

Siege of Shakespeare's Tomb

Persistent Effort to Move Bones at Stratford.

How much longer is Shakespeare to be allowed to sleep unmolested in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church at Stratford-on-Avon?

In London, a fortnight ago, that question came up for discussion. A private meeting was being held by one of the many societies that exist for the study of the bard's life and works, and something more than the bid for idle talk and speculation was intended by the author of the query.

As an earnest Shakespearean lover and student he made some surprising statements and stirred his sober-sided audience by openly expressing the melancholy opinion that the time is fast approaching when Shakespeare can no longer be bracketed with Moses and Merlin as one of the few heroes whose tombs remain respected and inviolate.

Merlin, of course, admitted this pessimistic club member, was buried under a spell, and his grave, like that of the leader of Israel's exodus, on Nebo's lonely mountain, defies discovery and desecration.

Shakespeare, however, enjoys no such advantage. For nearly three hundred years he has maintained his last sleep undisturbed, and for the most part in an unguarded grave, but it is a growing and disconcerting conviction among his most faithful worshippers that the days of the preservation of his post-mortem privacy are practically numbered.

Until about sixty-five years ago he was safe. But times have changed; the Shakespeare controversy has reached almost a critically intense stage, and it is hardly to be expected that Hamlet's creator will continue undisturbed when kings and conquerors have fallen victims to the insatiable modern curiosity.

All the great folks of Westminster Abbey have experienced the dismal humiliation of being turned out of their leaden winding sheets. In Victoria's reign Dean Stanley systematically exhumed every body in the Abbey, and even the royal body in Windsor's famous Chapel of St. George was dragged to the light.

Over in France and Italy the irreverent treatment of the remnant left of the heroes and heroines of history has been quite as pronounced as in England. The German Emperor thought it no impiety to disturb mighty Charlemagne at Aix. Even Agamemnon has suffered at the hands of the modern excavator of the ruins of Troy, and the Pharaohs and Pharaohs of Egypt would be disgusted could they but know what filmy protection vaults in the living rocks, and gigantic pyramids pour for helpless dead folk when the twentieth century intruder is up and going.

But while Cleopatra and the great Ramesses, Henry VIII, Pythagoras and even Abraham have been hauled ruthlessly back to the light, Shakespeare has benefited by the dignity of a noble repose. It is true that until a comparatively recent date his grave remained unopened, unvisited and almost unnoticed.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries nobody was gnawed by a desire to gaze upon his ashes, and his famous epitaph was all the defence he required. But in those simple old days, the Pyramids kept their secrets and nobody dreamed any more of trying to prove that Shakespeare was Bacon, or the Earl of Essex, than of maintaining that January was June.

When, however, the first doubts as to the identity of the writer of the plays and sonnets arose an astonishing effort was almost immediately made to remove the gravestone lying over him in Holy Trinity church, and the first attempt to open the poet's tomb no man is able to say, for there is an old crack across the slab. This sign remains unexplained, yet it may indicate that an assault on dead Shakespeare had been made before that inspired by the faith and curiosity of an American woman.

The amazing enterprise and conviction of the frail lady from New England, who forty years ago crossed the Atlantic for the purpose of exposing the Swan of Avon as a common impostor, was the means of bringing the rector of Holy Trinity to the realization that Shakespeare was not quite as safe as he had thought him.

Nevertheless Miss Bacon when she went to Stratford with a view of braving the curse of the poet's epitaph dealt in no underhanded methods. She suffered from the obsession or gift of discovering ciphers from the plays that have made Ignatius Donnelly and scores of others famous, but she was among the first to nourish the conviction that Shakespeare wrote his epitaph with a view to protecting something more than his bones.

By the aid of her ciphers she had arrived at the conclusion that in the dramatist's grave were hidden documents of a character to prove direful things against his title to fame, and she frankly went to the rector of Holy Trinity and asked him to permit the tomb to be opened. It is to Miss Bacon's credit that she was aboveboard and most persuasive. The rector was actually half won by her fire and faith. He even went so far as to think seriously over her urgent plea, and her theories and ciphers, but he never could bring himself to give her the permission she asked.

