

# THE VIRGINIA TEACHER

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## I

### LOCAL-COLORING SHAKESPEARE

Notwithstanding the often-quoted remark of Shakespeare, belittling the value of a name, I should like to admit at once that the real title of this paper is not the one that is printed at its head. That is far too ambitious to be treated in a few pages, or to be treated by me at all. My real title indicates a much more limited scope, although it can not be so briefly expressed. I should like to call this paper *A Few Hints of Local-Coloring Shakespeare, Gathered from Many Sources, and Hesitatingly Put Forth—at the Request of a Colleague—by a Teacher who Believes that the Task in Teaching Shakespeare is not to Dissect His Plays, but to Complete Them and Reconstruct Them by the Aid of the Imagination, the Human Voice, Chalk Lines on the Blackboard and on the Floor, and Every Other Material and Immaterial Thing that can in Any Way Contribute to the Students' Understanding and Delight in These Great Literary Inheritances of English Speaking Peoples.* That the task is one of completion and reconstruction, rather than dissection, seems too obvious to need development. It would be a poor course in wood-working or dress-making in which the students restricted their attention to drawing and specifications alone, and never saw complete, or themselves completed, a model of the object "studied." No music teacher would dream of limiting his study of a composer to that composer's score; he knows that words and notes do not make a song, but that they are merely directions from which a song can be made. And so it is with a play: a play is not a play when it exists only as a set of printed directions, certain words to be spoken, certain actions to be performed, certain effects to be secured. Of course I do not mean that there is no value in merely reading dialogue. And there are some fortunate people who have such an active imagination that in reading a play they natur-

ally, without any special training, reproduce in their minds the effects that the author had in his. But really intelligent play readers are scarce. The school has done little to develop them, for we have too often applied the reading-of-the-novel method to plays, and with dire results. We have forgotten that the novelist *usually* gives us all we need to know. He tells us how his characters look and act, he describes the rooms and places they inhabit, he explains to us their moods and states of mind, and he informs us of the tones in which they speak. But most playwrights do not do this, and Shakespeare did not do it. His plays are merely a memoranda of lines to be spoken by members of his company. "The speaker is indicated in each case, and from time to time there is a reminder to the stage manager to have trumpets sounded or cannon discharged behind the scenes. There is no direct description of the appearance of the persons, their age, their dress, their idiosyncrasies, the gesture which accompanies the speeches, the position of the persons on the stage, the mood of a speech nor the mood in which it is received. A character may be calm or may be sobbing convulsively without any direct indication in the text. All of this by-play, without which the spoken words are mere fragments, are gone with Burbage and Kemp and Hemyng and Condell and the others who first made the plays live."<sup>1</sup> Yet, "all of this by-play" must be understood by the student if he is really to appreciate the play, and most of it must be given to him by the teacher; so that it would seem that the teacher who undertakes the "teaching of Shakespeare" has a live task on his hands.

Possibly the best way of truly appreciating a Shakespearean play is to produce it on a real stage and before a real audience. Teachers who can do this will find a treasure of information and advice in Roy Mitchell's *Shakespeare for Community Players*. But actual production is not always possible, and

<sup>1</sup>Mitchell, *Shakespeare for Community Players*.



even when it is, we do not want to confine our knowledge to the few plays that we can "put on." Our problem is this: What can we do to make the plays live? How can we "local-color" Shakespeare for the class-room?

It seems to me that there are a great many things that we can do; and first and foremost, I should say *have the students learn all that they possibly can absorb about the Elizabethan theatre.* This approach is sure to interest, unless it happen to be a community (if there still are any such) where the theatre is taboo. Let the student compare the theatre as he knows it with the Elizabethan playhouse. The historical approach is excellent, and it can be easily explained by some such device as follows:

Time	Kind of Play	Where played	Players
900-1000	Liturgical ceremonies	Churches	Priests
1000-1800	Miracles, mysteries, and moralities	Churches and churchyards	Priests and laymen
1300-1450	Cycles of miracle plays	Public squares on wagons	Guilds
1450-1550	Interludes	Innyards	Strolling players
1550-1642	Dramas	Theatres	Professional stock companies

Of course, it must be kept in mind that in such a chart there is a good deal of overlapping. All these processes were going on together. The important thing is that starting with a little dramatic dialogue in the church as part of the service, there grew up in the course of five hundred years a professional theatre. In 1576, an actor, James Burbage, built just outside of London a playhouse called "The Theatre," and settled down with his company to entertain the city. Immediately other playhouses and other companies sprang up, and there followed in the short space of sixty years that marvelous growth which we know as the Elizabethan drama.

