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THE SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATION

Shakespeare Day

REPORT OF MEETING, ORGANISED BY
THE SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATION, HELD
AT KING'S COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF
LONDON, ON MAY 3, 1917, TO PROMOTE
AN ANNUAL SHAKESPEARE DAY IN THE
SCHOOLS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

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LOAN STACK

The Council of the Shakespeare Association desire to express their best thanks to Sir Charles Wakefield, Bart., a Vice-President of the Association, for his generosity in defraying the cost of the publication of this Report.

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‘CHILDREN BRAVE AND FREE
OF THE GREAT MOTHER-TONGUE, AND YE SHALL BE
LORDS OF AN EMPIRE WIDE AS SHAKESPEARE’S SOUL,
SUBLIME AS MILTON’S IMMEMORIAL THEME,
AND RICH AS CHAUCER’S SPEECH, AND FAIR AS SPENSER’S
DREAM.’

"NON SANZ DROICT"

TO
HIS EXCELLENCY
WALTER HINES PAGE
LL.D. D.C.L.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO GREAT BRITAIN,
IN TOKEN OF PROFOUND ESTEEM
AND AS A SYMBOL OF THE ONENESS OF
PURPOSE UNITING THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING
PEOPLES IN THE BROTHERHOOD OF ARMS
FOR THE IDEALS OF HUMANITY.

THIS SHAKESPEARE FOLIO
ENHANCED BY DEDICATION TO THE
BRITISH RED CROSS,
WAS PRESENTED

BY
THE SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATION
ON MAY 3, 1917 (APRIL 23 OLD STYLE)

AT A
MEETING ORGANIZED BY THE ASSOCIATION
HELD
AT KING'S COLLEGE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
TO PROMOTE THE INSTITUTION OF AN
ANNUAL SHAKESPEARE DAY IN THE SCHOOLS

THEY MAY READ, BUT IN SAFETY
THEY CAN'T FEEL THE PULSE OF THE
AGE SHALL BE THE ONLY CHANGING
SMALL SEE THE AGE BEEN CHANGING

"SPE LABOR LEVIS"



AN ANNUAL SHAKESPEARE DAY IN THE SCHOOLS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS.

R E P O R T O F M E E T I N G organised by the Shakespeare Association, held at King's College, University of London, on Thursday, 3rd May, 1917. Lieut.-Colonel SIR A. PEARCE GOULD, K.C.V.O., Vice-Chancellor of the University, in the Chair, supported by His Excellency Dr. W. H. PAGE, United States Ambassador; Professor I. Gollancz, Litt.D., President of the Association; Colonel Sir Charles Cheers Wakefield, Bart.; Mr. Edmund Gosse, C.B.; Sir James Yoxall, M.P.; Professor Caroline Spurgeon; Mr. H. B. Irving; Mr. H. G. Wells; Mr. G. R. Parkin, C.M.G.; and Dr. Burrows.

SIR ALFRED PEARCE GOULD, Vice-Chancellor of the University (Chairman):

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,—We have met here this afternoon to promote a proposal to honour the memory of Shakespeare in a way that has never been done before—by the observance of an annual Shakespeare Day in all the schools of the Empire. We are privileged this afternoon to welcome the esteemed representative of our latest Ally—an ally bound to us not only by strong ties of common interest, but by those stronger ties, a common inheritance, common ideals, a common intellectual outlook, and a common moral standard. These things, and no one has taught us the lesson better than the mighty Shakespeare, are

more potent in binding men and women together than mere material interests, and it therefore gives us profound satisfaction that Dr. Page has been willing and able to be with us (Applause).

Dr. Gollancz will presently tell us his reasons for proposing the annual observance of a Shakespeare Day. We support his plea because we believe that Shakespeare's name is the greatest inscribed upon the roll of the citizens of this vast empire. It is just worthy of notice that Shakespeare was not a ruler of men; he was not a statesman; he was not a soldier. Someone in this hall would perhaps like to remind me that he was not a University graduate; I am not so sure of that. I am inclined to claim him as an 'external' student of the University of London (Laughter), for it is very certain that Shakespeare would not have been Shakespeare if he had not pursued his studies in what was then, as it is now, and we hope ever will be, the Metropolis of the world. The proposed 'Shakespeare Day' is not to be an addition to the 'days' with which we are now familiar in the streets of London, so full of interest, more especially to the gentler sex, days which give many members of the sterner sex frequent opportunities for decorating their dull persons. No, it is to have a high, noble, educational purpose—educational in the best sense of the term. And it is for this reason that the University of London is to-day taking a representative part in this inaugural meeting. We are not going to ask the boys and girls of our schools to wave flags, pretending that by so doing they honour the memory of our greatest man. We want them to observe the day in such a manner that they may become more vividly familiar than they otherwise would be with Shakespeare's glorious words and thoughts; that they may from year to year increase their vital knowledge of his works; that they may form their study circles, their little or big Shakespeare

