

**THE SILENT  
SHAKESPEARE.  
[1915]**

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The Silent Shakespeare. [1915] by Robert Frazer

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**ROBERT FRAZER**

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The  
Silent Shakespeare

BY  
ROBERT FRAZER

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

Philadelphia  
William J. Campbell  
1915

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MAIN

THE SILENT SHAKESPEARE

"To the great Variety of Readers."

*Folio of 1623.*

In presenting the results of several years of preparation, the writer desires to acknowledge his indebtedness to the large body of investigators, from Malone to Halliwell-Phillipps, who have ransacked libraries and garrets for new light upon the subject of this sketch. To many of these something is owing, and frequent mention of authorities has been made in the text. But since it is clearly impracticable to trace, in every case, the source from which a suggestion has been received, this general acknowledgment is made, with the hope that no reference of importance has been omitted.

In the matter of accepting the statements of writers on this subject, it has been found necessary to exercise caution; a single instance will serve as an illustration. The present writer has insisted that Shakespeare's death attracted little attention; a point of

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some importance, as it testifies to the insignificance of the man.

As to this matter, we find the ingenuous Sir Sidney Lee, a modern pillar of the Stratfordian theory, with a different purpose in mind, making the following remarkable statement:

"When Shakespeare lay dead in the spring of 1616 \* \* the flood of panegyric lamentation poured forth in a new flood. One of the earliest of the elegies was a sonnet by William Basse \* \* This fine sentiment found many a splendid echo. It resounded in Ben Jonson's noble lines prefixed to the First Folio of 1623 \* \* Milton qualified the conceit a few years later, in 1630 \* \* Such was the invariable temper in which literary men gave vent to their grief on learning the death of the 'beloved author,' &c."

—*Great Englishmen of the XVIth Century*,  
pp 279-81.

Here is a very flagrant instance of the method of the *suggestio falsi*. The casual



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reader will accept the statement that a flood of lamentation poured forth in "the spring of 1616," when literary men "learned the death of the beloved author," without noting that actually the flood of 1616 consisted of a sonnet by Basse, which did not appear before 1622, of the introductory matter to the folio of 1623, of which more will be said later, and of Milton's verses, in 1630, when he learned of the death of the "beloved author."

However, we can forgive Lee for this sort of work, in consideration of his unwearying research, which produced, for example, his identification of the "Mr. W. H." of the dedication to the Sonnets with one William Hall.

Except in the arrangement and interpretation of the data which are the common property of all, there is nothing new in the following pages. Against the Hathaway marriage, the vital absence of any mention of it in the records of Stratford church, and the remarriage of Mrs. Shakespeare after

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1616, are insisted on. The interpretation of Heywood's protest against the insertion of his sonnets in the *Passionate Pilgrim* is perhaps new; and I have not seen the point made that Will Shakspeare, whose patron was Lord Strange, could hardly have dedicated the *Venus* and the *Lucrece* to another than his patron.

Perhaps, too, the part that I have assigned to Will Shakspeare in the composition of the plays, is more or less new. So far as I know, it has never been seriously maintained that his share in the work was a minor one. Stratfordians are satisfied with nothing less than to credit him with all that is fine in the plays; and Baconians will not allow that he had any part whatever in them.

The presentation of this theory is the principal object and excuse for these essays.

Philadelphia, 1915. ROBERT FRAZER.

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTORY

No self-respecting Shakespearean scholar permits himself to refer to the so-called "Shakespeare problem" otherwise than in terms of concentrated scorn.

Preferably he ignores its existence. This is natural and inevitable. Eyes that have been straining at a microscope do not at once recover their ordinary focus; and the close study of a subject induces affection for the traditions and prejudices which may be entangled in it, as well as for its vital truths.

In this way an unreasoning reverence has grown up for the mere name Shakespeare, even as though the poet had never written "that which we call a rose, by any other word would smell as sweet."

There really is a Shakespeare problem, and the attitude of these scholars does not at once dispose of it. A large and increasing number of sensible persons now doubt that