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# News-Letter

## THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP

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### “Shakespeare”: A Missing Author

#### Part I

Although mankind has certainly to face in these days graver and more pressing problems than that of the authorship of the Shakespeare\* plays, this question has a claim, if only a secondary one, amongst the serious interests of life, and deals with matters that are destined to endure when the special problems of today will have passed out of mind. Centuries hence, when the entire world will have changed, socially, politically and religiously, the works will be read with wonder, and the personality behind them command the admiration and even the affections of readers.

Truly great dramatic literature can only come from the pens of writers who are accustomed to look closely into their own souls and make free use of their secret experiences; and it may be doubted whether a single line of living literature ever came from pure imagination or mere dramatic pose.

Plays and the personality of their author are therefore complementary: their lives and characters form the natural key to the literature; the literature throws light into the obscure corners of the lives. The importance of the personality of a writer is therefore in direct proportion to the recognized importance of his work.

As, then, the Shakespeare plays hold first place in the world's dramatic literature, an acquaintance with the personality behind it—a prime factor in its

right understanding—must be a matter of some concern to those who regard these great creations of the human spirit seriously. Work so rich in thought and knowledge, and so varied in passion, could only come from an intense and many-sided genius; and all the elaborate developments of Stratford-on-Avon are a sufficient answer to the contention that the person of the writer matters nothing.

In further justification for inviting attention to this problem, we would urge the duty which the present generation owes to the great men of the past. What has certainly sustained many of these in their labours, through frequent obloquy and neglect, has been their confidence that posterity would eventually do them justice. If, then, the Shakespeare plays were not written by the man who has hitherto borne the honour, some other Englishman, one of the greatest of the sons of humanity, still awaits his rightful place in history. To make good such a defect is no unworthy aim, and no higher justification need be urged for grappling boldly with a problem that has vexed the literary world for nearly a century.

The consciousness that there was a distinctive personal element running through the dramas, one quite out of harmony with the records and traditions of William Shakspeare of Stratford, was one of the principal results of the discriminating admir-

\*This spelling of the name (Shakespeare) is here used only when speaking of the author of the plays, whoever he may have been: treating it, that is, as a nom-de-plume. When referring specially to the householder of Stratford it is spelt Shakspeare (the local pronunciation of which was, not improbably, Shaxper). The distinction, a recognized convenience, is made merely to avoid ambiguity in the discussion, and does not imply a pre-judgment of the issue. In referring to any contemporary writing the spelling of the original is retained.

ation with which, in the nineteenth century, the works came to be studied. With penetrating sagacity Emerson remarked, "I cannot marry (him) to his verse." To wrestle with baffling problems has, however, always been the lot of the Shakespearians: in itself clear evidence that there was something wrong somewhere.

However decisive such a sense of discord may be to the person who feels it instinctively, it does not supply the kind of material that can be easily pressed into service as evidence in an argument. On the other hand, experience has proved that scholars, equally well equipped, can wrangle endlessly respecting the classical knowledge shown in the plays; whilst lawyers and pseudo-lawyers argue inconclusively respecting their legal contents. Something more palpable and measurable is needed to settle the issues raised by these psychological, classical and legal difficulties; and it is to evidence of this concrete practical nature, such as can be weighed without special scholastic preparation, that I shall try to confine myself.

At the outset I shall state definitely, in the form of a brief proposition, what it is the special object of this essay to prove, namely:—

that the William Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon, who died in that town in 1616, cannot have written the poems and plays attributed to him, but was used as a cover for some great poet-dramatist who did not wish his own name to appear on the published works; and that, therefore, the author of the plays is missing.

It is generally known that there are many converging lines of evidence pointing in this direction. To rest a case, however, on the cumulative effect of separate and varied lines of proof demands a weighing of complex probabilities, and becomes, to some extent, a matter for the experts. We shall, therefore, not attempt such a task of general survey and coordination, but shall confine ourselves within very restricted limits, and shall find, I believe, a case as cogent as it is simple.

We shall, moreover, discard altogether that vast mass of Shakespeare lore which passes current as authenticated fact, but which is in reality mere inference based upon the assumption that William Shakspeare of Stratford wrote the plays; and we shall narrow the argument down to the bed-rock facts, taking as general basis the aristocratic connections of the original publications.

The name Shakespeare made its first appearance in English literature as that, not of a dramatist but

of a poet, when *Venus and Adonis* was published in the year 1593. The titlepage gave no author's name—itself a significant beginning—but the dedication of the work to Henry Wriothesley, the third Earl of Southampton, was signed: "William Shakespeare." The terms of this prefatory letter prove the poet to have been already on an intimate footing with the nobleman; and the English both of the dedication and the text of the poem reveals a natural mastery of the cultured speech peculiar to the highest social circles. This, of course, clearly establishes the writer's free association with the aristocracy some years prior to 1593.

Not till 1598 did the name "Shakespeare" become known as that of a dramatist, when it was attached to an edition of *Love's Labour's Lost*. Here, again, aristocratic connections are stressed. The work was published "as it was presented before her Highness" (Queen Elizabeth); and the drama itself is exclusively one of court life, full of interior portraiture and having as its basis the distinctive manners, etiquette and intercourse of people in familiar touch with royalty.

After this came a succession of plays with the same general stamp.

*Henry IV* (part 2): "As it hath been sundrie times publikely acted by the right honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants." (That is, the Queen's special company of players.)

