

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ANCIENT
RECORDS OF STRATFORD-ON-AVON,
CHIEFLY IN REPLY TO A LEADING
ARTICLE THAT RECENTLY APPEARED IN
THE STRATFORD-ON-AVON HERALD**

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A brief history of the ancient records of Stratford-on-Avon, chiefly in Reply to a Leading Article that recently appeared in The Stratford-on-Avon Herald by Various

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VARIOUS

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THE STRATFORD RECORDS



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CHIEFLY IN

Reply to a Leading Article

THAT RECENTLY APPEARED IN

The Stratford-on-Avon Herald.

HAVE I NOT SEEN DWELLERS ON FORM AND FAVOUR
LOSE ALL, AND MORE, BY PAYING TOO MUCH RENT?

BRIGHTON:
PRINTED BY JOHN GEORGE BISHOP.

1884.

20. 5. 10
20. 5. 3.

PREFACE.

This little history has been elicited under the following circumstances.

Long, long ago the Corporation of Stratford-on-Avon did me the honour to entrust me with the arrangement and calendaring of their old records, a work that I completed to the best of my ability in 1863. During the more than twenty subsequent years not a whisper of complaint was heard respecting either their accessibility or condition, but, on the contrary, the few strangers that visited the record-room expressed themselves gratified by the manner in which they were preserved. A few weeks ago, however, it was represented before the Town Council that some of the most valuable—"invaluable," as they were termed—records were "gradually decaying and losing their value"; words which, if they could be substantiated, would justly render me liable to the imputation of having displayed profound carelessness in the execution of my work, an essential feature of which was, of course, to see that nothing of the kind was likely to occur. Nor has this kind of intimation been restricted to the Council Chamber. The following, for example, is the commencement of a recent leading article in the Stratford-on-Avon Herald, a newspaper which has a large circulation in the town and neighbourhood,—

The Stratford Corporation are in possession of many very interesting records extending from the earliest times,

but it is only recently that the value of these documents has dawned upon the Corporate mind. They were permitted to lie in the muniment-room at the Birthplace unclassified, uncalendared, uncared for, and this indifference to their existence, had it continued, would have led ultimately to their decay, and consequent loss to the town. A little time ago attention was directed to the condition of these records, and the Corporation was prevailed upon to appoint a committee to superintend their classification and calendaring. Mr. Hardy, a gentleman in every way qualified for the work, was entrusted with the task of reducing these records from their chaotic state to something like order, and it is admitted that, so far as the work has proceeded, he has admirably discharged his duty. Of course gentlemen endowed with special talent of this kind require adequate payment for their services, and already Mr. Hardy's account amounts to £180.

The natural inference from all this is, that I have deceived the Corporation in every possible way, and it is an inference which has, to my knowledge, been accepted in more than one quarter. This is not to be wondered at, most of the inhabitants of country towns having no other information on such matters than that which is furnished by the local press. How far the implications of the Stratford Herald are correct will be gathered by the public from the statements that follow.

Then, again, the Stratford Herald, in another recent leader, observes,—

This can be said *from our own knowledge* that Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps has been treated *with the greatest courtesy*

by the Stratford Corporation *and by every individual member of it*; and that, if he thinks this treatment has not been extended to him, his mind has received a particular bias from people whose mental condition renders them incapable of imparting to him the truth.

If the Stratford Herald had here restricted itself to observing that the Corporation, *as a body*, have always treated me with "the greatest courtesy," no one would have been justified in disputing the assertion. I have ever felt grateful to them for the kindness with which they have treated me in their collective capacity, for the consideration with which they have invariably received the perhaps somewhat too numerous suggestions and requests that I have ventured to make, as well as for the very friendly terms in which they have always expressed the several resolutions that they have been generously desirous of passing in my favour. But when the Herald proceeds to observe, from its "own knowledge," that I have been "treated with the greatest courtesy by every individual member" of the Corporation, it has forgotten for the moment certain speeches by one of them that have been reported in its own columns. It is merely sufficient for me to remark that a few extracts from these orations would at once convince the public that a syllabic negative has been accidentally omitted in the description of the treatment to which I have been subjected. I shall be perfectly satis-

fied to rest my case on the reproduction of those speeches ; but until the Stratford Herald accepts this test, it will oblige by not leaving its readers to infer that I am a combative old fellow, who, although overwhelmed by æsthetic amenities, rushes into the town exclaiming, in the words of the Irishman at Donnybrook Fair,—“for Heaven’s sake let somebody fight me.”

Having left the situation I had filled for so many years, that of “the occasional help” to the Corporation, ordinary fairness demanded that the real facts should have been ascertained before it was insinuated that I had been a bad workman and an unreasonable grumbler. The reasons for leaving my place will be thought insufficient only by those who consider it indecorous for a literary domestic to exhibit independent feeling. But however kind masters may be, old servants like to go on quietly in the old grooves, and I am not the only one who has given warning for such matters as being scolded by a new head-gardener for moving a few potted flowers from the conservatory into the garden. Those who have been at the pains to thread the mazes of recent local events will find in this apologue more than one bit of the soul of the licentiate Peter Garcias.

J. O. HALLIWELL-PHILLIPS.

Hollingbury Copse, Brighton,
December, 1884.