

‘ IN THE QUICK FORGE AND WORKING-HOUSE OF  
THOUGHT . . . ’ LANCASHIRE AND SHROPSHIRE  
AND THE YOUNG SHAKESPEARE

By ALAN KEEN

WHEN, in 1940, the late Librarian invited me to contribute a brief paper on my recently discovered “ Shakespearian ” copy of Edward Hall’s *Chronicle* to the October issue of the BULLETIN, I did not then, in the morning of my enthusiasm and hope, even dare to anticipate than ten years hence, in 1950, my researches would uncover the key to the centuries-old mystery of Shakespeare’s “ hidden years ”. My thanks are due to Professor Edward Robertson, who, following the publication of my special article “ A Shakespearian Riddle ” in *The Times Literary Supplement* of 21st April, 1950, renewed the invitation of his predecessor, Dr. Guppy, and made it possible for me to return to the BULLETIN, bringing as it were, trophies of a long chase to its pages.

To recapitulate. My original contribution dealt with the presence of several hundred marginal annotations in an Elizabethan hand within an imperfect copy of Hall’s *Union of the Noble Houses of Lancaster and York*, of such a nature as to suggest a Shakespearian origin. The notes covered the regnal period of Henry IV and Henry V. As, however, Hall began his history with the deposition and murder of Richard II the materials were already present to form the basis of Shakespeare’s tetralogy. With the end of the reign of Henry V the marginalia stopped. Thereafter were noted a curious marginal “ doodle ” resembling a comic face against that portion of the text relative to the “ foolishe souldier ”, which became Shakespeare’s own Bardolph in Henry V, and, many folios later, the autograph of the first owner of the book, “ Rychard Newport ” with his initials “ R.N. ” and elsewhere the date “ 6 Aprill a° 1565 ”. Readers of the original article in the BULLETIN may recall an attempt to identify the particular Richard Newport of this

connexion ; an impossible task at that time, there being *two* Richard Newports living in 1565, and, as the public records were evacuated, no comparison could be made between the two Newport autographs (known to be among the Crown collections) and the "Rychard Newport" of the annotated *Chronicle*.

It may be imagined with what alacrity those of us who believed in the probability of Shakespeare being the annotator leapt, if prematurely, upon the task of identifying our Rychard Newport with one of that name who was owner of Hunningham in the County of Warwick from 1544 to the date of his death, 11th November, 1565. This Rychard Newport, through marriage of his daughter and various other ties, was closely connected with the prominent Warwickshire family of Underhill, one of whom, his son-in-law, in 1567, when Shakespeare was three years old, bought New Place in Stratford-on-Avon. His son sold New Place to Shakespeare in 1597. However attractive this identification seemed to be, the return of the public records at the end of the second world war, and comparison of autographs, blew our neatly-laid provenance sky high. The owner of our annotated *Chronicle*—the *other* Sir Rychard Newport—was of High Ercall in Shropshire, and, curiously enough, a cousin to the Sir Rychard of Warwickshire.

If we were disappointed we had at least not drawn a blank. This new Sir Richard Newport, though for our hopes inferior to the Newport of Warwickshire, still remained useful, his daughter Magdalen having married into the Herbert family and besides being a literary patroness herself, had had a number of children, amongst whom were Edward (subsequently Lord Herbert of Cherbury) and George Herbert the poet.

There the matter rested for some years, until by a curious chance a manuscript *Visitation* of Shropshire (which has been described elsewhere) shed a sudden and brilliant light upon the Newport connexions, from Shropshire and the Welsh Marches into Cheshire and Lancashire . . . Derbyshire and Warwickshire . . . joining the families of Herbert, Leveson, Fitton, Holcroft, Hesketh and Hoghton ; leading to those of Englefield, Throckmorton, Gratwood, Vernon, Corbet, Arden, Sheldon, Savage, Hall, Blount and Reynolds—all of which

families had direct or indirect concern or relation with William Shakespeare! My article "A Shakespearian Riddle" (to which I have already referred) enlarged upon what may be termed the "Shropshire circle", and may be usefully consulted since it is, perhaps, a contribution to Shakespearian genealogy. As a certain "William Shakeshafte" made his appearance within the Hoghton-Hesketh connexions, an attempt was made to carry the reader back through Shropshire into Lancashire to discover the "lost" years of Shakespeare *via* the autograph of Sir Richard Newport in the annotated copy of Hall's *Chronicle*.