From this historical survey, it is but a step to the actual construction of these early theatres. It will be noted that the strolling players favored an inn yard as a place for performances. The reasons are obvious. It was secluded, so that spectators could be made to pay admission. Usually it was in the form of a rectangle, and a raised platform at one end made a sufficient stage. The common people stood around on the ground, while the galleries made excellent places from which the "quality" could view the play. When

the actors came to build a playhouse, they naturally made it like the best thing they had known; so that the first theatres were merely the courtyards of inns with the inns omitted. The ground plans of all these early theatres were much alike, and they should be drawn on the blackboard over and over again, until they become absolutely familiar to every member of the class. Then the students will be able to think of a theatre in the form Shakespeare knew. This material is exceedingly easy to secure. It is contained in almost all of the more recent histories of literature. A few of the most recent and best books on the subject are: Matthews's *Shakespeare as a Playwright*, Thorndike's *Shakespeare's Theatre*, and Neilson and Thorndike's *Facts About Shakespeare.*

There are a host of interesting things about the Elizabethan performances that the students will delight in knowing. They will like to know that the time of performance was late in the afternoon because of the impossibility of lighting the play at night. In case of rain the performance had to be postponed, for there was no shelter for the mass of the audience. It should be pointed out in what ways our own theatre shows traces of the Elizabethan. It is very obvious that "boxes" grew out of the custom of the beaux of the period sitting on the corners of the stage to show off their clothes and manners. A report from some student on this custom can not fail to interest his classmates, especially if he takes as a basis, and reads extracts from, Beaumont and Fletcher's satire, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle.* The evolution of our "orchestra chairs" from a few special seats placed among the musicians, is another interesting topic; for it must be remembered that the space about the stage was originally the place where the rabble stood—as long as the play was sufficiently interesting to keep them in order. Their close proximity to the actors undoubtedly kept the latter interested in their work and made for a careful choice of plays, as disapproval was plainly and unmistakably manifested in the medieval manner. The fact that in England the first balcony, called the "dress circle," is still in many theatres the choicest and most expensive place to sit has interest, showing its growth from the galleries for the gentry.

The evolution of the actual stage will



make another desirable study. It will be observed that the small back stage, originally the only one in any way cut off from the audience by a curtain, has in the process of time become larger and larger as scenery has been introduced; and the front stage has become smaller and smaller, until within our own time it has actually disappeared. Most theatres or "Opera Houses" built even as late as thirty years ago were equipped with a front stage or "apron," but within the last few years we have seen the "picture frame stage" arrive, in which there is absolutely no front stage. Pictures of Elizabethan theatres are easily secured, and the appeal to the eye should not be neglected in this, nor in any other, part of our study of Shakespeare. Many famous artists have been inspired to illustrate the plays; and there are few prominent actors who have not, at one time or another, posed as one of the famous characters. The Elizabethan audience is another interesting subject and should not be entirely neglected.

Secondly, *the students must be taught as much as possible about Shakespeare's Company*. That it consisted entirely of boys and men may cause much astonishment, and it is an important fact to be kept in mind, especially if there are only boys in the class. If the original actors of Shakespeare's heroines were boys, boys can still assume the parts with good grace. The little that we do know about the assignment of parts must not be overlooked. We should by all means call attention to lists of names in the folio of "the Principall Actors in all these Playes."