Societies; that they may plant within their hearts and minds seed which will grow and flourish and bring forth fruit to the end of their lives. We say that we are all proud of Shakespeare, but how little attention is devoted to his works by the majority of English people! How ignorant they are of their Shakespeare, notwithstanding the efforts of our many excellent teachers! Professor Gollancz, I am sure, will agree with me in this statement, which I make bold to utter even in this College, and on this occasion. We are, therefore, very anxious that his proposal for a Shakespeare Day shall be a definite, earnest, intelligent effort, tending to correct what is deficient, to advance what is good, and to make more living among all classes their appreciation of the genius of the greatest of British men. Shakespeare, great in many ways, is dear to us and honoured by us for his intellectual vigour—how vast the expanse over which it reigns!—combined with a sane moral sense that makes his writings fit and helpful inspiration for everyone of us, from early youth to declining age. At this time when we can none of us take our thoughts away from the awful war that is devastating Europe, when our hearts have all been rent by its horrors, anxieties, and cares, it is well to be reminded that, after all, the intellectual and moral forces of the world are the mightiest, and that these forces, now uniting the Allies most closely, will prevail in the end. In this spirit we are fighting. The issue of the war will, we know, be such a freedom for the moral and intellectual advance of all peoples as the long ages that have gone by have not dreamt of, and as the present world cannot picture.

Ladies and Gentlemen, before submitting to you his proposal for the institution of an Annual Shakespeare Day in the Schools, Professor Gollancz has a very interesting statement to make, and I will now ask him to address you (Loud applause).

PROFESSOR I. GOLLANCZ, President of the Shakespeare Association :

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,—If I may venture to seem to offer a correction, we are assembled to-day to do honour not to an external graduate of the University of London, but to an internal Master of Arts of the great Universe (Applause.) But, before we come to our more than imperial theme how best to promote the institution of a Shakespeare Day primarily in the schools of the Empire, I have the privilege to speak a prelude which I feel sure will make its appeal to the vast English-speaking world. Indeed, the prelude is likely to prove a very integral part of our main purpose. We are honoured to-day by the presence of His Excellency Dr. Page; his presence is evidence enough that this meeting has a message not limited to the British Empire. We gratefully recall our debt to His Excellency for his valued help last year when we commemorated, amid the stress and preoccupations of the war, the Shakespeare Tercentenary. He addressed us more than once—in this Hall, at the Mansion House, and elsewhere. We felt how closely united he was with us in spirit, and we knew that millions of his fellow-countrymen were swayed by the self-same sentiments. In less than a year our confident hope has become realised. These trophies, the emblems that deck this Hall, attest what is in our hearts. The Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes are entwined, as it were, around Shakespeare's very self (Hear, hear).

Dr. Page has for years past been a great ally in many movements dear to those who cherish the intellectual co-operation of the English-speaking peoples. To-day he has come among us to show his heartiest sympathy with our present proposal, to give evidence of his goodwill, and his desire to support us. How best can we, members and friends of the Shakespeare Association,

signalise this memorable occasion? How best testify to our profound esteem for Dr. Page personally, and at the same time pay honour to the exalted office he holds, as representing the great English-speaking people now allied with us in resolute oneness of purpose? It has occurred to me that the occasion calls for some visible token. By happy chance I noted some little time back that a generous donor had presented to that most beneficent of bodies, the British Red Cross, a precious Shakespeare Folio, the Second Folio of 1632, and it seemed to me that this book, secured at Christie's sale by our good friends and neighbours the Brothers Maggs, was a most fitting symbol of the new covenant. When I mentioned the idea to my fellow members of the Shakespeare Association they acclaimed the suggestion, and the treasured volume is now on the table before us. It is my privilege as President to offer this Folio to His Excellency for his kind acceptance.