*The Merchant of Venice*: "As it hath been diuers times acted by the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants."

*Hamlet*: "As it hath beene diuers times acted by his Highnesse seruants" (King James's players).

*King Lear*: "As it was played before the Kings Maiestie."

And so with other published plays from 1598 to 1609.

The year 1609 saw the publication of the Shakespeare Sonnets; and, whatever perplexing problems respecting this work may have divided scholars, upon one point all are agreed: namely, that many of the poems are addressed to a young nobleman, with whom the poet is here seen on terms of close intimacy and strong personal affection.

In the same year an unauthorised edition of *Troilus and Cressida* appeared, with a bold assertion that the "grand possessors" of the manuscript had been defied in the publication of the work. Who

these "grand possessors" may have been we cannot tell. The terms, however, clearly point to aristocrats.

In 1623 the authentic publication of the Shakespeare plays culminated and closed with the issue of the famous First Folio.

This work is dedicated to the two brothers William and Philip Herbert, the Earls respectively of Pembroke and Montgomery, who are there stated to have followed "the author living with much favour"; and in the introductory poem contributed by Ben Jonson special emphasis is laid upon the personal interest both of Queen Elizabeth and King James I.

From first to last, then, links of a perfectly unique kind connect these plays and the person of their author with royalty and the aristocracy; and so surely are such intimacies implied, that it is usual to speak of them as established facts. Sir Sidney Lee, for example, refers quite confidently to the "personal interest which he had excited among the satellites of royalty," and adds: "Queen Elizabeth quickly showed him special favour." For no less than thirty years (1593-1623) the published works therefore declare him to have been acquainted with or honourably remembered by the greatest people in the land; and, if we take into account the necessary antecedents of the 1593 debut, the period of aristocratic association must be considerably extended beyond the thirty years.

We must now see how these facts bear upon the person hitherto credited with the authorship.

When *Venus and Adonis* was published William Shakspeare of Stratford was a young man of twenty-nine. To have worked himself by that age into such a society, and to have acquired the literary and social culture shown by the poem and its dedication—much of which could not have been learnt from books—to have produced so lengthy and elaborately finished a poem and carried through its publication, he must have had his feet firmly planted on the social ladder in his early twenties, at the latest. As, then, he lived to the age of fifty-two, and the chief business of his life would be to produce this literature and meet the social obligations which it would entail, we may say that the whole of that effective part of a man's lifetime which fixes permanently his place amongst his fellows would be passed in the open light of royal and aristocratic favour.

If, moreover, one with such commonplace beginnings as are shown by the early Stratford records, had, merely by his acting and playwriting, won for

himself access to the foremost company of actors, without a trace of youthful apprenticeship or experience in an inferior troupe, and used the position so rapidly gained to place himself immediately into intimate relationships with the people round the throne, he must have possessed, not only extraordinary intellectual powers, but wonderful initiative, enterprise, ambition, personal address and social tact. His aims must have been settled early, and his efforts to realize them direct and resolute. This was not the kind of man to allow himself to be pushed into the background, and, following a public vocation, he could not easily have been hidden. However rapid the ascent it could only have been accomplished by stages and through the active interest of suitable intermediaries.

The question before us, then, is whether these published pretensions and necessary implications of his connection with the literature can be subjected to an effective test.

A hundred years ago it is probable that no conclusive test was possible. Nineteenth century historical research\* has, however, completely changed the outlook in respect to this, as to so many other hoary misconceptions. Painstaking workers, officials and unofficial students, have toiled in regions of dust and mould, to pierce mists of imaginative traditions, and to come face to face with the realities of the past in its contemporary documents and formal records. The contents of long neglected archives, in obsolete writing undecipherable to the ordinary reader, have been microscopically examined, summarized, indexed, and placed within reach of the more general student; and this material has furnished tests that have given the *coup de grace* to more than one cherished illusion.

Naturally the public archives chiefly disclose public events, with an emphasis upon the doings of the governing classes, national and local. Private collections, being mainly the property of old families, throw light also upon their *private* affairs and interests.

The Shakespeare question, on the side from which we are now viewing it, is therefore one which is specially open to the test of historical research; and no workers have been more thorough in their investigations, or more unsparing to themselves, than those who, during many years, and in every likely

\*We so describe the modern historical research movement, not because it either began or ended in the Nineteenth Century, but because its systematic development was the work of that period.

quarter, have hunted for particulars relating to William Shakspeare of Stratford. Additional details may yet come to light, but sufficient has already been made out to pronounce quite definitely upon the general result of all this research work.

The first fact which stands out boldly is the complete absence of even the slightest relevant link between William Shakspeare's sordid beginnings at Stratford, traceable right up to the time when he was a married man with three children, and the exalted social and cultural intimacies of his early twenties implied in the publication of the first Shakespeare poems. In those days even scholars from the universities could, as writers, only penetrate the outer fringe of that uppermost circle by means of aristocratic patronage, graciously bestowed, and paid for by public literary compliments. Shakespeare reaches its centre without academic send-off and by a single stride, without leaving traces of an upward struggle or of assistance from any aristocrat or other likely helper. The supposed achievement, under any circumstances, is highly improbable; without record of stages and means it may be confidently regarded as impossible.

What is true of his reaching these heights is even more emphatically true of his keeping them. The records for all the years which lie between *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and the latest date ever suggested for his final retirement to Stratford (1612)—the most eventful years in the history of English drama—have been ruthlessly searched in the one supreme quest: to find out more about William Shakspeare. With what result?