Since then I have been concerned with bringing into clearer focus the tantalising "William Shakeshafte". This young man, who had already been suspected of being William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon, received a legacy under the will of his master, Alexander Hoghton of Lea, Lancashire, in 1581, and, in company with the transfer of sundry instruments of music and play-clothes, was commended to Sir Thomas Hesketh of Rufford. Thus provided with the means to marry, it is probable that William returned home and stayed with his wife for such a period of time until either ambition, or weight of paternal responsibility, or both, urged him to present his credentials at the great house of Rufford, there to join the Hesketh players.

Why "Shakeshafte"? There is no reason why the young William Shakespeare should not have, perhaps for theatrical reasons, adopted the variation used by his paternal grandfather, Richard, who appears in the Snitterfield Records as both Shakespeare and Shakeshafte.

Let us for a moment return to the beginning of it all. Professor Dover Wilson in his *Essential Shakespeare* sharply accents the recusancy or "old religion" of John Shakespeare, William's father, which brought him heavy trouble in the town where he had been held in public esteem, and observes that such a circumstance may have forced John to seek other means than the Protestant Grammar School for the education of his son. "There were" continues Professor Dover Wilson, "excellent alternatives . . . which would be fitter nurseries for dramatic genius and more in keeping with that passion for music which we know Shakespeare possessed. If, for example, he

received his education as a singing-boy in the service of some great Catholic nobleman it would help to explain how he became an actor, since the transition from singing-boy to stage-player was almost as inevitable at that period as the breaking of the male voice in adolescence." Moreover Canon Raines in 1836 had discounted Aubrey's statement that William had been a butcher's boy who *when he kill'd a calfe . . . would doe it in a high style, and make a speech*. Canon Raines pointed to the old dramatic representation of *Killing the Calf* and asked: "Was this the calf that Shakespeare killed?" Of course. It is clear that the youthful William was skilled in the pseudo-ventriloquial diversion of 'throwing his voice' into the dummy head of a calf pushed through a curtain. If we look in *Hamlet* (Act III, sc. ii, 105) we find Shakespeare's own allusion to this popular 'turn' beloved of his youth:

HAMLET: (to Polonius) My lord, you play'd once i' th' university, you say?

POLONIUS: That did I, my lord; and was accounted a good actor.

HAMLET: And what did you enact?

POLONIUS: I did enact Julius Caesar: I was kill'd i' th' Capital; Brutus kill'd me.

HAMLET: It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there,—Be the players ready?

The autobiographical significance of this allusion has, I may add, apparently escaped the notice of Professor Dover Wilson, or indeed any other editor of whom I am aware. It also brings into a new perspective the joint attacks on the young Shakeshafte-turning-Shakespeare by Greene and Nashe. We have only to glance back to Nashe's preface to his friend Greene's *Menaphon*, of 1589, where in a clear reference to the player-poet he includes him among "the alchemists of eloquence, who (mounted on the stage of arrogance) think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of bragging blank verse, indeed it may be the ingrafted overflow of some *killcow* conceit". The italics are mine.