Two legends run through my mind as I speak to you this afternoon: Shakespeare's device, the motto beneath his spear, *Non sanz droiēt*—Not without right, an inspiring device for the English-speaking race; and another motto, that borne by Colonel John Page, the first of the name to leave this land and found the illustrious family of which our guest of to-day is the honoured representative. Colonel John Page, who left England in 1650, was a small boy of five or six years of age when this Second Folio was published in 1632. I have studied his history and that of the Page family, who hold a great place in the annals of Virginia. This God-fearing and upright man took as his motto, *Spe labor levis*—Hope makes toil light. These two mottoes may well guide us now—*Non sanz droiēt; Spe labor levis*. Colonel Page could not have imagined that in the time far off a great ambassador of his name and race from across the ocean would be held in highest honour by a world-wide British Empire, when all the peoples of

English speech were to be united for the great cause of humanity and human progress (Applause).

There is only one element of regret to-day, in respect of Dr. Page's presence, and it is that illness deprives us of the company of Mrs. Page, who has done so much good work for the struggling, the wounded, and those in distress. As the Shakespeare Folio does not contain Shakespeare's imperishable Sonnets, we would ask Dr. Page to be good enough to hand from us to Mrs. Page this copy of the Sonnets. We would recall from what many believe to be transcripts of Shakespeare's very soul two monumental lines, herein inscribed, that apply equally to nations as to individuals:

' Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments.'

I must strike one sad note on this occasion. We have lost during the last few days a dear friend, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Shakespeare Association, Dr. Wheatley,—scholar and English gentleman. Our loss casts a gloom over those of us who had hoped to see him here. We know how heartily he would have taken part in this meeting, and how he would have rejoiced at its success. I desire in your name to pay this brief tribute to his beloved memory.

Fortunately, we have with us here to-day one who, in his exalted position as Lord Mayor, did much last year for the due observance of the Shakespeare Tercentenary Commemoration in the City of London—Sir Charles Cheers Wakefield (Applause). You may well applaud him. I knew Sir Charles years ago, when, in 1908, as Alderman of the City of London, he helped forward my efforts at the Tercentenary of John Milton. I had always hoped that he would be Lord Mayor in 1916. He has cordially consented to take the place of our Chairman at this function. As President of the

Shakespeare Association, on behalf of the Association, I have now the honour, Dr. Page, to offer for your kind acceptance this Shakespeare Folio. With very special pleasure we ask Sir Charles Wakefield to hand it to your Excellency. The book bears the following inscription :—

“NON SANZ DROICT”

To
His Excellency
WALTER HINES PAGE
LL.D., D.C.L.,
AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO GREAT BRITAIN
in token of profound esteem,
and as a symbol of the oneness of purpose
uniting the English-speaking peoples
in the brotherhood of arms
for the ideals of humanity,
THIS SHAKESPEARE FOLIO
enhanced by dedication to the
British Red Cross,
was presented
by
THE SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATION
on May 3, 1917 (April 23, old style)
at a
Meeting, organized by the Association,
held
at King’s College, University of London,
to promote the institution of an
ANNUAL SHAKESPEARE DAY IN THE SCHOOLS.

“Every man shall eat in safety,
Under his own vine, what he plants, and sing
The merry songs of Peace to all his neighbours:
God shall be truly known
Our children’s children shall see this, and bless heaven.”

“SPE LABOR LEVIS.”

(Loud applause).

SIR CHARLES WAKEFIELD, Bart. :

Your Excellency,—Just a year ago in that wonderful year of the Shakespeare Tercentenary it was my privilege, as Lord Mayor, to welcome you at the Mansion House as a most honoured guest among those assembled to pay homage to the genius of Shakespeare, and I recall with no little gratification that we gave you pride of place as the first of the speakers on that memorable day. How well you voiced our feelings of ever-grateful reverence for what we and the world owe to the poet and his inspiration! We welcomed you as the distinguished Ambassador to Great Britain, from Shakespeare's kinsmen across the Atlantic. It was difficult on that occasion to banish from our hearts certain hopes and fervent longings. To-day we meet again on one platform to do honour to the master-poet of the English-speaking people, yea, of the modern world, and with our hopes and longings amply realized. We meet as brothers in arms 'for the ideals of humanity,' ideals which we proudly believe find their fullest expression in the sublime utterances of the great dramatist.

A prophecy, as it were, made in my year of office as Chief Magistrate in this 'Mansion House of liberty,' as Milton, whom I may say was born in my Ward, called our noble City of London, has been happily fulfilled. On May Day last these words which I now recall were spoken by their author—Professor Gollancz—from the great 'Book of Homage' which he handed to me on that historic occasion:—

'And with us those, proud of their Englishry,
Who to his music built their new-found world,
In strength and freedom,—he their heritage.'