We now know that he sold some malt to one Philip Rogers, lent his customer two shillings, and afterwards prosecuted him for repayment; that when he died he left only his "second best bed," merely as an afterthought interlined in his will, to the woman whom he had married under unsavoury compulsion; and that, through years of affluence, he neglected to pay to a shepherd a debt of £2 incurred by his wife in days of poverty—the creditor having so lost hope of ever seeing his money again that, with grim humour, he bequeathed it to the poor, whilst nothing remains to show whether it reached the intended beneficiaries.

These, and other irrelevancies relating to houses, lands, tithes and false claims respecting his coat-of-arms, have, with infinite pains, been dug up, to teach the humblest of us how unfortunate it may prove to excite the curiosity of posterity; but in no single instance during the many years of his supposed

fame do we find in his private records traces of personal friendship with an aristocrat.

This is extraordinary from every point of view; for, even in the capacity of mask for another man, marks of such contacts might be looked for, since the person engaged for one purpose might very well have been employed on other business. This is not an unlikely explanation of the fact that after the time of his final retirement to Stratford the Earl of Rutland's secretary coupled the name of "Shakespeare" with that of Burbage in respect to a quite irrelevant cash payment. Even this reference has been disputed by its discoverer;\* but not even a trifle like this has, directly or indirectly, connected him with an aristocrat during all the years of his reputed immersion in literature and high class friendships. If ever he lived in touch with such people the meetings must have been jealously guarded and their traces carefully covered.

During these years he was evidently kept generally out of sight, in as yet undiscovered quarters. Brief glimpses of semi-clandestine lodgment is all that we can catch of him in London; for there, even the tax gatherers, who wanted him, went wrong by a matter of years as to where he was to be found—the very years during which, on orthodox assumptions, he was living in a blaze of royal favour. On the other hand, Thomas Greene, a lawyer, resided in his Stratford house, and along with Shakspeare's brother Gilbert, seems to have attended to any important business there; so that no one, either in Stratford or elsewhere, ever received a note from his hand, and no business of his in the town has left a specimen of his signature. Even his Stratford domiciliation, so much more traceable than anything found in London, is not without its strangely elusive phases.

As might have been foreseen, the lesson of the special researches directed towards him personally has been amply borne out by more recent enquiries directed from the other side: that is into the lives and correspondence of the aristocrats themselves, particularly those who, by name, were implicated in Shakespeare publications. Up to the present none of these labours has yielded the slightest fruit. Not a single document has shown any aristocrat at all interested in the person of William Shakspeare. None wrote to him, received a letter from him, or so much as mentioned him in private correspondence. It is blank negation everywhere.

\*"Burbage and Shakespeare's Stage," Stopes (p. 109).

The distinctive way in which "Shakespeare" has selected the third Earl of Southampton for immortality, in connection with his great poems—and also, it is believed, in the Sonnets—has naturally focussed attention upon that nobleman; and what is probably an exhaustive investigation has been made into his life and correspondence. In Mrs. Stopes's biography of him the materials collected fill two very substantial volumes; but, at the close of a long task, conscientiously carried out, the biographer has to admit failure so far as her main object was concerned. She has not discovered those traces of Shakspeare that she hoped to find: which she undoubtedly would have found had Shakspeare been the writer of all the "Shakespeare" poetry dedicated and addressed to Southampton.

A similar unrelieved failure has attended such enquiries as have been made into the affairs of the brother Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, whose interest was proclaimed in the First Folio. Indications of a warm practical interest in other men of letters, like Ben Jonson, exist; but not a trace of lifetime contact with Shakspeare has been found.

It cannot, of course, be claimed that all possible sources of information have now been exhausted; but the presumption against anything turning up to show us William Shakspeare in the presence of an aristocrat amounts to a practical certainty. A prolonged intimacy is, however, quite out of the question. One delusion that modern research has positively shattered for all time is that he enjoyed frequent and easy access to the nobility and the undisguised favour of royalty, whilst living, as a popular journalist has claimed, "as well known in London as the Globe Theatre." Such a life and such publicity are however the necessary implications of the literature.

We have therefore an irreconcilable conflict between the authorship pretensions and the findings of modern research: a proof that this man was the personal centre of a cunning scheme for deceiving people respecting the source of these great works. We speak of deception, of course, without implication of censure; for one way of concealing authorship seems as legitimate as another. The method in this case has proved more effective than an avowed anonymity could have been; and, if the writer had decided definitely upon his own self-effacement, it is certainly preferable that the works should have been preserved in this way than lost to mankind forever. As, however, Shakspeare was not the author he must have been used as a cover for some one else; and until that man is discovered and

acknowledged, the works are anonymous, and the writer of them is still missing.

J. Thomas Looney

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## Shakespeare's Will

In last April's *Quarterly Review* (England), Archibald Stalker asks the question, "Is Shakespeare's will a forgery?" He presents an argument regarding insertions and deletions in that document and its history since its discovery was announced which calls for a much more careful investigation of its authenticity and its legal value than has ever been given it. The will is perhaps one of the documents which should be submitted to X-ray and infra-red photographic examination, as well as to a careful study by the best legal minds.

Mr. Stalker says that lawyers "have hitherto examined the will on the assumption that it is genuine: if they proceed to examine it with reasonable suspicion that it might be a forgery, blunders such as no lawyer would commit will be exposed and the document will be revealed as the compilation of a forger whose immunity from suspicion has rested on the impudence of his inventions and on the disposition of men to believe that great poets are witless in the conduct of affairs."