Thus were the seeds of Greene's anger (which flowered in the open attack upon Shakespeare, written by Greene on his deathbed in 1592) sown from this early jealousy of the provincial player. And no wonder. Shakespeare had then in 1589, on the death of Sir Thomas Hesketh the year before,

left Rufford Old Hall and the Hesketh players and joined the company of Ferdinando, Lord Strange. Greene had earlier sought the patronage of the Derbys, and in first dedicating *The Myrroure of Modestie* to the Countess of Derby in 1584, followed confidently with *Ciceronis Amor*, *Tullies Loue*, to her son Ferdinando in 1589, regarding himself as well established in their favour. The advent and sudden popularity of the "up-start crow," invading the territory hitherto ruled over by university pens, dethroned Greene. At the end of the few bitter and penurious years left to him, the dying poet dipped his quill in gall and penned, in 1592, a last sneer at *the only Shake-scene in a country*.

If family connexions were the means of passing "Shakeshafte" into the household at Lea Hall, he may have met with both Protestant and Catholic influences there, for though Alexander Hoghton, his new master, was a Protestant, his brother's wife apparently was not. After the death of Alexander she was reported to the Government for keeping at Lea "an obstinate Papist well acquainted with seminaries and he was teaching the children to sing and plaie upon the virginalls". At all events, the young "Shakeshafte" seems to have especially earned his master's regard, which put money in his purse and placed his foot on the second rung of the ladder—Rufford, the nursery of his genius.

There has been for a very long time in the peaceful Lancashire village of Rufford the oral tradition that Shakespeare had been at the old Hall as a young man. While the text of the Hoghton will, printed by the Rev. G. J. Piccope in the second part of his *Lancashire and Cheshire Wills* (Chetham Society li, 237) in 1860, offers confirmation of this tradition, there does not then seem to have been any widespread interest aroused by its significance; not, indeed, until 1937 when the late Mr. Oliver Baker discussed the possibility of "Shakeshafte" being Shakespeare.

Among the many things in relation to Shakespeare and Rufford for which I am indebted to Mr. Geoffrey M. Brown, O.B.E. (who is a member of The National Trust Rufford Old Hall Management Committee) is the introduction to Mr. Philip

Ashcroft, junior, the founder of the Folk Museum at Rufford Old Hall, of which he is Hon. Curator, and whose family has been in Rufford since the fourteenth century. Mr. Ashcroft tells me that his maternal grandfather, Lawrence Alty, passed this oral tradition of "Shakeshafte" to his daughter, Mr. Ashcroft's mother, who told it to him. It may be added that Alty was born at Rufford, in 1837, and died there in 1912 aged seventy-five. Tradition dies hard. It may well be that the Alty-Ashcroft survival is the continuance of perhaps a seventeenth-century foundation.

The will of Alexander Hoghton directed that if his brother Thomas did not care to "keppe and manteyne playeres" then the "Instrument(es) belonginge to mewsyck(es) (and) all man(er) of playeclothes" were to become the property of "Sir Thomas Heskethe Knyghte". That (at least) the 'Instruments of music' did in fact pass to Sir Thomas seems clear from the recent fortuitous discovery by Lord Hesketh at Easton Neston, Towcester, of several early musical instruments among household effects removed some years ago from Rufford Old Hall. In this connexion an inventory of goods of "Robert Heskethe late of Rufforth, esq" of 16th November, 1620 (now preserved among the County Records at Preston) includes among "Instruments of Musique (ap)praised" . . . 'vyolls' . . . 'vyolentes' . . . 'virginalls' 'sagbutts, howboies and cornetts', with 'cithron, flute, taber pypes'. The instruments may easily be the very same which humoured Shakespeare to sprinkle generously certain of his plays with proper names and allusions, as, Simon Catling, Hugh Rebeck and James Soundpost. These suggest that they were players of stringed instruments, but as one of them says :

Faith, we may put up our pipes and be gone,

it is clear that they enter playing on wind instruments, either shawms or recorders, and these (cf. Edward J. Dent, 'Shakespeare and Music'; *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, Cambridge, 1946) would sound more effective than strings when played behind the scenes. As to the viol, Mr. Dent observes: "Any gentleman of Education might be expected to play upon the viol—upon the viol-da-gamba, at least. Though we do not

see him put to the test, Sir Toby Belch boasts that Sir Andrew Aguecheek ‘ . . . plays o’ the viol de gamboys ’.”