It begins with William Shakespeare himself, about whom, if there is nothing certain as an actor, there is at least some interesting tradition. Knowledge of the organization of the modern stock company will enable the student to understand the company to which Shakespeare belonged, for then, as now, it was the custom for each actor to have his own "line of business." Speculation about the original performers of the various parts is fascinating and by no means unprofitable. Shakespeare himself seems to have been an "old man," and to have played the Ghost in *Hamlet* and Adam in *As You Like It*. The tradition that Shakespeare played these two parts has reached us through most interesting channels. Rowe, who wrote the first regular biography of the dramatist, which however

did not appear until 1709, informs us of the first fact. His authority was the great actor Betterton, who claimed to have the information from John Lowin and Joseph Taylor, two actors who had been associated with Shakespeare himself, and who were still alive in 1660, when the theatres were reopened after the Restoration. The other tradition is still more hazy. According to William Oldys, in his manuscript *Adversaria*, now in the British Museum, Gilbert Shakespeare, a younger brother of William, was also still alive in 1660. When interviewed, his recollection of his brother's acting was very vague; but he claimed to remember seeing William play the part of a servant, lost in a forest with his young master, and wearing a "long beard."

We know, from an eley written upon his death, that Richard Burbage was the actor who played Hamlet, Othello, and Lear. How interesting it would be to know more about this man who first impersonated these tremendous characters! That he was an actor from his boyhood is most probable, as his father was the James Burbage who built "The Theatre." Of course, he probably also played the other tragic leads, and it is worth while to note that as Burbage grew older so did the characters that Shakespeare wrote for him. As a young man he originated Romeo, and as an old man he first impersonated King Lear. We may be certain that Shakespeare never forgot that he was writing for a specific company and for specific actors. There was the chief comedian, William Kempt, or Kempe, who is also famous for his "Nine Daies Wonder."<sup>2</sup> Robert Armin, who succeeded him as comedian about 1598, is supposed to have been a bit more subtle in his comedy, and consequently we find about this time a change in the sort of comedy parts that Shakespeare writes. Then there are John Heminge and Henric Condell, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for the first folio. And we must not forget to mention the two "heroines," one short and one tall, who seem to have been in the author's mind when he wrote the parts of Rosalind and Celia in *As You Like It*. These, and many more interesting facts, all the students should know, can easily be presented to the class by any bright student who has access to Chapter X of Matthew's *Shakespeare as a Playwright*.



Their value is that they help us to break away from the usual academic attitude towards the plays. We can no longer conceive of them as something created in a vacuum; they become living things made for a certain situation the better shall we understand the situation the better will we understand the plays. It has always seemed to me that in discussing the Porter scene in *Macbeth*, for example, we are over-looking an opportunity if we do not point out that one of Shakespeare's strongest reasons for writing it may have been merely that he had a good comedian for whom he wished to insert a part. The public wanted to see Kempe or Armin or whoever it might have been, and Shakespeare was too good a showman not to give the public what they wanted. Having decided to put in the character, he puts him in at the one place where he will be most effective, for by the time he wrote *Macbeth* he had become a master craftsman. How amused the shade of the great bard may be, by all our subtle reasoning to justify this scene!

Thirdly, *it should not be forgotten that Shakespeare was a poet who wrote many famous songs, and that songs imply music and singing.* No treatment of *As You Like It* should be considered satisfactory that does not leave the students with a few jazz-less tunes in their minds. That for three hundred years the greatest of musical composers have been putting melodies to Shakespeare's lyrics is a fact that we can not afford to overlook. By the aid of a victrola, the reproduction of some of the most notable is a simple matter. Contemporary Elizabethan music makes a fascinating study. There is an excellent book, published by the Oliver Ditson Company in the Musicians Library called *Fifty Shakespeare Songs*. It contains many traditional tunes, some referred to in the plays, and some undoubtedly used in early performances. There are some melodies composed by Robert Jones, who received his B. Mus. from Oxford in 1597; and there are some composed by Dr. Jack Wilson, who may very likely have been one and the same person as "Jackie" Wilson, who is supposed to have been a member of Shakespeare's own company, possibly the original 'singing page.'" The songs in *Twelfth Night* are especially important. For

<sup>2</sup>See *The Virginia Teacher*, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 1.

example, it is almost impossible to understand the baiting of Malvolio by Toby, Sir Andrew, and the Clown, in Act II, Scene 3, without knowing the song, *Farewell, dear heart*, which appears in the *Fifty Shakespeare Songs*, and which was without doubt well known to all Elizabethans. A knowledge of Elizabethan dancing, such as can be gained from an acquaintance with the work of Cecil Sharp and his pupils, is also helpful to the student of Shakespeare.

