

# News-Letter

## THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP

— AMERICAN BRANCH —

*The Shakespeare Fellowship was founded in London in 1922 under the presidency of Sir George Greenwood.*

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### The Great Debate of 1892-3

#### Bacon Versus Shakspeare

*Why do we hold our tongues,  
That most may claim this argument?*

Macbeth, II.3.126.

In the last number of the NEWS-LETTER appeared an account of a debate which ran through some fifteen numbers of the Arena Magazine in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The distinguished Shakespearean scholars who formed the jury, twenty-five in number, divided into four groups: one man who voted unreservedly for Bacon; six or seven who were equally dogmatic in their support of the Stratford man; a dozen or so who voted for Shakspeare only because he was in possession and it was felt that the Baconians had not proved their man the author; and four who stated flatly that neither candidate's claims satisfied them and that the real author was yet to be discovered.

With the Oxford case in mind, I reread all the testimony (which I had originally followed with great interest as a high school sophomore) and found important points brought out, which have not recently been used, and which are far stronger arguments for our candidate than they ever were for his wife's cousin.

Mr. Reed, the first debater, says that to attribute the works to the uneducated Stratford man involves an improbability so great "that it is very nearly a violation of the laws of nature." To assign them to Bacon also involves some improbability, for his name, for three hundred years, has been "a synonym for all that is philosophical and profound," and the plays show genius of another kind. But the improbability in the case of Bacon is small when compared with the impossibility that the Stratford man, with his upbringing, could have composed them.

Mr. Reed then takes up point after point: (1)

The author had a profound knowledge of Latin, Greek, French, and Italian. Helena's lament over a lost friendship has its origin "in an untranslated Greek poem, published at Venice in 1504." The French Commentaries which contained the celebrated case of Hales vs. Petit, "which was satirized by the grave-diggers, were translated into English for the first time more than half a century after *Hamlet* was written." He quotes eight eminent scholars to prove that the author had university training. (2) The author was a jurist. Among others he quotes Franklin Fiske Heard: "Among these (legal terms) there are some which few but a lawyer would, and some even which none but a lawyer could, have written." (3) The author was a philosopher. "He was inconceivably wise; the others conceivable," says Emerson. "The wisest of men, as the greatest of poets," says Walter Savage Landor. "An amazing genius which could pervade all nature at a glance, and to whom nothing within the limits of the universe appeared to be unknown," says Whalley.

Next, Mr. Reed pays his respects to the Stratford man. He speaks of the illiteracy which surrounded him in his homes, both before and after his supposed burst of literary production in London. He points out that although nearly thirty spellings of the family name were found in the various records of the time (all of them, by the way, indicating that the first syllable was pronounced "Shack"), *not once* is there used the spelling "Shakespeare" or "Shake-speare," which is *always* used in connection with any printed copy of plays or poems. "Literature had an absolute monopoly of it."

Then the debater takes up the question of the Stratford man's handwriting. After quoting the editors of the First Folio about the author's writing, "with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers," he remarks that it is very queer that he should have reserved all his blots and illegible scrawls for the six signatures which are the only samples of his chirography which have come down to us.

Next, Mr. Reed takes up the question of *Venus and Adonis*, the "first heir of my invention," therefore ante-dating any of the plays. This means that Richard Grant White and Furnivall are right in dating it 1584. (We recall that two later Shakespeare authorities, Churton Collins and Dr. A. S. Cairncross, both think that it must have been written in Stratford before the hegira to London.) Reed asks how this classic masterpiece, written in "the purest, most elegant, and scholarly English of that day," could have been composed by a youth of twenty, reared in a town where only seven out of nineteen aldermen and burgesses could sign their names, where the common speech was a patois rude to the verge of barbarism (remember that the recruits from Stratford, in 1588, had to use an interpreter to transmit the commands of their London drill-master); and where, as White admits, outside of the school and the church, there were not half-a-dozen books in the town.

He speaks of the date of *Hamlet*, "not later than 1589," as proved by a dozen references to it before the date usually given in the orthodox editions (1602). He asks how a youth from Stratford, without a single aid, could have written this masterpiece at the age of twenty-four, saying that this would seem to involve a miracle as great as that attributed to Joshua—in other words, a suspension of the laws of cause and effect.

He recalls that the Stratfordians try to explain the early references to *Hamlet* and the dates of 1593 and 1594 in Henslowe's diary for *Hamlet* and *King Lear* by saying that there were earlier plays by other dramatists who used the same names for their works; and points out how absurd it would be for a playwright, in putting out his masterpieces, to give them names already well known to the public as belonging to the works of other writers.

Mr. Reed next reminds us that, in his early forties, our hero suddenly quits the exciting, intellectual life of London, retires to the dirty village where he had spent his boyhood, and there drops his intellectual life as abruptly as it was begun. He shows supreme indifference to the fate of his works, many

of which were still in manuscript and were not to be seen by the general public until years after his death: "Such indifference to the children of his brain and so complete a seclusion from the refinements of life present to us a picture, not only painful to contemplate, but one that stultifies human nature itself."

The debater tells that the references to Shakespeare in the literature of the years when he was supposedly at the height of his fame (1592-1616) have been carefully "collated and published." They number, says Mr. Reed, one hundred and twenty-five; one hundred and twenty to the author of his works, with no personal word of identification; five to him personally, namely, one by Greene—the "shake-scene" remark—which, as many of our readers know, was never connected with the Stratford man until Thomas Tyrwhitt, one hundred and sixty years after his death, jumped to this conclusion, to the great joy of later Stratfordians, who, as Alden Brooks says, seized upon it as a heaven-sent appearance of their hero's name out of the obscurity where it had reposed since the twins were baptized in 1585. The second "reference" is part of the first: namely, Chettle's apology to one of the "scholars," friends of Greene's, to whom the dying man's letter is addressed, in which he warns them against some loud, coarse, "upstart crow" of a player. (It is strange that in all these hundred and sixty years since Tyrwhitt, no one has noticed that it is impossible for one man to be both the "crow" and one of the men who are being warned against him.) So Reed's second "reference," like his first, disappears.