## Death of Professor Moore Smith

Professor George Charles Moore Smith, Cambridge scholar and Professor of English Literature at Sheffield University for many years, died at Sheffield in November last at the age of eighty-two years.

"His speciality in scholarship," writes a correspondent of the London Times Literary Supplement, "was the university drama in early days, and his book, 'College Plays' (1923), and his editions of six academic Cambridge plays of the Elizabethan era were his principal contributions to the subject. Notable among his other publications were his edition of the 'Marginalia' of Gabriel Harvey, which A. H. Bullen printed at Stratford-on-Avon in 1913, and his edition of the poems of Lord Herbert of Cherbury."

It will be recalled that in the last number of the NEWS-LETTER we disagreed with Professor Moore Smith's opinion that the anonymous writer, Axiophilus, mentioned in Gabriel Harvey's *marginalia* with great admiration, was in reality Harvey himself.

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Occasional meetings of the American Branch will be held, for which special notices will be sent to members. Dues for membership in the American Branch are \$2.50 per year, which sum includes one year's subscription to the NEWS-LETTER.

The officers of the American Branch will act as an editorial board for the publication of the NEWS-LETTER, which will appear every other month, or six times a year.

News items, comments by readers and articles of interest to all students of Shakespeare and of the acknowledged mystery that surrounds the authorship of the plays and poems, are desired. Such material must be of reasonable brevity. No compensation can be made to writers beyond the sincere thanks of the Editorial Board. Articles and letters will express the opinions of their authors, not necessarily of the editors. They may be sent to Charles Wisner Barrell, 17 East 48th Street, New York, N. Y.

## The Leading Article

It is our privilege to present, as the leading article of this issue of the NEWS-LETTER, Part I of "*Shakespeare*": *A Missing Author*, by J. Thomas Looney, whose "*Shakespeare*" *Identified in Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, first announced the theory that Edward de Vere was the true author of the plays long known as Shakespeare's.

In the present article, written some time ago and now first published, Mr. Looney shows by critical analysis that the personal element, running like a thread through the plays, is quite out of harmony with the records and traditions of Shakspeare of Stratford. Mr. Looney's argument will be found of value to those readers who may wish to begin a

study of the Shakespeare-Oxford problem. It should be followed by a reading of "*Shakespeare*" *Identified* and later hooks published on the subject.

## Twelfth Night Club's Jubilee

In 1890 a few young actresses, in envy of their masculine contemporaries with their Players and Lambs clubs, started a club of their own which they named the Twelfth Night Club, because of their decision to hold Annual Revels on January 6th.

Beginning with a group of ten and the simplest quarters, the Club now has a large membership and is housed in an extensive suite of rooms at 21 West 47th Street, where a charming hospitality is dispensed.

True to its name, the Club's Annual Revels have frequently been based on the play of *Twelfth Night* or some other of Shakespeare's plays, one sketch being called "How Shakespeare Should Have Married Off His Heroines."

The Twelfth Night Club is now celebrating its golden jubilee. In honor of that half-century mark, and the many gracious members of the Club who have entertained us so delightfully on the stage, the members of The Shakespeare Fellowship, American Branch, extend greetings and best wishes for another fifty years of joy and satisfaction unalloyed.

## Echoes

It is reported by the New York *Post* that Cornelia Otis Skinner may take the role of Queen Elizabeth in the play by Warren Munsell, Jr., "By Any Other Name" (presenting Oxford as Shakespeare), which had a tryout at the McCarter Theatre, Princeton, New Jersey, July 29th, 1940, and is scheduled for New York production this winter.

"English Earls of Elizabeth's day were quite a bunch of lads. Essex got his head cut off for two-timing the queen, Oxford wrote Shakespeare's plays—according to the latest school of thought—and Leicester was Master of the Horse and first Englishman of record to go in for 'improving the breed of horses in a big way,'" is the paragraph by which CUE (14 Dec. 1940) prefaces its announcement of the Grolier Club's exhibition, *Six Hundred Years of Sport*.

## The Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Shakespeare Fellowship, American Branch, was held at the home of Mr. James Stewart Cushman, 815 Fifth Avenue, on Saturday, November 30, 1940. Professor Louis P. Bénézet of Dartmouth College, President of the Fellowship, presiding.

Mr. Charles Wisner Barrell, Secretary and Treasurer, since September 3rd associated with the U. S. Army as a film editor and scenario writer, spoke extemporaneously of the meeting a year ago when the Fellowship was organized, of its growth during the past year, of the interest displayed throughout the country in the Oxford-Shakespeare theory, and the renewal of memberships for the Fellowship's second year. While his late arrival in New York had precluded his submitting a formal statement of the Fellowship's financial standing, he said there was well over a hundred dollars in the bank. He considered the infant organization showed a vigorous beginning, especially in view of the anxiety of people everywhere who realize that the whole continent of Europe is under the domination of a tremendous machine and that it will take the combined efforts of every one to stop it. He was particularly pleased to report that the various college and library memberships had all been renewed.