In the fourth place, *we should see that certain difficulties of Elizabethan language are forever cleared up for the student by his study of Shakespeare.* This is a much less hopeless task than it is often assumed to be. Of course, the high school is not the place for a detailed study of language. Such study as there is should have but one end: to make the plays more easily understood. There are a few words and a few principles that clear up a huge proportion of the difficulties that the young student finds in trying to read Elizabethan language. We must determine what these difficulties are, and then by memory work and drilling clear them up for him. One of the present difficulties in understanding the plays arises from the fact that certain words which are still current were used by the Elizabethans in a very different sense from what we understand today. We must be sure that the student knows the Elizabethan meaning. Examples of such words are *still* used in the sense of *ever* or *always*, *presently* meaning *at once* or *right away*, and *admired* denoting *to be wondered at*. Then the student must know that *anon* does not mean "anonymous," nor "in a little while," but always has the archaic sense of *at once*. He should be familiar with the impersonal use of *his* where we should use *its*. He should know that *nor* . . . *nor* was used like our *neither* . . . *nor*. Even such a simple thing as the use of *an* for *if* may prove puzzling to him unless it is clearly pointed out and fixed in his mind.

There are a few language principles which he can easily be made to understand: as the ethical dative, the use of the genitive in an adjectival manner, and the quite common inversion of the pronoun and the adjective. All of these principles may be illustrated from *Julius Caesar*, or almost any other play. Notice Casca's relation to Brutus and Cassius in



Act I: ". . . he plucked me ope his doublet." In the same act we find, in Cassius's argument to Brutus, "hearts of contraversy," which illustrates the second principle, for "of controversy" simply means "controversial." The third principle hardly seems to need illustration, for every reader of Shakespeare must know that famous and oft-repeated line, "Good my lord, . . ." Probably no two teachers would agree altogether as to what words or principles should be picked out as important, but that there are a few that it is worth while stressing can hardly be disputed.

Fifthly, *we should not neglect the interest that may grow out of a knowledge of the plays as mere books with a long and varied history.* The pirated quartos of the early 17th century, the invaluable first folio and its successors, a few of the most famous of the host of distinguished editors and samples of their cleverest emendations; knowledge of these things will help to make the plays live. An invaluable book for the teacher who is seeking to create "local color" is the inexpensive facsimile of the first folio published in London by Chatto & Windus.

Sixthly, *we should require more memorizing.* As Sterne says, "They order this matter better in France." Few French boys leave the school without a considerable knowledge of the French classics, but the American boy who can quote very much from Shakespeare—or any other of the great masters—is the exception and not the rule. Of course, many of the expressions have crept into our everyday speech, and are widely used by persons who have no knowledge of their origin. There is the story of the man who liked the performance of *Hamlet*, but who complained that the play was too full of quotations! Of properly directed memorizing there is, however, too little. Most students, if they are convinced that the quotations are worth while, are much more willing to "learn by heart" than they might be ready to admit. Of late we have belittled the memory in education by requiring too little of it. Memorizing is one thing, at least, in English teaching, that can be exact. It is something that the student can "set his teeth in." And nothing else makes a difficult passage light up with meaning as does memorizing. Moreover, there is no reason why we should con-

fine this work in Shakespeare to the play that we study as a whole. It is very debatable whether or not *Hamlet*, for example, can be read with much pleasure or profit by even the most advanced high school classes. But certain parts of *Hamlet*, such as Polonius's advice to Laertes, Hamlet's soliloquy on death, and his advice to the players, can be studied and memorized with benefit by any properly prepared high school class.