Additional proof that the Hoghton-Hesketh instruments, and in particular the cornet, were ‘ theatrical ’ in usage is sustained by a further statement of Mr. Dent’s from Mr. W. J. Lawrence’s *Shakespeare’s Workshop*, 1928, p. 48. “ The tone of the cornet was something like that of a trumpet, but softer ; and in the ‘ private ’ or indoor theatres it seems—probably for this reason—to have replaced the louder instrument.”

A further note from Easton Neston, which sounds as sweetly as music to our ears, is the recollection by a local solicitor at Towcester, that in some title-deeds that passed through his hands before the last war he noticed the name Shakeshafte, which in later documents had been changed to Shakespeare. Lord Hesketh has ordered a search for these documents, and so in the meantime we must keep both patience and judgment in check.

Professor Hotson has already told us of two of William Shakespeare’s trustees, to whom Shakespeare and four of his fellows in 1599 granted their half-interest in the ground lease of the Globe Theatre—William Leveson and Thomas Savage. Leveson was kindred with the ‘ Shropshire circle ’ of the Newports, and like Savage was intimate with Heminges and Condell. At the death of Thomas Savage in 1611, his will revealed bequests of forty shillings to the poor of Rufford ‘ where I was borne ’ and twenty shillings to his cousin, the widow of Thomas Hesketh of Rufford. As Professor Hotson remarks that we may have here an astonishing coincidence and nothing more, I would ask him to consider the Savage-Oldys connexion, with which I will presently deal.

Perhaps I may add another ‘ coincidence ’. Let us look towards the Welsh border and sight a young squire with his newly-wedded wife. They are travelling to the County Palatine of Lancaster to visit Knowsley, the seat of the Earl of Derby. In a previous article I referred to John Salisbury of Lleweni, co. Denbigh ; and to Shakespeare’s contribution of a cryptic poem *The Phoenix and Turtle* to a volume of verse entitled *Love’s Martyr*, by Robert Chester, a retainer of Salisbury, published in 1601, to celebrate the knighthood of his patron.

I had assumed that a friendship between Salisbury and Shakespeare, made perhaps earlier in the country and renewed in London (Salisbury left his Welsh estate in 1595 to enter the Inner Temple), existed. My assumption may indeed be right when we consider the circumstances surrounding the visit to Knowsley of the young squire and his bride.

John Salisbury had succeeded to the family estate of Lleweni in 1586, and a few months later married Ursula Stanley the natural daughter of Henry Stanley, 4th Earl of Derby. Salisbury, himself a poet, held open house to men of letters, especially local bards, among whom was Robert Chester. To Knowsley then came Salisbury and his wife in August 1587, the event being recorded by William Farington, the steward, in the Household Book: "on Saterdag Mr. Salusbury and his wieffe and unkele came". The couple departed on 28th August, and Salisbury appears to have returned later in the year from the entry of 15th December: "Mr. Skaresbrike came and also Mr. Salesbury". I must add that "Mr. Salusbury" and "Mr. Salesbury" are positively identified with our John Salisbury of Lleweni by Canon Raines in his edition for the Chetham Society of *The Derby Household Books* (1853, Chetham Soc. xxxi). Farington notes the departure from Knowsley of Salisbury two days later. A brief stay, from which it is perhaps evident that the young squire was alone and returned to his own roof-tree for Christmas. That Salisbury met "Shakeshafte" at Knowsley during those two days of December 1587, or even earlier when Salisbury was there with his bride (Farington was an erratic recorder), is quite possible, indeed probable, for Sir Thomas Hesketh's players were at Knowsley in December 1587. Sir Edmund Chambers in his *William Shakeshafte* (*Gleanings*, Oxford 1944) refers to what he calls an odd entry by Farington under 30th December, "On Saturday Sr. Tho. Hesketh, Players went awaie", and later adds 'I should like to be sure about that comma'. Luckily the printed text of Canon Raines' transcription was in error. Thanks to the late J. Ernest Jarratt (who was also a Member of the Rufford Old Hall Management Committee, and whose unpublished studies of Shakespeare's Lancashire have been presented to the Atkinson Free Library,