The third reference is the item in the diary of John Manningham (1601), where he says that he has heard about an actor named Shackspere anticipating one of his fellows named Richard Burbage and sending out word to the man waiting outside that "William the Conqueror takes precedence over Richard the Second." Manningham, in order to make sure that his joke will be understood, inserts in parentheses, ("Shackspere's name William"). This sounds to me like just a common, vulgar anecdote such as might be bandied around, pinned on any names that will go together to fit the point of the gag, and the fact that Manningham has to diagram the joke would indicate that the average person would not connect the name with the plays with which the public are slowly becoming acquainted. Only a few days after Manningham tells this anecdote, he writes that he has seen a comedy which amused him greatly, called "Twelfth Night."

But either he does not know who wrote the comedy, or he fails to connect the name with that of the hero of his story. I can't find much comfort for the Stratfordians in Mr. Reed's third "reference." The fourth is from an anonymous writer (1605) who calls attention to his penurious habits, his chronic disregard of obligations, and his wealth. This may fit the Stratford man all right, but it has nothing in it to apply to the playwright. The fifth "reference," according to Mr. Reed, is that found in a letter of Heywood, wherein the writer "is indignant because two of his poems had been published by a piratical printer as Shakespeare's, but (he affirms) without the latter's consent."

I may say, in passing, that I once examined this supposed reference, and discovered, as I expected, that Stratfordians, eager, as usual, to grasp at any straws that will keep their cause afloat, have read into it something which is not there. Shakespeare's name is not mentioned. It is taken for granted by these critics that Heywood is writing about "The Passionate Pilgrim," but if one reads the reference carefully, it is apparent that it is some other collection of poems, for the man who is indignant has recently (1612) published other poems, which puts Shakespeare completely out of the picture. So disappear even the supposed five references to the Stratford man. And Mr. Reed is right in saying, "Excepting Ben Jonson, not a word, not the remotest hint from friend or foe within the circle of his acquaintance, of a transcendent genius, or indeed, of any literary ability whatever."

He closes this first installment with three quotations on the Shakespeare question:

"I cannot marry these facts to his verse." Emerson. — "A mere fabulous story, a blind and extravagant error." Schlegel. — "What! are we to have miracles in sport? Does God choose idiots by whom to convey divine truths to man?" Coleridge.

In a later issue, I hope to give our readers a digest of some of the other articles. The strange thing to me is that, after the weaknesses of the Stratford case were so thoroughly exposed, why it is that our colleges and schools went right on teaching it just as though these deep scholars who made up the jury had backed up the Stratford story one hundred per cent. If just at this time (1893), some one had appeared with the Oxford theory, the whole hoax would have been exploded. It was the ciphers and hocus-pocus which the Baconians used that gave the Stratfordians a new lease of life.

Louis P. Bénétz

## Shakspere-Shakespeare

WILLM SHAKSPERE, OF STRATFORD-ON-AVON.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *nom de plume* OF

EDWARD DE VERE.

It is not difficult to understand how the name "Shakespeare" has confused all those who have studied the drama of the Elizabethan period when we find that there were over one hundred variants in the spelling of that name. These vary from Saxper to Shakespeare. However, about ten variants cover a large majority of the uses and of these the three most used at that time and in the order named were Shakspere, Shake-spear and Shakespeare. The last mentioned has become the most popular with writers and readers during the century last past.

SHAKSPERE. Heretofore it has been assumed that a man, born and reared in Stratford, with a name similar to the well known "Shakespeare," wrote the greatest master-pieces in the English language. Scholars and historians have carefully investigated his life in their search for truth and now have a fairly clear picture of the man and his ability. The information thus acquired gives convincing evidence that this man, a butcher's son, was uneducated and had not written a line of either verse or prose.

The family name of this Stratford resident was spelled Shakspere and evidently pronounced Shaxper. From the town and church records it was found that this Willm Shakspere was one of ten children born to John and Mary Shakspere and that five of these children lived to maturity. While the parents and the children were illiterates, the records show they all lived and died under the name of Shakspere. Therefore there is no doubt as to the spelling of the name of the Stratford family.

Six signatures of this Willm Shakspere have been located, one on each of three sheets of paper composing his will, and the other three on business documents. All six signatures are different, scrawling and therefore not easily deciphered, but they are the only written evidence in existence; assuming they are genuine, the said Willm Shakspere used that name and thus acknowledged it as his own.

By his use of it in each and every case pertaining to his personal affairs and his business, it is not unreasonable to assume that if he wrote plays or sonnets that were publishable he would have at-

tached that name thereto. However, certain classical plays and sonnets appearing during this period bear only the names Shake-speare or Shakespeare. This fact indicates that another person using the names mentioned was the author of these published literary works and that the Stratford Shakspeare had no part in their composition.

**SHAKESPEARE.** The words 'shake' and 'spear' are of very ancient English origin. We find them as parts of other old words such as spearshaft, spearsaking—the shaking or flourishing of a spear or shaft. These words are frequently found in early English history and were even in use in Bible times. It seems the words meant then much the same as they do today for they had to do with boldness, fearlessness, or threatening with a lance or spear. As the name of a family, or of an individual, variations of Shakespeare appear in records as far back as the thirteenth century in England.