Lastly, we can help to local-color Shakespeare by using books and poems in which he appears as a character, or in which his times are portrayed. A few of such books which might be useful are Noyes's *Tales of the Mermaid Tavern*, Bennett's *Master Skylark*, Rolfe's *Shakespeare, the Boy*, Black's *Judith Shakespeare*, and Shaw's satirical little play, *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*. The first mentioned book is especially valuable. Of course, the characters and the times are seen by Noyes through the eyes of Romance, but the painting is true, and the idea of the Elizabethan age that students will get from his work is probably as correct as any they might secure from volumes of less fanciful history. There they will find mentioned most of the prominent contemporary writers. Their curiosity should be aroused by the portrayals of the May day customs, the Morris dances, the tragic burial of Mary Queen of Scots, the arrest and strange adventures of Master Ben Jonson, Raleigh "swaggering down as if he owned a world," and cakes and ale and red-deer pies. Those who are interested in the form of the theatre itself will find passages such as follow:

" . . . . . I'll find  
Some good square inn-yard with wide  
galleries,  
And windows level with the stage. 'Twill  
serve  
My Comedy of Vapours; though, I grant,  
For Tragedy a private House is best,  
Or, just as Burbage tip-toes to a deed  
Of blood, or, over your stable's black half-  
door,  
Marked 'Battlements' in white chalk, your  
breathless David  
Glowers at the whiter Bathsheba within,  
Some humorous coach-horse neighs a  
'hallelujah'!

Or, again::

" . . . . . This marchaunt's house  
Was builded like a great high-gabled inn,  
Square, with a galleried courtyard, such as  
now  
The players use."



The result of all this sort of work should be to make the age of Elizabeth live for the student. It should give him a cross-section of Elizabethan life; and if it does that it will have been worth any amount of time and effort, for that is perhaps the greatest thing literary study can give. A conception that even one age other than our own was made up of real living people will aid in enabling the student to overcome provincialism of time and place. And if we can make the Queen Anne age live through our study of Addison and Steele, the Puritan age through Milton and Bunyan, the 18th Century through Johnson and Burke, or the 19th by our study of Tennyson and Browning; then, even though we may not have corrected every composition fault, we have aided to educate the student.

However, I begin to perceive that in my attempt to emphasize "local-coloring," I have made no mention of the canvas on which it should be spread, and before concluding, I should like to mention my text. I find it in the words of Heminge and Condell, actors in Shakespeare's own company, and men who had the privilege of seeing the plays worked out one by one as they grew in the mind of their author. It appears in their preface to the first folio.

But it is not our province, who onely gather his works, and give them you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him. And here we hope, to your divers capacities, you will finde enough, both to draw and hold you: for his wit can no more lie hid, than it could be lost. Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe: And is then you doe not like him surely you are in some manifest danger, not to understand him. And so we leave you to others of his Friends, who if you need, can bee your guides; if you neede them not, you can lead yourselves, and others. And such Readers we wish him.

"Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe." That, to my mind, is the secret of teaching Shakespeare. But, "reading Shakespeare" should not mean sitting upright at desks with book in hand and pulling the plays to pieces. It does mean working them out as plays, re-creating them. I advocate the pushing aside of the teacher's desk to make a clear space in the front of the room, the assignment of parts, and the working out of such stage business as is necessary for a clear

understanding and interpretation of the lines. The school reading of a play might well resemble the first rehearsals of a company of actors. It is not at all necessary that the parts be memorized. But each actor must have a clear idea of what he is trying to do, of the character he is trying to portray. Often it is possible to appoint a student "stage-director" for a scene, and to let him assign the parts and oversee the reading. A chalk line on the floor may well become the curtain dividing the front stage and the rear. Perhaps there is a scene out in the open, like the one between Brutus and Cassius in *Julius Caesar* (Act IV, Scene 2). They begin to quarrel, and decide to continue their conversation in the tent of Brutus. They order their captains to have the troops withdraw, and they themselves leave the front stage by the imaginary door at one side. They turn and enter again behind the chalk line, while all the students see the imaginary curtains looped up at each side, forming the tent. As they enter, the quarrel breaks out in all its violence. This was the Elizabethan method, and there is none better adapted to the classroom. The text gives all the directions. Such an experiment illustrates the Elizabethan theatre, and clarifies the play, in a way that hours of talk might fail to do.