The Shakespeare Association, founded in connexion with the Tercentenary Commemoration, will, we hope,

AN ANNUAL SHAKESPEARE DAY. 11

carry on and develop the good work accomplished last year amid the clash of arms and battle, a marvellous tribute to Shakespeare, and through him to his dear land. In asking me to voice to-day's welcome to your Excellency, the Association has shown its appreciation of my willing efforts in a manner which will ever be treasured by me.

We hear much of the moral and material good which we know must result from this our oneness of purpose, but this day we desire to manifest the intellectual unity. How better can this be done than by handing to you, Dr. Page, this noblest of all the works ever written by any man of English speech? Could there be a more fitting symbol? In the years to come it may serve to remind you of the profound esteem and personal regard in which we hold you, and will always hold you. May it be a cherished souvenir of one all-important aspect of what your Excellency has so well described as the greatest event in all history, the coming together for justice, liberty, and right of Shakespeare's kinsfolk. Let Shakespeare be our talisman in the ampler day now dawning for this troubled world (Applause).

MR. EDMUND GOSSE, C.B. :

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,—You will find appropriately that in these days of food economy the meat in the sandwich is an exceedingly thin slice; it will only occupy you one and a half minutes (Laughter). What I am desired to do is to explain to Mr. Page by a brief history or anecdote, treated with as little levity as I can bring myself to employ, how this Shakespeare Folio which Professor Gollancz has so eloquently described to you comes to lie on this table to-day. To do that I must tell you what some of you know to your disadvantage,

that for three years I have been the Chairman of the Books and Manuscripts Section of the Red Cross, a sturdy but impenitent beggar. Last year, in March, I was in my office when I suddenly received a telephone message from Lord Derby. Of course it filled me with terror. When I came to myself I realized that I was long past the military age, but I thought at last my military genius had been discovered. But nothing of the kind was the case. What the War Minister had to say to me was, 'I have a Lancashire friend, Mr. Algernon Law, who has a very rare book, and if you wheedle him very cleverly you may get that book.' No wheedling was needed—I am not a master of wheedling at all. I am a plain man. But I had the pleasure of making Mr. Law's acquaintance; I am glad to tell you that Mr. Law is here to-day. The book proved to be a very fine copy of the Second Folio of Shakespeare, which his native modesty kept him for a brief spell from giving as a gift for the benefit of the Red Cross Fund. Upon that followed the great Christie sale; and then came Messrs. Maggs the booksellers, who bought it, and then Professor Gollancz, who happily secured it from them for presentation to Dr. Page, and so on, like 'the House that Jack built'; but I am 'the cow with the crumpled horn!' (Laughter.) I cannot tell you how glad I am to think that this book, which I held for a few weeks, should under such conditions go to America as the possession of the American of all Americans whom we most honour and love. Only one word more—and this in reproof of those in authority in this University. When I asked 'What do you want me to say?' all that one of the most prominent members of the University could reply was, 'Oh, you must tell the Ambassador that Shakespeare was an American' (Laughter). Well, it is a deal better than saying he was a German (Applause).

SIR CHARLES WAKEFIELD then handed the Folio to His Excellency.

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. W. H. PAGE :

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I find myself too much flattered and too much embarrassed really to tell you how deeply I appreciate this great compliment that you pay me. If I had earned this book I should, of course, value it most highly. Since I have not done anything to earn it I value it still more highly, because it comes to me as a touching evidence of your good-will and esteem which it seems I have been so fortunate as to gain, and it is all the more welcome for that reason. It is not given to me because of my deserts, but—what may I say?—as a compliment to my aspirations (Laughter).

Of course, Professor Gollancz, you cannot completely deceive me, much as you touch me; it was impossible to give one volume to a hundred million people, and I happen to be the beneficiary of that physical impossibility. More than this I am at a loss to say, in appreciation of your kind and gracious welcome and of this far too complimentary presentation. Not content with all this, you, Professor Gollancz, have summoned my ancestors to the ceremony, and I am proud to think you have, because they were English (Applause). And their descendants are English yet. I do not mean, of course, politically; but I do mean in all the noble aspirations of our race. And this book coming to me from this English Shakespeare Association will make this day memorable, not only to me but to my children after me.