On account of his position, as Lord Great Chamberlain of England and a member of Queen Elizabeth's court, Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, a brilliant scholar, could not publish his writings over his own name. The adoption of a *nom de plume* was therefore necessary as an outlet for his literary compositions.

It is this writer's opinion that Edward de Vere toyed with pseudonyms that he might adopt long before he decided definitely to use one. Here was a traveled scholar with great ability and a burning urge to write, but laws, conditions, and his official position required that caution be exercised. With the passing years there were personal reasons for having a pen-name that could withstand slurs similar to those cast against and suffered by his "good name" in the past. He had already secretly written and accumulated a great amount of literary material and was continuing to write in secret with still larger plans for the future.

It was natural, in composing a fictitious name, that he would select ancient words such as 'shake' and 'spear', or possibly an old, almost unused name combining such words, which would best fit into his own personal history. Trademarks, copy-righted names and name-words are so constructed today.

The name Shake-speare (hyphenated word) can rightly be tied into his personal and family history. When Edward de Vere was given an honorary degree by Cambridge University (and this was in the presence of Queen Elizabeth, where no one would hardly dare to state other than fact) the speaker recited:—

"... English poetical measures have been sung by thee long enough . . . thou hast drunk deep draughts not only of the muses of France and Italy, but hast learned manners of many men, and the arts of foreign countries. . . . O thou hero, worthy of renown, throw away bloodless books and writings that serve no useful purpose; now is the time for thee to sharpen thy spear. . . . Minerva strengthens thy right hand . . . thine eyes flash fire, thy countenance shakes a spear. . . ."

Further, regarding reference to "spear shaking," we should not overlook the fact that his crest, as the young Lord Bulbeck, was a lion holding or shaking a broken spear. Therefore a decision to select a pseudonym like Shake-speare was both logical and fitting in his case.

With the foregoing information we can well understand why that name would be satisfactory to him personally and also was one that would not readily be attached to him in the eyes of the small reading public. It must be borne in mind that little attention was paid to the names attached to verse- or prose-writing in those days.

Even though caution and care were exercised in adopting his *nom de plume*, (he afterwards called it his invention) he did not use it on his shorter poems and verses, some of which got into print, because these items were harmless and could safely appear over his own name.

In 1591 and 1592 changes in the theatrical situation in London created ruptures and disturbance amongst both actors and play-writers. The plague had reduced attendance. The grouping or assembling of people in buildings was always one of the arguments against theatres when the plague was prevalent and, in addition, this was the period when penalties were imposed for not attending church. Most church people, certainly the Puritans, were opposed to the theatre.

About this time a man from Stratford appeared in London and was employed to take care of gentlemen's (Lord Oxford and his friends) horses while they attended the theatre. When Edward de Vere discovered that this Stratford man had a name—Willm Shakspeare—very similar to the *nom de plume* that he had worked out for himself, this hostler was unknowingly in line for permanent employment. Being an illiterate made him doubly valuable in the hands of this brilliant scholar. Therefore Willm was given regular duties in connection with the troupe of players and was retained as a theatrical employee for several years. His illit-

eracy eliminated him from any position of consequence so we must assume he was merely a janitor, a stage hand or possibly a helper to a property man. This conclusion is reached because he is not mentioned amongst the list of actors, nor does the name Willm Shakspeare appear on the actor payrolls.

Of course de Vere was fully aware of everything theatrical in London. He had plays to be acted, verses to be published, and now that he had a workable *nom de plume*, he decided to make use of it. It would not be difficult to hide behind a man who had a similar name, when the owner of that name was one who would not know what it was all about even though he should get into difficulties, or possibly should be arrested on account of what the verses or plays contained.

The first venture or trial of the pen-name might best be verses. Therefore, with everything arranged, there appeared in 1593 the well edited and nicely printed poem—*Venus and Adonis*—and to this Edward de Vere attached his *nom de plume* William Shakspeare. Being the first use of his pen-name, it was of course the first time this name appeared in print. He states this fact in the dedication by terming it the first use of "my invention."

There are reasons to believe that the poem went to the printers bearing the name Shake-spear (hyphenated word) and that the printers omitted the hyphen in setting up the word. This belief is based on the fact that later, when other MSS bearing the name Shake-spear reached the printers, they likewise, though not always, omitted the hyphen. The first play to bear the name "W. Shakspeare" was *Love's Labour's Lost*, published in 1598. The use of the initial *W* for the word William and adding of the letter *e* at the end of the name were planned deviations of the original pen-name of Shake-spear. No doubt the printers were instructed by de Vere to make slight variations. A little confusion with the name would help rather than hinder his plans. However, the name of the butcher's son—Willm Shakspeare—who lived in Stratford, has never appeared on a printed literary production.

Thus the name "William Shakspeare" came into use, and from that time onward it has continued to be known as the name of the author of the great English classics. That *nom de plume* has kept, as it was planned to do, the real author, Edward de Vere, unidentified insofar as the public was concerned, for over three hundred years. A group of his relatives (the Pembroke family) and friends (Ben Jonson and a few others), knew all about the secret and they did everything necessary to preserve it

after de Vere's death.

There were other factors that helped greatly as time went on. The most important of which was the promotion of Stratford-on-Avon, its buildings and relics. This became solely a money-making scheme, and the gullible public accepted that place with its mythical stories about Willm Shakspeare as being true. In 1769 David Garrick bitterly condemned the deception that was going on there, but it has continued on until the present time.