Southport), Sir Edmund's doubt is set at rest. Mr. Jarratt saw the original MS. Household Book on its return from war-time evacuation, and the entry is undoubted. There is no comma. "On Saturday Sr. Tho. Hesketh Players went awaie." Remembering that *The Phoenix and Turtle* had been fully discussed by the late Professor Quincy Adams in his *A Life of William Shakespeare* (London, Constable 1923), I turned to his pages and there read his curiously interesting statement that his poem, to celebrate the union of John Salisbury and Ursula Stanley, was written *about* 1587. The italics are again mine. The poem, a graceful compliment by the young Hesketh player to his host Lord Derby and his daughter Ursula, if an astonishing performance at his then age of twenty-four years, may indeed be the "first heir" of his invention and thus precedes *Venus and Adonis*. I would incline to the view that the latter, his first *published* work, ignored *The Phoenix and Turtle* written earlier, but was no doubt re-polished, even re-written, for inclusion with the Chester volume of 1601.

We must now consider the ties connecting "Shakeshafte"—the embryo Shakespeare—with Rufford. The names of Hoghton, Hesketh, Salisbury and Savage have come to us, the last two appearing at the beginning of his career and re-appearing at the zenith of it as intimates of both Court and Theatre. This brings me to my promised note on the Savage-Oldys connexion, which to my mind is extremely pertinent to the foregoing. Mr. E. A. B. Barnard, F.S.A., in the introduction to his *New Links with Shakespeare* (Cambridge, 1930), tells of his discovery of some documents in a chest at Hanley Court, near Tenbury, Worcester, in 1925. Two of these documents were directly concerned with the actor Henry Condell, friend of Shakespeare and co-editor of the First Folio of his *Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*, and the remainder (most curiously and fortuitously) have connexion with the "Shakespearian" families distinguished by Mr. Norman Long-Brown and outlined in my *T.L.S.* article of 21st April. The Hanley Court Collection, Mr. Barnard states, "was originally made through the medium of Cecilia Oldys, by her marriage with Walter Savage of Broadway, who died before the 21st September, 1721—

and afterwards with John Newport of Hanley Court. She was born in 1694, her father being the Rev. Thomas Oldys, of Tingewick near Buckingham, who for many years possessed the rectory of Quinton, co. Gloucester, lying off the main road between Broadway and Stratford-upon-Avon. As Cecilia Newport, she is still commemorated in the old church of St. Eadburgha at Broadway . . . her death is recorded as having taken place on 21st March, 1766, when she was aged seventy-two. John Newport had died in 1760 aged sixty." Cecilia's father, the Rev. Thomas Oldys, was related to William Oldys (1696-1761) the antiquary and Norry King-of-Arms, of whom the statement is made that he "had engaged to furnish a bookseller in the Strand, whose name was Walker, with ten years of the life of Shakespeare unknown to the biographers and commentators, but he died and made no sign of the projected work".

As Cecilia's first husband, Walter Savage, was a descendant of the Northern family from which we have noticed Thomas Savage of Rufford, who was Shakespeare's friend, then it seems likely that some account of the early years and beginnings of Shakespeare in Lancashire and Shropshire was given orally by Walter Savage to William Oldys. Cecilia, her husband and the antiquary were exact contemporaries so time is in agreement with such a possibility.

With the death in 1588 of Sir Thomas Hesketh, the established and rising poet-player entered the service of Ferdinando, Lord Strange. He must from that time have been preoccupied with dramatic composition, and it would now seem that in 1590-1591 Shakespeare interrupted his travels with Strange's Men to become Playwright, and retired into the peaceful lands of Shropshire to work under some hospitable and sympathetic roof—most likely that of Magdalen Herbert, friend of Donne and patroness of literature. Her father, Sir Richard Newport, Lord of Ercall, the first owner of the annotated *Chronicle*, had died in 1570, and it is quite possible that Shakespeare had the copy from Magdalen at either of the two Shropshire houses of her inheritance, High Ercall, or Eyton-on-Severn.