By the use of this sort of reading, we shall find the same process going on in the class that went on among the first professional actors. Some boy succeeds especially well with a part, and thereafter he has a "line of business." When such a part occurs again the "audience" will call for him. If a song is in the part, let the readers make the stage picture, while the victrola performs. It will be impossible not to acquire a few simple properties. Not long ago I read "The Comedy of Errors" with a class of young boys. Without any suggestion, they soon acquired a "ropes end," a "bag of gold," and a jeweled "chain"—made of cord. The action of the play made these properties essential, and their use made clear many lines that would have otherwise required explanation or comment.

Most of the information suggested above will work into the study of a play that will result from such a reading. With younger pupils it will be impossible, probably, to do much more than read the play. But if the reading is properly approached, it will be done with



understanding and gusto. The students are given a chance *to do something*, and the most active boy in the class is no longer a problem, but a leader. He wants all the information that he can possibly get that will enable him to do his part well. Otherwise the teacher is certain to hear, "Aw, let *me* try it." An interesting account of this method may be found in *The Play Way*, by H. Caldwell Cook. When it is necessary with older students to make a more detailed study of a play, as for "college entrance exams," a preliminary reading of this sort is the best kind of beginning. From this preliminary reading, the teacher can branch out into any sort of study that is desired, for the reading should have made the play live and real. And when we can get the boys and girls of our schools to see that Shakespeare is the author of living characters, and not merely the writer of dusty words, when we can "put over" to them the life we see and feel in these plays, the tribute of Hugh Holland "to the Famous Scenic Poet, Master William Shakespeare," will be true:

"For though his line of life went soone  
about,  
The life yet of his lines shall never out."

MILTON M. SMITH

## II

### TEACHERS' INACCURACIES IN MARKING PAPERS

This article is nothing more or less than an account, in a sort of semi-scientific style, of an interesting experiment in marking examination papers. Its value lies mainly in contribution to the evidence showing that teachers can not mark papers accurately.

At the request of the writer Dr. Gifford's class in Educational Measurements, composed of teachers, examined a set of eighteen papers and marked them. These papers were the result of a seventh grade arithmetic examination given in a Virginia elementary school. Written instructions were given for the class to observe in marking the papers. Incidentally it may be mentioned that the results of two teachers' work had to be thrown out because

they did not follow directions. The questions and the instructions to those marking the papers follow.

#### EXAMINATION

1. Find discount and proceeds on a note for \$550 made October 1, due January 1, interest at 4 per cent, note discounted December 2 at 6 per cent.
2. A draft cost \$2752.75 including a premium of 0.1 per cent. What was the face of the draft?
3. The tax rate being 1 1-2 per cent, how much must a company pay on property assessed at \$75,000?
4. If a man's property is assessed at \$13,000 and his tax is \$150, what is the rate of tax?
5. The duty on cigars is \$4.50 plus 25 per cent ad valorem. If the consignment weighs 275 lbs. and is worth \$825 what is total duty?
6. If goods invoiced at \$28,000 is insured for 80 per cent of its value at 1 1-4 per cent and the property is destroyed by fire what is the loss including the premium?
7. A man bought some C. P. stock when quoted at 211 1-2. He sold it when quoted at 214 3-4. He made \$90. How many shares did he buy?
8. A telegraph pole is set perpendicular to the ground and a wire fastened to it 11 feet from the ground and to a stake 13 feet 6 in. from the foot of the pole so as to hold it in place. How long is the wire? Draw figure.
9. How many square feet in the base of a water tank that is 42 feet in diameter?
10. How much does the holder of 75 shares of R. R. stock receive when a 5 1-4 per cent dividend is declared.

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR MARKING PAPERS

1. Each teacher must do *all* the grading work on these papers without any consultation whatever with any other member of the class. Make no comparisons whatever until your results have been handed to the instructor.
2. Follow instructions absolutely, for otherwise the results will not be comparable.
3. The first thing to do is to make a table on a sheet of paper. Make it like the table below.
4. The second thing is to study the list of questions and assign a value to each. These values must total 100. If you think the prob-