Only since 1920, when J. Thomas Looney gave to the world his great discovery of Edward de Vere, in his book entitled *Shakspeare Identified*, has the public learned the facts. Since that important literary revelation was made, over thirty volumes on Edward de Vere have been published in all parts of the world and scholars everywhere are beginning to recognize him as the real author of what are known as the great Shakespearian plays and sonnets.

Flodden W. Heron

## Micro-Films

The London *Times Literary Supplement* (June 21, 1941) reports that the "many thousands of the valuable manuscripts in the possession of the Dean and Canons of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, are being micro-filmed so that if they are destroyed by enemy action or fire the matter in them will still be preserved." After commenting on the very early date of some of these documents, the *TLS* continues, "It is much easier to read the peculiar penmanship of the medieval clerk when seen greatly enlarged on the screen, and it will be possible for research workers to consult the documents without visiting Windsor—at Yale or Harvard, for instance."

The *Saturday Review of Literature* tells of a similar rescue of rare books belonging to the British Museum: "Deep down in an abandoned Welsh coal mine a librarian is working; the strangest place for a librarian, and his task, too, a strange one. On rough shelves lining the mine's long gallery are several million dollars' worth of the world's rarest books and manuscripts evacuated from the British Museum. The man photographs them page by page, on micro-film, and sends each finished roll to America. Photographs of 1,000,000 pages have already crossed the Atlantic safely; not a foot of film has been lost."

These steps in the right direction should be followed by many others, in this country as well as in England. There are priceless documents in the archives of Washington, as well as old manuscripts

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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.

in some of our great libraries, which should be made available to students by means of micro-films. They would thus be saved from the wear and tear of frequent handling, a great consideration, for old paper breaks and crumbles, and the importance of saving them from fire cannot be over-estimated. Some of this country's earliest records are still to be found in county courthouses, where the space allotted them is inadequate and where the offices are ill-equipped to handle them. Copying such records by hand has been done too often by untrained workers who fail to read correctly the difficult old script. Micro-films would obviate this unfortunate result.

## Enemy Action

The Bacon Society of London, according to the July number of *Baconiana*, has lost its headquarters and the offices of its Hon. Secretary, Mr. Valentine

Smith, at Number 3, Farringdon Avenue, E. C. 4, through enemy action, having been completely destroyed. "Mr. Smith's energy enabled him to save the Society's records and correspondence files, and to remove the library bequeathed to the Society by the late Mr. B. G. Theobald from Brighton in the space of a few hours before this place became a prohibited area. He has rescued from Canonbury Tower many van loads of books and pamphlets which are the property of the Society."

The Shakespeare Fellowship extends its deepest sympathy to the Bacon Society for the loss of its offices. The Society is, however, to be congratulated upon the saving of its records, correspondence files, and books.

*Baconiana* also tells us that "in the heavy raid on London on the night of Saturday, 10th May, Gray's Inn Hall and the adjoining Chapel were completely destroyed by fire." It is a grievous task to record London's losses of her heritage from a glorious past, all the result of "enemy action."

## Professor Kittredge

George Lyman Kittredge, retired Professor of English of Harvard University, died Wednesday, July 23rd, at the age of eighty-one.

When he retired in 1938, Professor Kittredge had taught English at Harvard for forty-eight years and had won a worldwide fame as a distinguished scholar and educator. He had a profound knowledge of the Shakespeare plays, of Chaucer, and other great literature of the past.

## Shakspeare, Shakespeare and de Vere

A delightful little book, which can be read and re-read with pleasure and satisfaction, is *Shakspeare, Shakespeare and de Vere*, by Louis P. Bénézet, published in 1937 by the Granite State Press, Manchester, New Hampshire. In it, Professor Bénézet compares the twin mysteries of Shakspeare and Shakespeare, and arrives at the conclusion that only Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, could have been the author of the Shakespeare plays. He confirms his solution of the mystery by an analysis of the sonnets, which are perfectly applicable to Edward de Vere, but entirely inapplicable to William Shakspeare of Stratford, from anything that can be learned of his life.

As an appendix, Professor Bénézet includes an Elizabethan poem of a unique kind. He challenges his reader to name the author.

## Oxford's Pseudonym

In view of Mrs. Eva Turner Clark's gracious gesture of giving her book, *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays*, to members of The Shakespeare Fellowship, may I draw the members' attention to the closing lines of Mrs. Clark's preface to her volume?

I have often wondered how Mr. Looney's revelation of Shakespeare's identity can be more widely circulated.

A step in the right direction could be taken if our members would note, learn by rote, and quote the last paragraph of the Preface, on page vii, of *Hidden Allusions*:

Let it inform and convince your hearers that Lord Oxford wrote the plays and state clearly that he wrote them over the pseudonym of William Shakespeare, just as Charles Lutwidge Dodgson wrote over the pseudonym of Lewis Carroll.

And as there are many lovers of 'Alice' who do not know the real name of Lewis Carroll, so there would be many who might not know the real name of the man who wrote over the pseudonym of William Shakespeare. But it should be taught and explained and proved until accepted.

For we do not want,—and couldn't if we did,—to change the name on books or on theater programs. We do not want to say or read, *Othello*, by Edward De Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, any more than we would say, casually, Alice's Adventures In Wonderland, by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson or Tom Sawyer by Samuel Clemens.

We say Elia's Essays, not Charles Lamb's, and we will continue to say Shakespeare's King Lear, not Oxford's King Lear.

We do not expect the books in the Folger Library to be rebound or retitled and we do not wish new editions of the plays to be ascribed to De Vere.

Our mission should be—must be—to teach that the Earl of Oxford wrote the plays and that he used the name William Shakespeare as a pen name, with the full knowledge and willingness of the Stratford man who bore that name.