The *locale* of the great house at High Ercall would then be of absorbing interest to the poet, his mind set upon the braveries

of the York-Lancaster play-cycle. Nearby Hatley Field set for him the scene of the Battle of Shrewsbury in the first part of *Henry IV*, to the east of which may be seen Haughmond Hill which King Henry calls "*yon bosky hill*", while Jack Falstaff's glorious lie of how he and Hotspur rose "*both at an instant and fought a long hour by Shrewsbury clock*" certainly provoked the topical if anachronistic allusion to the newly-erected, arcaded Cloth Hall of 1595 in Shrewsbury Market Place, a prominent feature of which is its clock. Also at Shrewsbury in 1591 had appeared '*one master Bancks, a Staffordshire gentelman*', who, '*brought into this towne a white horse whiche wolld doe wonderfull and strange thinges . . .*' When Shakespeare, three years later was busy upon '*Love's Labour's Lost*' he remembered, and gave credit to, the peculiar intelligence of the *dancing horse*. At the other Newport house, *walks on the gentle Severn's sedgy bank, by swift Severn's flood*, gave to Shakespeare that first-hand knowledge of the river which he shows by the above lines from *Henry IV* and again in a further reference to the *sandy-bottom'd Severn*. Natives of Eyton-on-Severn will attest the fact that the river-bed here is indeed so.

But if these topographical echoes are in themselves inconclusive evidence of any *prolonged* stay in the country by Shakespeare, we stand upon much firmer ground when we regard the presence of both Lancashire and (in the majority) Shropshire words, in the early plays. We must not, however, lose sight of the book itself which, as we have seen, has given us the remarkable clue to the poet's 'hidden years' and holds the all-important evidence of Shakespeare's work and life.

If we can accept the annotated Hall's *Chronicle* as being Shakespeare's own working copy during his Salopian retreat, we see at once that veritable flow of ideas which accompanied his attentive reading of the black-letter text . . . ideas which while having direct bearing upon the historical tetralogy, also allowed for other infusions into the Comedies. Let us then, for a moment, look over the shoulder of 'our bending author' as he opens the thick folio and begins the '*introduccion into the history of Kyng Henry the fourthe*'. Turning fol. i his eye catches the line '*. . . so that al men (more clerer then the sonne)*

*may apparantly perceiue, that as by discorde great thynges decaie and fall to ruyne, so the same by concorde be reuiued and erected*’. Turning back for wider margin he takes his quill and swiftly writes the couplet :

“ by concorde smalle  
things doithe growe  
by discorde gret things  
dothe away flowe ”

Thereafter we could find direct employment of both theme and words in poems and plays, as, for example :

“ Small herbs have grace, great weeds do grow apace ”  
(*Richard III*)

“ Small lights are soon blown out, huge fires abide ”  
(*Lucrece*)

“ How shall we find the concord of this discord ? ”

“ . . . I never heard so musical a discord . . . (and)

“ How comes this gentle concord . . . ”  
(*A Midsummer Night's Dream*)

Shakespeare's darting mind had captured more in that line of the old chronicler than a play on the words concord and discord ; the bracketed ‘ *more clerer then the sonne* ’ flew direct into the speech of the scheming Archbishop of Canterbury in the first act of *King Henry V*. To sum up his most plausible statement of the claim of Harry to the crown of France, the Archbishop declares the rigmarole to be

“ . . . as clear as is the summer's sun ”.

Shakespeare seems to like the ‘ introduction ’ of Hall, and we follow him to that of ‘ *The victorious actes of Kyng Henry the fifth* ’. Again, on the turn of the first leaf, he stops and smiles at the ‘ lusty and flourishing stile ’ of the chronicler. . . . *This prince was almost the Arabical Phenix, and emongest his predecessors a very Paragon* : We find the transmutation in Act IV, scene ii of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* :

QUINCE : Yea, and the best person too ; and  
he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

FLUTE : You must say ‘ paragon ’ : a paramour is,  
god bless us, a thing of naught.

