfortunately for Dyce, Furness, in the great work "Variorum Shakespeare," states "We cannot find any evidence that the Arsenal at Venice was ever called the Sagittary"; he furthermore quotes Elze's "List of Inns," but a Sagittario was not amongst them, and has not yet been discovered . . . Almost in desperation Elze is quoted as having stated that it was "probably an imaginative name devised by Shakespeare."

No alternative place has yet been suggested, but perhaps to those who knew Venice in the sixteenth century it was a very real place.

If Elze's last theory is dismissed as untenable, the question still remains unanswered. Where is the place to be found and what does Othello mean by saying "Send for the lady to the Sagittary," if the place was that of an Inn and the residence of the officers of the Arsenal. A highly improbable place for a lady to be led to. Surely there could be a more suitable place where Desdemona could "speak of me before her father."

A Court of law for example! For Othello says "If you do find me foul in her report . . . let your sentence fall upon my life . . ." From the context it may be deduced that it was a magistrates court room where evidence was taken and civil law administered.

I wish to bring forward for consideration the suggestion that the place referred to in *Othello* is not the Sagittary but the Saggiatore.

The word Saggiatore in Italian means Golden Scales and also Assayer. In Shakespeare's works Justice and Scales are linked together. "The cause in justice equal scales" (2 *Henry VI*).

Corroborative literary evidence is at once forthcoming as in the same scene in *Othello* 1.3.217. A Senator uses the words "This cannot be; by no assay of reason," and as if to clinch the matter Iago says "If the *balance* of our lives had not one *scale* of reason to poise another of." The word Saggiatore in Italian is well known, as in the case of Galileo who, after his visit to Venice, to show his telescope to the Noblemen of Venice, called his book *El Saggiatore*, which may be translated as The Golden Scales.

In addition to literary evidence there is also in Venice the possibility of *actual* evidence if we can take the words on Ongaro who in his book, "The Ducal Palace of Venice," states "Up the Golden Staircase, the first door on the left leads to a place which was a Court of Law in which the old Civil Quarantia discussed the civil affairs and the management of the Mint."

Both Sagittarius and Saggiatore were familiar to the Italians; for example the signs of the Zodiac were carved on the 18th capital, "the most interesting and beautiful of the 36 capitals of the pillars supporting the fabric of the Doges Palace." On the second side is Sagittarius represented as the centaur Chiron, as Ruskin mentions in *The Stones of Venice*, but to Ruskin the most beautiful figure of the series on the fifth side is Venus in her houses Taurus and Libra; Venus is sitting on a bull, her breast very nobly and tenderly indicated under the folds of her drapery, and she is holding the scales in her left hand. The Saggio of the Italians.

It does seem possible that Shakespeare knew the difference and that some scribe got the two names mixed up.

There was a great fire in 1577 at the Ducal Palace, and the destruction of pictures of the "Great Council chamber and the Upper rooms

of the sea facade." The "restorations" were eloquently described by Ruskin, "Whilst I was in Venice buckets were set to catch the water which came through the Tintorets, and in the Ducal palace paintings of Paulo Veronese were laid on the floors to be repainted . . ." There still, however, exists in the College Hall the picture of Venice enthroned by Peace and Justice, the figure of Justice carrying the Golden Scales.

Research into the etymology of the word Saggiatore indicates that it was used to denote "Assayers" office, and other meanings of the word included "Trial," "Judgement" and "Golden Scales," and as the first three scenes of *Othello* teem with reference to legal matters, and the charge facing Othello of using Witchcraft was indeed a criminal charge in Venetian law, it would be likely that a warrant for search would be required, and the place to which Iago went would also be a civil court.

Roderigo says "Let loose on me the Justice of the State for thus deluding you," and Brabantio says "Till fit Time of law and course of direct sessions call thee to answer."

Consideration of the complete speech of Othello shows how apt the word would be if Saggiatore was intended.

Othello:

"I do beseech you
Send for the lady to the Sagittary,
And let her speak of me before her Father;
If you do find me foul in her report,
The trust, the office I do hold of you
Not only take away, but let your sentence
Even fall upon my life."

It seems to me very likely that the place Iago knows is indeed the Saggiatore, a place of JUSTICE. [As de Vere was in Venice in 1576, he was in a position to know the set up of the Venetian buildings and in particular the Doges Palace prior to the fire in 1577.]

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