In a report on the NEWS-LETTER, Mrs. Eva Turner Clark said that a thousand copies of each issue had been printed and, after copies had been sent to members of the Fellowship in this country and in England and a certain number retained for new members who might wish to have the publication from the start, the remainder of the copies had been sent to a selected list of teachers of English in various schools and colleges throughout the country, a different list for each issue. As the subject covered by the NEWS-LETTER is a controversial one, an effort has been made to avoid an unpleasantly controversial tone in the articles published. Since there is a great mass of literary and historical matter connected with the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama and stage, all of it must be re-examined and re-interpreted from the angle of Oxfordian authorship. Mrs. Clark stated that the resultant new interpretations should be printed in the columns of the NEWS-LETTER so that all members of the Fellowship may benefit.

Following the reports, the President proceeded to the election of officers for the coming year. Dr. Will D. Howe moved that the present officers be

re-elected, which motion was seconded by Mr. Sévéro Mallet-Prevost. As there were no other nominations, the officers of the previous year were unanimously re-elected.

President Bénézet then addressed the meeting on the subject of Professor Oscar James Campbell's article in the July Harpers Magazine, refuting it with an assembly of facts which should be given space in the same publication. A partial summary of these facts was given in the December NEWS-LETTER.

Dr. Howe spoke on "The Publisher's Attitude toward the Oxford-Shakespeare Question," and, since he is connected with the well-known publishing house of Charles Scribner's Sons, Dr. Howe's remarks were extremely pertinent. He thought it was a wonderful thing to bring this character (Oxford) out of the dark and said he believed Oxford was the most likely author of the plays and sonnets; that discussion should be encouraged on both sides; that we are prone to claim too much for repeated passages, a mistake that many literary critics make.

Mrs. Frank J. Sprague, the well-known authority on the works of Walt Whitman, spoke on "Oliver Herford and the First Volume of Edward de Vere's Plays." She prefaced her story by saying that Carolyn Wells, the writer, spent several weeks with her about twenty years ago and at that time asked her to read "*Shakespeare Identified*, by J. Thomas Looney, and to read it through before discussing it at all; Miss Wells added that it was completely skillful, very convincing, and one of the best detective stories ever written. Later, Mrs. Sprague talked the book over with Miss Wells, Gelett Burgess, and Oliver Herford, all of whom had been convinced by Mr. Looney's arguments. One day Oliver Herford asked Mrs. Sprague to dine with him, saying he had something very interesting to show her. On arrival, she found him pacing the floor in a state of excitement and before she could take off her coat, he handed her what looked like a very common-place book, saying, "Look at it, look at it carefully." On the outside was printed "The Works of Edward de Vere." On the title-page she found "Complete Works of Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, First Edition, 1922." "Go on," he said, "turn to the Contents," and there she found a list of thirty-seven plays beginning with—*The Tempest!* After Oliver Herford's death, Mrs. Sprague was able to purchase the book from the executors of his estate and, having brought it to the meeting, mem-

bers were privileged to handle and examine this unique volume.

Mr. James Stewart Cushman spoke briefly on the activities of the Fellowship and suggested that all members could contribute something of value by writing articles for the NEWS-LETTER and by securing new members for the society. In conclusion, he said that Mrs. Cushman had provided tea and refreshments for those present and invited them to adjourn to the dining room. The delightful hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Cushman in their charming home will long be remembered.

## The Earthquake

In his article on Arthur Golding in the December issue of the NEWS-LETTER, Mr. Barrell notes Golding's published account of the earthquake which happened in England in 1580 and mentions "Shakespeare's reference to the same earthquake in *Romeo and Juliet*" (quoting the *Dictionary of National Biography*):

'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years.

R. & J., I.iii.23.

This definite statement has been one of the few allusions noted in the plays by Stratfordians and they, believing the earthquake referred to was the one in England in 1580, have generally accepted the date of the writing of *Romeo and Juliet* as eleven years after that event, in 1591.

But, since the scene of the tragedy is set in Italy, is it not more reasonable to examine the earthquake history of that country? Long ago, Hunter declared, "It will not be denied that Shakespeare might make an Italian in an Italian story allude to an event that occurred in London; but the whole argument is of the most shadowy kind, and it seems to be entirely destroyed when the fact is introduced that in 1570 there did occur a most remarkable earthquake in the neighborhood of Verona, so severe that it destroyed Ferrara, and which would form long after an epoch in the chronological calculations of the old wives of Lombardy. When the church of St. Stephen at Ferrara was rebuilt, an inscription was placed against it, from which we may collect the terrible nature of the visitation: [Long Latin inscription upon which Hunter comments as follows]. The order of towers, palaces, and temples in this inscription corresponds to the order in which they occur in the well-known passage in *The Tempest*. Will this come in aid of the argument of those who contend that Shakespeare must, at some period of his life, have breathed the air of Italy, seen the

Italian palaces and witnessed the Italian customs he has so accurately exhibited? The inscription appears to have been cut in 1571, or not long after. At all events, I submit, that, if we must suppose that the poet intended to make the Nurse speak according to the truth of history at all, this is the earthquake to which she alludes, and not the slight trembling, which alarmed the fears of a northern people unaccustomed to such phenomena."

In 1857, Staunton says, "There is a small tract extant entitled 'A coppie of the letter sent from Ferrara the xxii of November, 1570. Imprinted at London in Paules Churchyarde at the signe of the Lucrece, by Thomas Purfoote'; in which the writer describes 'the great and horrible earthquakes, the excessiue and vnrecoverable losses, with the great mortalitie and death of people, the ruine and overthrow of an infinite number of monasteries, palaces, and other howses, and the destruction of his graces excellencies castle.' The first earthquake was on Thursday, the 11th, at ten at night, 'whiche endured the space of an Aue Maria'; on the 17th, 'the earth quaked all the whole day.' In all, 'the earthquakes are numbered to haue been a hundred and foure in xl houres.'"