If every United States citizen could be made by law to read Mr. Looney's book, there would be no need to reiterate its message. It is all so indubitably true, that he who reads it *must* believe. I have never known an intelligent reader of the book who did not believe it implicitly.

When missionaries go to heathen countries to spread the gospel, they take Bibles with them. We cannot spread our discoveries except by Mr.

Looney's book, and—the book is unobtainable!

Misfortune followed that blessed volume. Its first publication was held back by one war, its present progress is impeded by another. Even the few copies left in London have been destroyed and we have but a handful of copies over here. What is wanted is a very large and very inexpensive edition, and at present that does not look at all probable.

So I ask that when members of our Fellowship explain our beliefs to novices, that they dwell on the fact that the name of William Shakespeare is not thrown into the discard, but is the acknowledged pseudonym of Edward De Vere, and instance the case of Lewis Carroll.

Oxford used a pseudonym lest he incur the displeasure of Queen Elizabeth. And Charles L. Dodgson, the clergyman, had not the same but a similar reason.

Let us preach the gospel so perfectly set forth in Mrs. Clark's invaluable declaration:

"The name, William Shakespeare, is intended to be considered as a pseudonym for the Earl of Oxford. He chose to make use of it, and it would be a mistake to change it since the dramas have so long been known by it, although the desirability of knowing the truth about the authorship is unquestionable."

Carolyn Wells

## Letters from Members Brief Excerpts

Professor Everett L. Getchell, Boston University, School of Education: "We had Dr. Bénézet speak in our 'Contemporary Writers' course. His zeal and enthusiasm carried all before him. I think he won every hearer to his cause. So there are some seventy new adherents to spread the gospel of the seventeenth Earl of Oxford."

John L. Astley-Cock, Chicago Tribune: "I became an Oxfordian immediately after reading Looney's book, the original edition soon after publication; up till then from 1894 I was completely agnostic, neither Baconian nor Stratfordian. . . . So far as I know there is but one other member of the Fellowship in these parts, at the University of Chicago, whom I have not yet met; I have a couple of friends whom I have enthused over de Vere, but I wish we had a chapter here from a missionary point of view!"

James W. Morris, Associate Justice, District Court of the United States for the District of Colum-

bia: "In these times when tragic and catastrophic events press upon us all, it is refreshing and restful to occasionally struggle with a problem which is both sufficiently interesting and remote."

Miss Margaret L. Knapp, Hartford, Connecticut: "In the midst of the world's misery and turmoil, I try to remember what is easy to forget, that England's struggle did not end with the destruction of the Armada, but that the [Shakespeare] plays were not only acted, but written, some of them, in time of war. I think, however, that it was easier then to preserve one's detachment than now, when the tempo is so terribly accelerated. . . . Anything that tends to keep alive the free spirit in mankind is doubly valuable just now."

Mrs. Frank J. Sprague, New York: "The last issue of the NEWS-LETTER was read through with pleasure and profit, as always."

Philip Van Valkenburgh, Baldwin, Long Island, N. Y.: "Last winter I carried with me to Florida Mr. Looney's book, two of Mrs. Clark's books, together with the plays, this year I will do the same; new knowledge necessitates a new reading of each play, and a better understanding and interpretation of Lord Oxford's genius."

Mrs. George A. Ball, of Muncie, Indiana: "The more I read along the line of the Oxford theory, the more convinced I am that it is the only solution to what have been impossible conditions that cannot be explained any other way."

Mr. F. Allen Burt, of Brookline, Massachusetts: "My membership in the Fellowship is an increasing joy to me. As an advertising man and something of a researcher, the desire for exactness and truth make the quest for final proof of Oxford's authorship a sort of delightful game that will not be laid down."

Professor Pierre S. Porohovshikov, Atlanta, Georgia: "It is a distressing fact that it is now more than a hundred years since Lord Palmerston in England and Delia Bacon in America first showed to the public that the legend of Stratford is only good for infantile minds. It is a shame for our civilization that that silly story has lasted as long as several decades and that school children are still brought up with a firm belief in the lie. . . . But we, the heretics, may confidently say that the old structure of ignorance and wilful blindness has been shaken to the foundations and cannot survive much longer."

## Elizabethan Stage Scenery More Elaborate Than Ordinarily Believed

The scene-shifter is supposed to have had far less to do in Queen Elizabeth's day than at present. John Addington Symonds thus expresses the general opinion: "It is difficult for us to realize the simplicity with which the stage was mounted in the London theatres. Scenery may be said to have been almost wholly absent. Even in Masques performed at Court, on which immense sums of money were lavished, and which employed the ingenuity of men like Inigo Jones [reigns of James I and Charles I], effect was obtained by groupings of figures in dances, by tableaux and processions, gilded chariots, temples, fountains, and the like, far more than by scene-painting. Upon the public stage such expenditure had, of course, to be avoided. Attention was concentrated on the actors, with whose movements, boldly defined against a simple background, nothing interfered. The stage on which they played was narrow, projecting into the yard, surrounded on all sides by spectators."

Dr. H. H. Furness says, in a note on *Much Ado About Nothing* (*Shakespeare Variorum*), "I think there were more scenery and stage accessories in those days than is generally believed." Then he asks, "Why should the rough makeshifts by the rude mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* excite such mirth in Theseus and his court if they were not seen to be caricatures of the real stage-scenery to which that court was accustomed?"