At the ninth hour the spell of the epitaph, which has overawed so many, fell from him and he probably repented his weakness in even listening to the doctory little no less a person than Nathaniel Hawthorne, then Consul in England, that Miss Bacon confided the tale of a secret effort she eventually made to come by the documents she believed were in the tomb.

It was a valiant spirit, she always called Shakespeare the "old player," or "Lord Leicester's groom." She looked upon him as a vulgar thief of other men's fame, and she believed that night that she had a free hand to deal as she liked with his grave. However, after a trying vigil she too fell a victim to the spell of that doggerel verse graven on the tomb of that master magician among poets.

She could not quite bring herself to defy the curse, she became indeed almost terrorized, and so ended a scheme for exhumation all but put into execution by one of the most virulent enemies dead Shakespeare has ever had.

To some superstitious believers in the Stratford poet it is a significant as well as pathetic fact that Miss Bacon eventually died in a retreat for the insane. Her convictions, like John Brown's body, go marching on, and she is by no means the last person to insist that the only way to settle the controversy raging every year more furiously over the authorship of the plays is to

open the tomb in Holy Trinity Church. Worse still, she is not alone in having tried to violate the six feet of earth that Shakespeare claims.

Of course if you go to Stratford and listen to the townsfolk, or the police, or the present rector of Holy Trinity, they will tell you that Shakespeare is as safe as Capt. Kidd's treasure and that talk of violations of his tomb is the yellowest kind of journalism. Nevertheless there are to be found sober English folk who credit the rumor which says that in all there have been five attempts upon the poet's grave and that one was frustrated only last spring.

This latest indignity was perpetrated about the time when the birthday festival at Stratford was in full swing. Somebody then discovered that the cement about the edges of the grave slab had been carefully chipped away and that putty had been forced into its place.

From this it was concluded that some enemy to Shakespeare had but done half the work of removing the slab, and that later the vandal would return to scrape out the substitute for cement and easily with a crowbar shift the stone. Thereupon it was recalled that twenty-five years ago a similar trick had been discovered just in time.

Singularly discreet have been the rector of Holy Trinity. Then as now no hue and cry was raised. A whisper of the truth got about at Oxford and so leaked out, to cause a deal of angry and uneasy comment, just as it was evident the marauders had got no further in their work than removing the cement the story of the discovery escaped the newspapers.

It is said at Oxford though that when news of the tampering with Shakespeare's grave got to the ears of Algernon Charles Swinburne that sensitive poet burst into a passion of tears. Under the inspiration of his indignation he dashed off a sonnet and a corking good one it was, too, for, when warmed to the task, Swinburne is a master hand at verbal vitriol. He produced fourteen lines of gorgeous rhyming verses calculated to sear the souls of the unknown ghosts, but he was prevailed upon not to publish the production by those discreet persons who are responsible for Shakespeare's rest.

Recently or since the last signs of intrusion on England's most sacred spot of earth was discovered, a step in the right direction has been taken with a view to securing to the dead poet immunity from vandalistic attacks. In other words a body of guardians for his tomb has been organized.

This is the only secret Shakespearean society in existence. The names of its members are not generally known, but King Edward is said to be honorary president and a fund has been raised in order to keep Holy Trinity and its treasure under constant police protection.

Two American gentlemen belong to this society, but no German is permitted to join it, for on several occasions the German critics, who read any and every kind of mad meaning into plays, have insisted that it is proper and even necessary to have the grave of Shakespeare opened.

Once upon a time a bland-spectled Herr Professor from a German university, with a ponderous tone under his breath, waited upon a rector of Holy Trinity with a round robin, signed by his fellow professors, to demand certain documents known, he said, to be under the stone in the chancel. The rector was interested, courteous but firm in refusing his permission. He has learned how to deal with the vaporing of the cranks who visit Stratford in numbers every year.

Still, even those who are the most passionate believers in Shakespeare, and who, like sensitive Swinburne, would forego and rage to see his tomb disturbed, agree that time will certainly arrive when a shameful deed will be perpetrated in Holy Trinity under the pretense of serving the ends of truth.