One or two coincidences seem to have been marked by Blakeway,<sup>1</sup> who points to the wretched summer of 1594, and Shakespeare's fine lines upon it in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which, he asserts, correspond exactly with the several manifestations of the distemperature under which the good folk of Shropshire suffered. The same editor refers to a broil on the Sessions day of 1589, between Vaughans and Newports, and observes "Shakespeare we see needed not to have travelled so far as Verona for a scene parallel to the Montagues and Capulets. Mr. Newport's sister had married a Herbert. Sir Edward Herbert, of Powis Castle, was plaintiff in a suit with Mr. Vaughan (who was possessor of Lwydiarth), at the preceding Spring Assizes: and this was quite enough with the irascible spirit of the Welshmen of that day to excite a feud between their respective partizans, though the relationship of the two Herberts were as distant as third cousins."

Before leaving the *Dream* with its Shropshire echoes, for a summary of the Shropshire words of the plays in general, it is both pleasant and contributory to our thesis, to find Georgina F. Jackson including in her monumental *Shropshire Word Book*,<sup>2</sup> the following definition:

**BOTTOM**—a ball of yarn as it was wound off the reel for the cottage-weaver, or for home use. In the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the weaver, who is one of the *Dramatis Personae*, is called *Bottom*—a name borrowed, doubtless, from the *bottoms* of yarn employed in his handicraft.

And the place of origin—Pulverbatch, a parish 7½ miles S.S.W. of Shrewsbury. And there is, too, Professor Dover Wilson's reading of the words "thisne, thisne" uttered by Bottom (*Dream*, Act II, sc. ii), to be 'thissen' (in this manner; this way, that way) and dialect of the North and Midlands. Perhaps a Lancastrian echo.

Thanks to the painstaking work of my wife and my friend Mr. Geoffrey Brown, I have been able to place in chronological order a selection of typical Shropshire words used in the plays, and which, according to the *New English Dictionary* were first intro-

<sup>1</sup> *A History of Shrewsbury*, 1825, i, 390-398.

<sup>2</sup> *Shropshire Word Book*. A Glossary of Archaic and Provincial Words, etc., used in the county. London 1879 (Supplement).

duced into literature by Shakespeare. These cover the period from 1591-1592 to 1612-1613. Asterisks denote words also found in South Lancashire dialect.

|  |                                    |           |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------|
| *ALE-SCORE                             | (2 <i>Henry VI</i> )               | 1591-1592 |
| QUARTERS                               | ( <i>Comedy of Errors</i> )        | 1592-1593 |
| WITCHES STIRRUPS                       | ( <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> )        | 1594-1595 |
| *BRASS                                 | ( <i>Love's Labour Lost</i> )      | 1594-1595 |
| ALONG OF                               | ( <i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i> ) | 1595-1596 |
| BOTTOM                                 | ( <i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i> ) |           |
| COLLY                                  | ( <i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i> ) |           |
| O'ER LOOKED                            | ( <i>Merchant of Venice</i> )      | 1596-1597 |
| BESMUDGE                               | ( <i>Henry V</i> )                 | 1598-1599 |
| NOOK-SHOTTEN                           | ( <i>Henry V</i> )                 |           |
| *HAGGLE                                | ( <i>Henry V</i> )                 |           |
| NAY-WORD                               | ( <i>Twelfth-Night</i> )           | 1599-1600 |
| BUCK-WESH (see<br><i>buck basket</i> ) | ( <i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i> )  | 1600-1601 |
| DRUMBLE                                | ( <i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i> )  |           |
| MOBLE                                  | ( <i>Hamlet</i> )                  | 1600-1601 |
| COUCH                                  | ( <i>All's Well</i> )              | 1602-1603 |
| ARRIVANCE                              | ( <i>Othello</i> )                 | 1604-1605 |
| TAKING                                 | ( <i>King Lear</i> )               | 1605-1606 |
| FOSSET                                 | ( <i>Coriolanus</i> )              | 1606-1607 |
| MAMMOCK (or) MOMMOCK                   | ( <i>Coriolanus</i> )              |           |
| POTCH                                  | ( <i>Coriolanus</i> )              |           |
| *REECHY                                | ( <i>Coriolanus</i> )              |           |
| *FORE-END                              | ( <i>Cymbeline</i> )               | 1609-1610 |
| PECK                                   | ( <i>Henry VIII</i> )              | 1612-1613 |