An examination of the records of the Court Revels will throw some light on the subject. A useful volume, *Plays and Masques at Court During the Reigns of Elizabeth, James and Charles*, was published in 1926 by Dr. Susan Mary Steele, Professor of English at Judson College. The book was compiled from materials taken from the "official records of court performances found in the office-books of the Revels and in payments to actors; and contemporary allusions found in correspondence, memoirs, diaries, and the like." For the Elizabethan period, much of the material had been already published by Professor Albert Feuillerat in *Documents Relating to the Office of the Revels in the Time of Queen Elizabeth* (1908).

Even before Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558, "plays, masques, and other diversions were an established part of the holiday amusement of the English court." During the first decade of her reign, most of the holiday entertainments appear to



have been in the form of masques, though when she visited the universities, according to Nichols' *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, elaborate plays, generally in Latin, were arranged for her pleasure.

One of the earliest plays for which we have a description of the scenery is "Edwardes tragedie," supposed to be Richard Edwards's *Damon and Pythias*, produced at Whitehall, Christmas 1564. For this greatly admired play there were provided "Diuers townes and howsses and other devises and Clouds." For a play produced the following February, "Diuers Cities and Townes and the Emperours pallace & other devises" were furnished by the Revels Office.

In 1556 Richard Edwards produced *Palamon and Arcite* which pleased critics even better than *Damon and Pythias*. In this play, says Nichols, quoting from Wood's MSS, "was acted a cry of hounds in the Quadrant, upon the train of a fox in the hunting of Theseus, with which the young scholars, who stood in the windows, were so much taken (supposing it was real), that they cried out, 'Now, now!—there, there! he's caught, he's caught!' All which the Queen merrily beholding, said, 'O excellent! Those boys, in very truth, are ready to leap out of the windows, to follow the hounds.' . . . In the acting of the said play, there was a good part performed by the Lady Amelia [supposedly the pretty boy, Peter Carew], who, for gathering her flowers prettily in a garden then represented, and singing sweetly in the time of March, received eight angels for a gracious reward by her Majesty's command."

In 1568 was produced, among other plays, "*Orestes* and a *Tragedie of the Kinge of Scottes*, to ye whiche belonged diuers howses, for the setting forth of the same as Stratoes howse, Gobbyns howse, Orestioes howse Rome, the Pallace of prosperitie Scotlande and a gret Castell one thother side."

For six plays produced during the season of 1571-1572, all the suitable apparel for the actors was supplied by the Revels Office, "also apt howses: made of Canvasse, framed, fashioned & paynted accordingly: as might best serve their severall purposes. Together with sundry properties incident: fashioned, paynted, garnished, and bestowed as the parties them selves required & needed." For the play given on January 6, 1572, the Revels Office records the following: "John Izarde for mony to him due for his device in counterfeting Thunder & Lightning in the playe of *Narcissus* being requested thervnto by the seide Master of the office And for sundry necessaries by him spent therein

. . . xxij".

Another season, the Office of the Revels provided "A tree of Holly for the Duttons playe . . . other holly for the forest." Again, "to paynte for howses for the players & for other properties as Monsters, great hollow trees & suche other." Properties needed in the different plays are not always listed in the Accounts, but are frequently mentioned in this way, "Thoroughly furnished garnished & fytted with the store of thoffice and provisions following," showing that scenery and accessories were kept on hand from which new plays could be provided, sometimes with repairs and alterations.

A play at Hampton Court, December 25, 1574, required "iiij Lodes of Tymber for the Rock (which Mr. Rosse made for my Lord of Leicesters menns playe) & for other frames for players howses ij' iiij'." In 1576, for *The historie of the Collyer*, a "paynted cloth and two frames" were taken to Hampton Court. Often the warrant for payment reads somewhat as follows: "For making their whole Companie and furniture to present a play before her Ma'tie," without listing details of the "furniture." The "cariadge of the stuffe" to or from the court is often recorded while the articles carried are not given in the Accounts.

Occasionally, perhaps because the Revels Office could not supply the required stage-setting from its store and it became necessary to provide new scenery, the Accounts tell a fairly complete story. For *The history of the Knight in the Burnyng Rock*, produced at Whitehall, March 1, 1579, there were provided "Long sparre poles of furre . . . peeces of Elme cut compasse . . . Doble quarters . . . single quarters . . . Deale bourds . . . Elme bourdes, 153. foote . . . in all," and nails of various sizes were employed in the construction of the Rock. Its size is further indicated by the item "for mending a scalling Ladder that serued at the Rock." Sixpence was paid "for Coales at the Courte to drie the Painters worke on the Rock." A "cloud" was employed in the same play. Ten shillings was paid "ffor a hoope and blew Lynnen cloth to mend the clowde that was Borrowed and cut to serue the rock in the plaie of *the burnyng knight* . . ." and "for nayles of sundry sortes vsed about the Clowde and drawing it vpp and downe;" also "for a coard and pulleys to draw vpp the clowde."

Besides actors' apparel and properties furnished by the Revels Office for *A history of the Duke of Millayn* and *the Marques of Mantua*, produced December 26, 1579, "a countrie howse" and "a

Cyttye" were supplied. For another play about the same time "A Cittie and a Battlement" were required. Similar items are listed many times. Many ells of sarcenet were used for most productions, "sarcenet" being a gauzy kind of silk, and the length of an "ell" being forty-five inches.

For *A storie of Pompey*, January 6, 1581, "was ymployed newe one great city, a senate howse and eight ells of dobbel sarcenet for curtens." During the season of 1581-1582, among properties provided were "a Mount with a Castle vpon the toppe of it, a Dragon & a Artificiall Tree" which cost £100; an "artificiall Lyon & a horse made of wood," and three painted cloths.