For a few years now perhaps Shakespeare will lie in the mysterious peace that the curse and blessing his epitaph have won for him, but his enemies are increasing and working to the end that they may successfully defy his wishes. One and all they now persistently profess the belief, as did poor old mad Miss Bacon, that the evidence needed to brand him an impostor and reveal the real authorship of his plays, poems and sonnets lies in that grave.

A school of his detractors even go so far as to announce that Shakespeare is not buried under the slab bearing the anathematizing stanza. At any rate they say his name is not on the slab, and it is only tradition, not any positive or accredited authority, that states that the flagstone covers the body of the poet.

This branch of doubting Thomases inclines to the belief that the stone protects a chest holding precious papers only. The man Shakespeare, it is maintained, is buried somewhere else in the old church.

They argue this with an ingenuity that would excite the envy of the traditional Philadelphia lawyer, and gleefully add that the present Duke of St. Albans is known to possess a manuscript copy of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," written out and signed by Lord Bacon. This valuable document, it is confidently asserted will some day come into the market, and then in a cipher on the back of one of the manuscript sheets will be found an inventory of the contents of the chest buried in the chancel of Stratford's church.

In view of these facts it is scarcely surprising that the true Shakespearean worshippers are troubled, but the cause of their greatest anxiety they see in the rapid increase in England of a school of men and women believers in the poet who, goaded by the denials of their poet's enemies, are inclined to counteract a scheme for the exhumation of his almost sacred bones.

Thus and only thus, say some of the exasperated adherents of the great William, can his imperious superiority be proved and the present shadow be removed from his name and fame.

Even Gladstone was at one moment swayed by the foolish impassioned argument of a Shakespearean adherent to admit that it might be well to explore the tomb. On the strength of this feeling he stopped on only Stratford and went into the church. Had he had he read the epitaph over in his finest tones. When he had stayed silent a moment, gazing down on that flat slab, he shook



Prince shooting tigers at his ease

his head and turned thoughtfully away. "After all," he said gravely, "I was wrong. I know now that had I any hand in troubling Shakespeare I should feel his curse and never forgive myself for committing the greatest sacrilege of modern times."

FIGURES THAT TALK.

(Christian Guardian.)

One hundred and sixty thousand "foreigners" have settled in the Canadian west during the last five years. In 1901 there were only this number of people in Assiniboia, Saskatchewan and Alberta. It is estimated that there are now one million people west of Lake Superior. This is double that of seven years ago.

Last year the immigration to Canada was 252,038—another Toronto record. Take a railroad as long as from Winnipeg to Toronto. Take a strip of land ten miles on each side all the way. This amount of land was taken up in home-steads last year. No wonder the railroads could not keep pace with development.

There are almost one hundred thousand Galicians in Canada—that is about as many as there are people in the whole of Prince Edward Island. The Methodist Church has one missionary doctor and three ladies working among this people.

There are about ten thousand Donkhorbs in Canada—nearly enough to fill the entire railway city of St. Thomas, Ont. These people have no schools, save a small one carried on by the Society of Friends. As yet the Government is doing nothing for their education, and the churches of Canada are leaving them alone.

There are about seventeen thousand negroes in Canada—nearly enough to populate Kingston, Ont., at the last census.

There are over seven thousand Mormons in the Dominion—they could fill up the beautiful city of Quebec—and the man who thinks that their presence here will not make a problem some day for Canada does not understand Mormonism.

There are about twenty thousand Menomites and twenty thousand Hungarians residents in our land—they would together fill the cities of Halifax, N. S., and St. John, N. B.

There are about thirty thousand Orientals in Canada, and let some people tell the story the number is increasing very rapidly. In 1901 Vancouver had a population of only twenty-six thousand and Victoria of only twenty-one thousand.

In Western Canada almost every other man is a "foreigner." The Methodist Church employs one colporteur and one Bible woman, who speak some of the European languages—these are the only workers in the "other half" of our people.

The churches of Canada have a "home mission" problem on their hands, whose solution will not be reached without some patience and faith and self-sacrifice.



ANOTHER DREAM.