On quite other grounds I placed the writing of *Romeo and Juliet* in my *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays* in 1931. When that book was published, I had not seen an account of the Italian earthquake of 1570, eleven years earlier than my dating. This important historical fact strongly confirms my conclusion.

Working in England on allusions to be found in the plays, Admiral Hubert H. Holland contributed an article to "The Shakespeare Pictorial" in June 1936 in which he states his belief that *Romeo and Juliet* was written in 1581, and among other allusions upon which he bases it, declares that the earthquake referred to was unquestionably the great Italian one of 1570.

Since the Earl of Oxford spent the winter in Italy some five years after the great catastrophe, he would have seen evidence still remaining of the widespread ravages, for such extensive damage cannot be repaired in a few short years. Small homes may be rebuilt, but not castles, palaces, churches, and public buildings which take generations to build. The minor earthquake in England in 1580, bad as it may have seemed to Englishmen, did relatively little damage, but it would have served to bring freshly to Lord Oxford's mind the catastrophe suffered by Italy in 1570.

Eva Turner Clark



## A Letter from Lavenham

Mr. F. Lingard Ranson of Lavenham, Suffolk, England, editor of an Oxford-Shakespeare page in the East Anglian Magazine, has made a remarkable collection of photographs of architectural and sculptural details in and about Lavenham which show the influence of the once powerful de Vere family. Mr. Charles Wisner Barrell recently received a letter from Mr. Ranson which he believes will be of interest to members of the Fellowship. The letter was written October 31, 1940, and from it the NEWS-LETTER takes the following excerpts:

"Your history-making discoveries regarding the portraits of 'Shakespeare' created quite a sensation in England. If it had not been for other more serious events occupying all our minds, it would have made 'front-page' news. As it was, the Stratfordians received a nasty jolt. A lively interest was aroused in my own county of Suffolk where, as I may have told you, followers of the Baconian theory abound. This is not to wondered at, seeing that Sir Francis Bacon was M. P. for Ipswich, our county town, for so many years, and whose mother was of Lavenham descent. But to all and sundry, your wonderful discovery was a great revelation, even the many biased Stratfordians and other Oxfordian critics who have approached me on this subject—and who, whilst arguing that, allowing your discovery to be correct, this did not prove that Oxford was the author of the works of Shakespeare have been completely stumped for an answer as to why proved portraits of Edward de Vere were chosen to represent and were passed on to the world as portraits of Shakespeare.

"I have followed with great interest the progress of the American Branch of the Shakespeare Fellowship from its advent. I consider your NEWS-LETTER to be of an high order of publication and have to admit that what appeals to me is that, not only do the many fine articles show careful and extensive research, but it is their freedom from the sloppy sentiment which characterizes so many English publications when dealing with any question of Shakespeare and makes them more convincing.

"The article, 'Through De Vere Country'—which, I was happy to note, was illustrated with a reproduction of one of my photographs of

Lavenham Church—has given me great pleasure, not only because of the fact of my name being recorded there, but that it also brought to me happy memories of Mrs. Eva Turner Clark's visit to our old-world town of Lavenham. How charmed she was with all that she both saw and heard, the sing-song voices of the fustian-clad rustics, the overhanging timbered buildings, with their arch-headed doorways and oriel windows with leaded casements, and above all the Church of SS. Peter & Paul. Mrs. Clark will be glad to know that, up to the present time of writing, nothing has happened to mar the beauty of Lavenham or its neighbourhood. Every day, however, we are in danger and have had scores of very close and exciting incidents and I sometimes fear something will happen. All the same, the natives are really great and it makes me proud to be living in these days.

"I am commissioned by my sister to convey her kindest regards to you, and to say that at all times and in all parts of America where she stayed (Florida and the rest) all the people she met were pro-British and she felt that the soul of the Great American people was with Britain's cause. This was of great comfort to her and gave her hope of the help which we know now is coming to us in ever increasing volume.

"It would interest you to be in England today; there is a different feeling spreading all over the country which augurs well for the future; I have seen it in the towns and in the countryside. A common danger has made an united nation. Never for a moment have the people doubted the ultimate success of their efforts, and we all recognise and appreciate the tremendous help the U. S. A. is giving to England in just the way that is most needed. We do not need men; we have them ready, keen and trained, but just waiting for equipment; and when all is ready, then we shall strike.

"I sincerely trust you are well and that you will be able to keep the Shakespeare Fellowship flag flying in America, although, even there, it must be a great task, but I hope to see the day when we shall once again in England resume our research in the Shakespeare Fellowship."

## Shakespeare and Mark Twain

Suppose that, three hundred years from now, when Mark Twain's real name has been forgotten and most of his works are out of print, confusion should exist in the mind of the public between him and a certain Marcus Twayne, of whom it was known that he had once lived in Hartford, and that a monument to him might be seen in a near-by Connecticut town. A school of commentators might then arise to maintain that Marcus Twayne's genius was such that he could write 'Huckleberry Finn' without ever having seen the Mississippi River. Should it be asked what proof there was of the genius it would be answered that the proof was that he had written the books. Should it be objected that Marcus Twayne was once attacked as 'an upstart crow' in borrowed feathers and defended by some one who knew of him as a writer only by hearsay, that would simply prove that others were jealous of him. Furthermore, should the curious fact be unearthed that the said Marcus Twayne was actually pen-shy, that there was not only no letter, but no record of any letter from him to another person during a life presumably devoted to literary pursuits, even that would not invalidate the theory for those of the Twaynian school; there would always remain the monument.