In addition to the above there are over a hundred other Salopian words used in the plays, but these, in company with a Lancashire list now in preparation by Mr. Geoffrey Brown, must await publication in a larger volume.

Some relevant odds and ends occur to my mind before the closing of this article. Our assumption that Shakespeare spent some years in Shropshire is strengthened, for example, by the fact that in 1886 the purchaser's and vendor's exemplifications relative to New Place, Stratford-on-Avon, of 1597 (the year Shakespeare acquired the 'pretty house of brick and timber') were found among the papers of the Severne family of Wallop, Shropshire.<sup>1</sup> New evidence in support of the apocryphal epitaphs on the Stanleys in Tong Church, Shropshire, may rest

<sup>1</sup> *Athenæum*, 13 Feb., 20 Mar. 1886; Halliwell-Phillipps, *Rarities*, p. 140.

upon the identification of Sir Edward Stanley as being the brother of Henry the 4th Earl of Derby, and one whose name occurs in the Farington Diary as a member of the Earl's household. The young "Shakeshafte" visiting Knowsley in 1587 with the Hesketh Players could have known Sir Edward. Space will not, I fear, allow expansion of the matter. Indeed there is so much more evidence to form new threads in the weft and warp of this vast tapestry, that it must be some time before presentation of the final thesis takes place. In venturing to append a brief (and speculative) Chronological Table in illustration of this article, I cannot end without acknowledgement of the valuable assistance given me in my researches by my friends Mr. Norman Long-Brown, Mr. R. B. Halliday of Leicester and Mr. Geoffrey M. Brown. Also my grateful thanks are due to my wife, who has undertaken many laborious tasks.

SHAKESPEARE *alias* SHAKESHAFTE

- 1564 (Born c. April 23). Baptised 26th April.
- 1578 Father's money troubles begin. Sent as singing-boy to Household of ALEXANDER HOUGHTON, of Lea, Lancashire.
- 1581 (August) Hoghton makes his Will, leaving "Willm Shakeshafte" (among other servants) a year's wages, and commending him to Sir THOMAS HESKETH of Rufford Old Hall, Lancs.
- 1581 (September) Will of Hoghton proved. "Shakeshafte" returns to Stratford-on-Avon—perhaps by Christmas.
- 1582 Woos Anne Hathaway. Pre-nuptial association about July. Marriage, 28th November.
- 1583 A daughter, SUSANNAH, born 26th May.
- 1585 Twins, HAMNET and JUDITH, born 2nd February. *About this time (or even before the birth of the twins) "Shakeshafte" left Stratford-on-Avon. Carefree days of financial and marital ease with 'country contentments', may have seen the beginning of his poetical exercises—perhaps the first drafting of Venus and Adonis.*
- 1585 At RUFFORD OLD HALL.
- 1587-1588 At KNOWSLEY with the HESKETH PLAYERS. Meets JOHN SALISBURY of Lleweni and URSULA (STANLEY) his wife. Composes *The Phoenix and Turtle* in honour of their recent marriage.
- 1588 Death of Sir THOMAS HESKETH.
- 1588-1599 Joins STRANGE'S MEN.
- 1590-1591 Goes into Shropshire. *The player turns playwright . . . and the rest is history.*