Dolly-Molly Wolcott told me a month ago that her new gown was going to be a dream.

"Polly-Well, that is all it is, so far. Her husband won't give her the money for it."

Thomas A. Edison was discussing at Atlantic City the various devices for increasing the brilliance and diminishing the cost of a gas jet.

"Many of these devices have for base a mantle," he said. "You know what a mantle looks like? Then you'll appreciate a remark I overheard in a hardware dealer's."

"A young woman entered the shop and said: 'Have you got those things for improving a gas light?'"

"Yes, madam," said the dealer. "Here is a complete set, fittings, chimney and mantle, all for—"

"Oh, I don't want the set," said the young woman. "I've got the metal part and the chimney, but the little white shirt is busted. It's only one of them I want."

The Government has purchased a site for a new postoffice on the corner of Brock and Dundas streets, Whitby.

GLIMPSE OF LIFE IN INDIA.



Exterior of the Shooting-box

'Ranji' in his dress as a Native Prince

WAS IT FRAUD?

DETROIT FINANCIERS SUBSTITUTED MACHINERY FOR CASH.

Court Nullifies the Deal—Mr. Justice Riddell Characterizes the Transaction as High Finance and Fraud.

Toronto, Nov. 4.—"It may be that those guilty of this fraud would be shocked to hear the transaction thus bluntly described, but that is the name that fits," says Mr. Justice Riddell in his judgment in the case of Joseph W. Boyle against the directors of the Canadian Klondike Mining Company.

The transaction to which his Lordship refers was a sale of \$65,000 of assets belonging to the Detroit Yukon Mining Company, of which the defendants were also directors, to the Canadian company for \$500,000.

The defendants claimed that the purchase of the machinery for \$250,000 was a term of the arrangement. His Lordship says that he declines to accept the evidence of defendants on this point. Their application for a charter stated specifically that their stock was to be paid for in cash, and the learned judge finds that they did not intend at that time to state a falsehood.

"There never was any agreement that this machinery should be taken for \$500,000 in cash or in stock," says his Lordship, "and the pretended sale was in fraud of the Canadian company and the plaintiff, the largest shareholder."

His Lordship adjudges each of the personal defendants liable for the whole amount of \$500,000, and declares that the conveyance of property by the Detroit company was effected without a price being fixed. The parties are at liberty to either take the value of \$65,000, placed thereon by his Lordship, or to have the value fixed by the Master for a settlement.

RUBBERLESS MOTOR WHEEL.

The Wonderful Invention of a Russian Engineer.

Berlin, Nov. 3.—Boris Loutzky, the celebrated Russian engineer, who is credited with the invention of an original automobile motor, has perfected a marvelous wheel which is designed to do away entirely with rubber tires for all sorts of motor vehicles.

M. Loutzky's invention is built of steel and the wheel consists really of a wheel within a wheel. The tire or outer rim is entirely independent of the inner wheel, which protrudes on either side around the hub, forming projections on which the weight of the car rests, no matter how rough or uneven the surface of a given roadway.

M. Loutzky asserts that absolutely elasticity is thus insured the car, with a consequent absolute minimum of wear and tear on the tire, which may be renewed from time to time at small cost, instead of at the fabulous prices which keep so many motorists poor buying pneumatics.

The inner wheel, or ring, is constructed of new and highly flexible steel, which gives like rubber and makes riding as smooth and easy as with pneumatics.

In M. Loutzky's description the new wheel practically constitutes an artificial and permanently level roadway for the car suspended above it.

CASTORIA.

The Kind You Have Always Bought

Beas the Signature of J. C. Watson

Manitoba Postmaster Killed.

Cordova, Man., Nov. 3.—Reuben Rear, postmaster here, was killed last evening by the roof of a stable falling on him.

Berlin is Growing.

Berlin, Oct. Nov. 2.—The assessor's figures show an increase of 92 in population. Berlin now having 13,074. The percentage of increase was 7.59.

The increase in assessment is about one-half million dollars.

In a head-on collision between two Grand Trunk trains at Falkenburg several employees were injured.

Getting on the Right Track

Insures Success in Life.

(By Rev. Madison C. Peters.)

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