Exactly this line of reasoning has been followed about Shakespeare. William Shaksper of Stratford-on-Avon wrote the plays, therefore he must have gone to school. He wrote the plays, therefore he must have had access to such and such books. The personal glimpses in the sonnets do not square with Shaksper's circumstances, therefore they are a fantastic allegory. The plays show a familiarity with courts and courtiers, therefore Shaksper must have been on intimate terms with the rich and the great. The result is a swollen mass of commentary which has grown like a snowball; and like a snowball, it can melt.

William Shaksper of Stratford-on-Avon is the most unattractive figure in literature. Not because of his obscurity; we have more facts and more traditions about him than we have of many men of his class, but neither the facts nor the traditions are of the right sort. A young tradesman after a forced marriage runs away to London, deserting his wife and twin babies, and manages to get a foothold on the stage. It is assumed that he is set to revamp old plays, that his transcendent ability enables him

without previous experience to shape them into the form in which we now have them, that he could write an *early* play about the Court of Navarre and a long poem saturated with feeling for classical beauty, and then retiring to his native town, spend the rest of his life as a money lender, whose idea of 'the quality of mercy' is to sue his neighbor for thirty-five shillings, a hoarder of malt contrary to the town statute, a man who obtained a coat of arms on false pretenses but let his daughter grow up unable to write her name, and who left a will originally drawn up for a seal instead of a signature, as though he himself were in the habit of making his mark instead of signing his name. There is no gold to be extracted from this ore. Everything written to bolster such a theory only serves to make it seem more incredible; it shows, in short, that Mark Twain was not Marcus Twayne.

The untaught genius may score a success by writing about what he knows, or like Marlowe in 'Tamburlaine,' about what the rest of the world does not know, but when he deals with things near home he had better know his subject by heart. He cannot 'study up' the Mississippi River and give us a 'Huckleberry Finn.' It is never denied of Mark Twain that he had a rich background of personal experience, but it is denied of Shakespeare. Nothing is more singular than the disposition of commentators to seek a *literary* source for everything in the plays. It never seems to be postulated that in an age teeming with turbulent life, full of adventure, discovery, intrigue, merrymaking, war, imprisonment, violent death, a man gifted with the highest type of imagination might have taken his materials where other men take them—from life. Always we must be told of some "lost" Hamlet, some "earlier" 'Taming of a Shrew.' Very well; what was the source of the "lost" plays, and what is there to prove that the same hand which has left us the revised and finished productions was not responsible for the earlier ones as well? Expert writers point out that the plays abound in allusions to hawking, fencing, bowling, dancing, especially the Court dances, that Shakespeare's love of the Barbary horse is so evident that it is probable that he once owned a roan barb, that he was a skilled musician of the polyphonic school, and then they try to drape these acquirements upon the lay figure of a Shaksper instead of seeing that all this easily worn

knowledge was but the accomplishment of a gentleman born, gained in the natural way through daily habit and association. Gained, moreover, in youth, when the senses are fresh and the brain is storing away its own choice of material for future use.

The penalty attached to a striking pen name is that it creates a personality around itself which tends to obscure the individual behind it. Had Mark Twain lived before the telephone, the photograph, the newspaper and the personal interview, we should have had a Mark Twain myth and Mark Twain legends. Had the censorship been what it was in the last years of Elizabeth, he would have had to issue his works under a nom de plume. 'The Prince and the Pauper' might have been stayed from publication in 1600 as 'As You Like It' was, with its banished duke. Had 'A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court' been associated with the Essex Rising in 1601 and aimed at the Queen, its author would have been lucky to have escaped the Tower. Shakespeare, whoever he was, was like Mark Twain a sayer of inconvenient things. That our withers are unwrung is not saying that his contemporaries' were.

Now, had the World War been fought on American soil and links in the chain of identity been lost, it is certain that such fragments of autobiography as Mark Twain had left behind him would not have been set aside in the effort to reconstruct the man from his works. If therefore he had described himself as "beated and chopped with tanned antiquity" we should not conclude that he was about twenty-eight at the time, and if after the failure of his publishing house he had spoken of himself as "lamed by fortune's dearest spite," he would not have been telling the world that he was a business man about to retire on a competence. He wrote 'Innocents Abroad' because he had been abroad; and when Shakespeare tells us that there was a very local dance in Italy called after the place of its origin a "bergamask," that the dependent cities of Venice were allowed to name the ships they furnished her Navy after their own city, so that a ship of Verona was known as a "Veronesa," that the system of canals in northern Italy made it possible for a traveler to take ship at Milan, the chances are that he learned those things on the spot and not by cramming some Universal Cyclopaedia. Where could a Shaksper have picked up Cambridge undergraduate slang, to speak as Shakespeare does of "scanting my sizes?" Would he even have known what was meant? Do we?

We have now only to suppose that instead of retrieving his fortunes, Mark Twain had died prematurely, that authentic issues of his works ceased, and that when, to do tardy justice to his memory, an edition containing twenty hitherto unpublished works was printed, his heir was in prison for political reasons. This was the situation of Henry Vere, Lord Oxford's son, in 1623, when the First Folio was printed. The times were "out of joint" for disclosing the authorship of the plays, but it is certain that in a select circle the matter was an open secret.

