

SHAKESPEARE V. SHAKESPEARE

IT IS SAID that every new idea and theory that is put forth goes through three stages in the public mind. First, 'absolute nonsense!' next, 'there may be something in it', and finally, 'of course it has always been so'. Anyone can see this exemplified if he thinks of the history of Copernican astronomy, of the theories of evolution and of germ infection, or the suggestion that there was a possibility of human flight. The idea that the 'Shakespeare' plays were written by someone other than the actor from Stratford, whose name (in a different spelling), they bear, is at present going through all three stages. The majority of people—people that is, who know anything of English literature at all—take it for granted that they were written by the Stratford man, but there is a growing number of people going through the second stage, and a minority who are fully convinced that whoever did write the plays, it was not the actor, though they are divided in their beliefs as to who really was the author. In this article we will follow the 'anti-Stratfordians' and for the sake of clearness will spell the name of the actor 'Shakspere' and that of the writer of the plays, 'Shakespeare'.

No student of English literature can ignore the question entirely, nor could a collector such as Alexander Turnbull. His Shakespeare collection was not extensive, as he concentrated particularly on Milton and some of the nineteenth century writers, but it had some interesting highlights. The copy of the Second Folio is a fine tall copy in a beautiful light calf binding, and there is also a copy of the Oxford Facsimile of the First Folio, and early editions of such sources as Holinshed's *Chronicle*, North's *Plutarch*, and the English version of the *Decameron*. (The tales of course were well-known before they appeared in print.) Rowe's edition of the plays in seven volumes is here and the twenty volumes of the Variorum edition, published by J. B. Lippincott, as well as other good early and modern sets. The 1853 set of the Shakespeare Society's publications, and the two series of the New Shakspere Society's, issued in the 'seventies and the 'eighties, are not to be found in every library. On