Similar items for stage settings are occasionally recorded until 1584, but after that year they are not set down in the Accounts, nor seldom even the name of the play. This was probably due to the fact that at this time a new Clerk Comptroller of the Records of the Revels, William Honing, was appointed. From this time on, the most meagre details are given of productions at Court, merely place, date, name of company, and warrant for payment.

Failure to record details of stage-settings is no indication that plays were being produced less lavishly. On the contrary, from the time of the erection of the first theatre in 1576 to the end of Elizabeth's reign, dramatic art was developing rapidly and we can only suppose that scenery and properties kept pace with the art. We may learn something from sermons preached through this period, for the clergy resented the better attendance at the theatres. An excerpt from one sermon, 1577, follows: "Behold the sumptuous Theatre houses, a continual monument of London's prodigality." Another sermon, 1578, refers to "the gorgeous playing place erected in the Fields." Gabriel Harvey spoke of the "painted theatres," "painted stage." (J. Q. Adams, in *Shakespearean Playhouses*). Even Tom Coryat, in his *Crudities*, says that the comic theatre in Venice is "very beggarly and base in comparison of our stately playhouses in England; neither can their actors compare with ours for apparel, shows, and music."

In 1583, twelve of the most important actors in London were chosen from the best of the old companies to form a new company under the patronage of the Queen and, for the rest of that decade, it enjoyed high popularity. One must assume that these very able actors were provided with all the necessary equipment, stage-settings as well as apparel, for producing advantageously the finer dramas written during the 1580's.

It must be admitted that records of the Court Revels give only one side of the picture, yet it was to the ornate public theatres that the clergy objected and to which Tom Coryat gave praise. While plays at Court were always more handsomely produced, it is safe to assume, from what contemporaries tell us, that scenery matched the houses in which the plays were given. Some of the most magnificent homes in England were being built about this time and it must be conceded that masons and carpenters who could achieve such fine results in palaces, could equally apply their inventive genius, along with that of actors and managers, to the improvement of the stage.

The first public playhouse built in London exclusively for the production of plays was the Theatre, erected in 1576, but, like the inn-yards where plays had long been given, the roof covered only part of it, leaving the "groundlings" subject to vagaries of the weather. Those who could afford boxes in the galleries were protected from a straight downpour of rain, and so, doubtless, the stage was equally protected. This was important for the elaborate costumes generally worn and for any scenery in use at the time.

For the inclement winter season, a small portion of the priory of Blackfriars was operated as a so-called "private" theatre for several years, and a little later, the singing-school of St. Paul's Cathedral. While these playhouses were extremely small in comparison with the large public theatres (the Curtain was built a year after the Theatre, and others followed soon after), some of the best plays appear to have been given in them. The price of admission was double what it was at the Theatre and persons who "went thither were gentle by birth and by behaviour as well; and playwrights, we are told, could always feel sure there of the calm attention of a choice audience." The declared purpose for which plays were given at the private playhouses was to rehearse the actors in their parts so they might give finished productions at Court. This must have been true also of the Queen's Company, which generally played at the Theatre. Fleay, in his *History of the London Stage (Introduction, p. 11)*, is emphatic in his assertion of "the absolute subordination of public performances to Court presentations."

While the cost of elaborate scenery, stage-settings, and apparel for the actors was probably prohibitive for both public and private playhouses, nevertheless, since companies which made use of these houses played also at Court where lavish pro-

ductions were the rule, they must have employed less expensive substitutes or they would hardly have been practiced for the stage-settings in which they were eventually to appear.

Gabriel Harvey has told us that John Lyly was "vice-master" of Paul's and "foole-master" of the Theatre, meaning that Lyly was the assistant director of the company of children playing at the singing-school of St. Paul's Cathedral and of the comedians of the Queen's Company playing at the Theatre. The question is, since Lyly was the assistant, who was the director? All through the period when he was connected with these two companies, he was employed as secretary by the Earl of Oxford, who was known as a dramatist and the patron of a playing company. It is a logical assumption that Lord Oxford was the director behind the scenes, though it did not become his rank as hereditary Lord Great Chamberlain of England, to assume such a position publicly, since with the Puritans, a large portion of the population, the stage was held in low repute, and the time was one of great political turmoil, owing to the troubles with Mary Stuart and the war with Spain.

It is evident that Lord Oxford had a special interest in plays produced at the little theatre in Blackfriars because he took over the lease of it from Henry Evans in 1583 and, while he is supposed to have presented it to John Lyly, his secretary, the annual rents paid in 1584 were £20 and £8 for Lord Oxford and Lyly respectively. Their tenancy at Blackfriars did not last long, owing to the objections to a theatre in the vicinity by the owner, Sir William More, and it was at this time that the company moved to the singing-school of St. Paul's.

It was a source of special grief to Lord Burghley that his son-in-law had no regard for the value of money and that he would leave his family destitute, though he had inherited one of the greatest fortunes in the realm. Lord Burghley objected to "his lewd friends, who still rule him by flatteries." The word "lewd" did not then mean sinful or vicious, as it does today, but "lay" or "unlearned," and we may suppose that the reference was to actors and playwrights, with whom he must have been closely associated. That Lord Oxford was the greatest spendthrift of Elizabeth's reign, we may rest assured. That most of his money was expended on the improvement of the stage, scenery, costumes, and in the payment of actors and playwrights, we may well believe. When in 1586 he could no longer carry on his extravagant methods in producing plays, the

Queen came to his rescue with the grant of £1,000 a year, which, as we learn from another of Lord Burghley's letters, he continued to spend on his "lewd friends." The Queen, however, understood and approved, for in 1586 the war with Spain began and she valued the stage for purposes of education and propaganda. Years after, Thomas Heywood wrote: "Plays have made the ignorant more apprehensive, taught the unlearned the knowledge of many famous histories, instructed such as cannot read in the discovery of all our English chronicles . . . plays are writ with this aim, and carried with this method, to teach their subjects obedience to their king, to show the people the untimely ends of such as have moved tumults, commotions, and insurrections, to present them with the flourishing estate of such as live in obedience, exhorting them to allegiance, dehorting them from all traitorous and felonious stratagems."