Of the First Folio, sold for a pound a copy, it is estimated that five hundred copies were printed. More than one hundred have been traced. What became of Marcus Twayne's—I mean, William Shaksper's—copy? He had been buried at Stratford without distinction seven years before, no money having been given to the town chamberlains on the occasion of his funeral. His heirs, however, were well-off. We should expect to learn that a copy had been in the possession of the family if he had had any share however slight in the authorship of the plays. But if he had not had any share in them, we should expect to find that there was no tradition that a single copy was ever seen, much less possessed by any of the supposed author's descendants . . . which is exactly what has happened.

No author's copies in the house; no autograph with three words attached; no newspaper clippings, no congratulations from friends; no record of a single letter written to any one during a life given to literature. Would any believe it of Mark Twain? Why should any one believe it of Shakespeare?

*Margaret L. Knapp*

## Publishers!

That five thousand extra copies of the January issue a year ago of *The Scientific American* were sold because of its leading article, Charles Wisner Barrell's "Identifying Shakespeare with X-Ray and Infra-Red Photography," was a surprise even to us who know so well the value of this scientific investigation. This evidence of a widespread interest in the subject should suggest to other publishers that many times five thousand readers can be found for the mass of equally interesting, not to say thrilling, evidence which still awaits adequate presentation on previously unknown phases of Lord Oxford's mysterious career. All of this unpublished evidence connects the playwriting nobleman and the Shakespeare authorship arcana with circumstantial realism.

## Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher

Dr. Ashley H. Thorndike, in his pamphlet, *On the Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare*, "has endeavoured to show that to this influence may be ascribed nearly all that differentiates these last plays of Shakespeare from their predecessors." (Furness *Variorum*: CYMBELINE, p. 453).

"These last plays," to which reference is made, are *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. Their late listing in the commonly accepted chronology of Shakespeare's plays is largely due to entries in Forman's Diary, but Dr. Tannenbaum has shown these entries to be forgeries by Collier, hence they can no longer be used as evidence.

Furness also quotes Knight's conclusion to the effect that "it will probably some day be established to demonstration that *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* belong to the Shakespeare of six-and-thirty rather than to the Shakespeare of six-and-forty," and he further says, "*Cymbeline* will go with them."

The chronology based on contemporary allusions assigns *The Winter's Tale* to the Earl of Oxford when he was thirty-six years old; *The Tempest* somewhat earlier; and *Cymbeline* still earlier. Some twenty-five or thirty years later, a few years after Oxford's death, Beaumont and Fletcher took these fine old plays and to some extent modernized them. That accounts for their "influence on Shakespeare."

## The Birds of Shakespeare

Mrs. Lavonia Stockelbach, Canadian artist, has painted in water-color sixty-two birds named in the plays of Shakespeare and these paintings were shown in an exhibition held in the Whitney Gallery of the New York Museum of Natural History during the last half of December. In her catalogue Mrs. Stockelbach mentions finches, hedge-sparrows, larks, wrens, martins, nightingales, wood doves, redbreasts, blackbirds, starlings, throatsles, "and the other big and little birds of England." The sixty-two birds portrayed by the artist are referred to in the plays and poems of Shakespeare more than 600 times in all.

Edward Alden Jewell, writing in the *New York Times* of December 14, says of these paintings: "The birds are hushed with the most loving and

expert care, no detail slighted, no color botched, no texture left unsensed. The medium used is opaque water-color and the studies are painted on wood—holly wood, in most instances; beech and maple now and then."

## Letters from England

Interesting letters have been received, though delayed, from Mr. Percy Allen and Mr. T. M. Aitken who have both been forced by war conditions to leave London and are now living in the country. At the time of writing, their London homes were still safe from bomb attack. We hope they may be among the fortunate ones to find their old homes awaiting them when the war is over.

## Oxford-Shakespeare Books

Copies of the following books and booklets are available at the office of The Shakespeare Fellowship, 17 East 48th Street, New York, N. Y. Prices listed include postage.

"*Shakespeare*" Identified in *Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, by J. Thomas Looney. \$4.10.

*The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, by B. M. Ward. (Orders on this book will take time, as it must be sent from England.)

*Life Story of Edward de Vere* as "*William Shakespeare*," by Percy Allen. \$2.10.

*Lord Oxford was "Shakespeare"*, by Lieut.-Colonel Montagu W. Douglas. \$2.10.

*The Man Who was Shakespeare*, by Eva Turner Clark. \$3.50.

*Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays* (printed in England as *Shakespeare's Plays in the Order of Their Writing*), by Eva Turner Clark. \$3.00.

*The Satirical Comedy, Love's Labour's Lost*, by Eva Turner Clark. 75c.

*Elizabethan Mystery Man*, by Charles Wisner Barrell. 25c (five copies for \$1.00).

"*Ashbourne*" *Portrait of Shakespeare*, by Gerald H. Rendall, B.D., Litt.D., LL.D. 25c.

*Ben Jonson and the First Folio Edition of Shakespeare's Plays*, by Gerald H. Rendall, B.D., Litt.D., LL.D. 25c.

*Shakespeare Authorship, a Summary of Evidence*, by Gilbert Standen. 25c.

Also available are a few bound copies of Volume of *The NEWS-LETTER*, published by The Shakespeare Fellowship, American Branch. \$2.00.