Having learned from evidence which cannot be produced in our allotted space that the Earl of Oxford was the author of the plays which appeared in print under the *nom de plume* of "William Shakespeare," we must now consider whether, during the period when he was closely associated with the London stage, there was any improvement in its scenery and its stage-settings. We have only to take down our volume of Shakespeare and glance through almost any play to discover how varied are the scenes. As we have shown that quite elaborate scenery was in use, at least in Court productions, through the early part of Elizabeth's reign, we must assume that in the later part, with the magnificent development of the dramatic art and the building of beautiful theatres, the stage technicians developed their craft in keeping with the demands upon them. It is probably true that the bills for meeting the increasing costs were largely paid out of the pockets of our spendthrift Earl.

Much of the evidence concerning the stage and the drama of Elizabeth's day was blotted out by the excesses of the Cromwellian period and by the devastation of the Great Fire of 1666. We can, however, well believe that the stage in her reign was more beautifully appointed than many have thought and we ask, with Dr. Furness, "Why should the rough makeshifts by the rude mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* excite such mirth in Theseus and his court if they were not seen to be caricatures of the real stage-scenery to which that court was accustomed?"

Eva Turner Clark

## Surprising Error

In a work announced with such loud claims to perfection as Professor B. Roland Lewis's *The Shakespeare Documents*, it is surprising to detect an error of extraordinary carelessness. Such lack of effort to find out the facts in a matter easily ascertainable casts discredit on the whole publication.

The error is found in Professor Lewis's mention in a footnote of the portion of manuscript of the play, *Sir Thomas More*, around which has played much controversy, several students contending that one of the several hands of the manuscript is that of Shakspeare of Stratford. Because the problem has had a great amount of attention from others and the manuscript has been published in facsimile, Professor Lewis does not go into the question at length. He does, however, make the following statement: "W. W. Greg, in the edition of the play put out by the Malone Society, ascribed the several hands in the play to A, B, C, D, E, and S (Shakespeare)."

The hand in controversy, ascribed by several students to Shakespeare, is D and not S, as is indicated by the brackets in the quoted statement. Hand S is that of the original scribe, Anthony Munday, author of the play, and has been so noted by Dr. Greg, Sir Edmund Chambers, and others. The other hands are recognized as those of revisers of the play, some of whom have contributed passages of considerable length. Hand D, in the old English secretarial style, is the hand supposed to be like the signatures to the will of William Shakspeare of Stratford.

Since the above criticism was written, a review of *The Shakespeare Documents* by Dr. Samuel C. Chew of Bryn Mawr College has appeared in the New York Herald Tribune. Dr. Chew makes the statement, "A vast amount of miscellaneous erudition is introduced, much of it bearing only the faintest relation to the subject in hand. The style is often slovenly and slipshod, occasionally incredibly naive. . . . There are not only errors in transcription both from English and Latin documents but errors in the expansion of contractions and actual mistranslations."

There are, says Dr. Chew, "various quite inexplicable omissions," among them being "the much-discussed manuscript of 'The Booke of Sir Thomas More' of which three pages are believed by such distinguished scholars as Greg, Dover Wilson, Pollard and R. W. Chambers to be in Shakespeare's handwriting or at any rate composed by him. Mr. Lewis, accepting Dr. Tannenbaum's arguments

against the ascription to Shakespeare, dismisses this manuscript in a footnote." Though Dr. Chew does not point it out, even in the brief footnote Mr. Lewis manages to include a surprising error, as has been told in the beginning of this article.

Dr. Chew concludes his review with the following paragraph (in part): "If a work of such scope as this, advancing the claim to supersede all earlier collections of documentary material, was to be produced at all, the scholars for whom it is primarily intended had the right to expect that it would be accomplished according to the strictest standards of impeccable technique. It cannot be said that 'The Shakespeare Documents' conforms to these standards. The errors and omissions I have noted are here set down as a protest and a warning. There are others which I have not commented upon."

## Annals of English Drama

The University of Pennsylvania Press has recently issued *Annals of English Drama, 975-1700*, by Alfred Harbage. A sub-title says it is "An analytical record of all plays, extant or lost, chronologically arranged and indexed by authors, titles, dramatic companies," etc.

An immense amount of labor has gone into this important volume. Such an accumulation of facts will be of great benefit to the student of English drama.

The Modern Language Review (Cambridge University Press) for July, 1940, publishes an interesting article entitled "Elizabethan-Restoration Palimpsest," by Alfred Harbage. The author thus states his hypothesis: "Certain playwrights after 1660 secured, in manuscripts, unprinted plays written before 1642, modernized them, and had them produced and published as their own; hence a number of Restoration plays hitherto considered original are actually adaptations of 'lost' Elizabethan plays. Some of the authors involved, both pilfered and pilferers, are men of mark in literary history, and to the shades of the latter I must offer a word of propitiation. Although my terms and methods may suggest the pursuit of criminals, I am making no charges of moral obliquity. To appropriate silently the work of earlier dramatists was in former times a normal practice."

Mr. Harbage gives a long list of "pilfered and pilferers," even certain Shakespeare plays having been so taken, and concludes, "Restoration drama cannot be understood without a knowledge of Elizabethan drama; in a measure, the converse may also be true."

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