I take the opportunity, if I am not doing anything in violence of good taste, of expressing the hope that when you pass this resolution setting forth the proposal made by Professor Gollancz to promote

the institution of an Annual Shakespeare Day in the Schools you will be kind enough, at my suggestion and on my motion if you will permit me to make it, to add also 'in the schools of the United States' (Applause). The best brains and the best character in the Republic are at work in its schools, for it is to this profession and to their development that the finest spirits of this generation are turning. I take the liberty to assure you on their behalf and on behalf of all my countrymen that your example in establishing a Shakespeare Day and suggesting some fit observance of it every year will be gratefully followed by them (Applause). Mr. Gosse is right—Shakespeare is American also. We hope that we have completely inherited him as we have inherited his noble speech and most else that lies at the foundation our scheme of life; and the observance of a day such as you are starting now will be quite as welcome a suggestion to American schools as it is to your own. It will be most fitting on the anniversary of this day for us in the United States and for you here to see to it that the children and students of all grades and all ages give a little time at least to observing a day which I predict and hope will make your Shakespeare Association immortal (Applause). I think that I shall have affixed to this volume, which your graciousness to me makes priceless, some such inscription as this: 'Every man who looks at this book thereby contracts an obligation, which he must not shirk, to do something to promote the observance of Shakespeare Day on every anniversary so long as he lives' (Applause).

PROFESSOR I. GOLLANZ:

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,—Is there any need for me, after what we have heard, further to urge my plea for the observance of a Shakespeare Day as an annual institution in our

Schools? His Excellency's striking proposal, which moves us profoundly, makes our task an easy one, for surely the Schools of the Empire will not lag behind the Schools of America, where we confidently hope His Excellency's message will meet with a cordial response. We may, indeed, look forward to the time when 'Shakespeare Day' will be extended in scope so as to commemorate, through Shakespeare, the present most auspicious alliance of the English-speaking peoples.

The prelude to this day's proceedings renders it necessary for me to be concise in the statement of my case, and I shall not attempt to enter into details. Other speakers will be good enough to add their valued opinions, and to piece out my imperfections.

We may accept as a fact, without indulging in panegyric, that Shakespeare—and perhaps Shakespeare alone—merits such a tribute to his genius as is now proposed. Last year's observance of Shakespeare Day, on the occasion of the Shakespeare Tercentenary Commemoration, carried out under such difficult conditions, confirms one in the belief that for education, in the best sense of the term, nothing but good can accrue from the present proposal.

Education in this country is now about to receive its Great Charter. Fortunately we have an appreciative scholar at the head of affairs. Mr. Fisher has written to me that my project has his fullest and deepest sympathy, and that he will authorise His Majesty's Inspectors to allow any deviation from the ordinary curriculum of the schools necessitated by the observance of a Shakespeare Day. I am glad to add that the educational authorities of the London County Council will similarly encourage the efforts of the teachers in this direction; and I feel sure that we may reckon on the goodwill and encouragement of other local authorities.

In this matter everything must necessarily depend on

the enthusiasm of the teachers. I know how zealous my colleagues of the teaching profession, and especially the teachers of English, are for all that pertains to Shakespearian study. Shakespeare Day may readily become a vivifying force to help them in their teaching of Shakespeare, of English literature, and of much besides.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I do not intend to dwell on any didactic purposes that may be served by the institution of the Day; these are obvious. Lessons of patriotism and loyalty, ideals of life, faith in the ultimate triumph of a noble humanity, we cannot begin to learn too early from our Shakespeare; and everything that tends to make Shakespeare's wisdom a living possession, likely to grow in potency during life, is of all-important educational value. Shakespeare's genius fortunately found expression through drama, the form of art nearest to our instincts and tastes from earliest childhood. Acting is congenial to boys and girls; and in education we ought to make the most of this instrument. I have in mind the carrying through of a 'Shakespeare Day' mainly by the pupils themselves for their own delight, and for such profit to themselves as may result therefrom. Were there time I would trace the close association of schools with Drama from the monastic plays through the period of the Renaissance, culminating in Shakespeare. In the Elizabethan age, and probably in mediæval times, colleges and schools had their annual performances by students and pupils. Eminent authorities on education recognised the value of the acting of plays as an integral part of the school curriculum. The statutes made special provisions for academic drama. Collegiate and school halls, on special occasions, and more especially from Christmas to Twelfth Night, were transformed into theatres, with platform as stage. Of course, the purpose was not merely for amusement. Power of expression,

the exercise of memory and address, and other faculties were well developed by this effective method.

But, Ladies and Gentlemen, we need not go back to far-off precedent and ancient authorities. Teachers will at once recognise the many advantages to be derived from focussing on to Shakespeare Day much of the routine work of the school year.

And 'Shakespeare Day' should make its appeal to others than to those engaged in the teaching of Shakespeare and English generally. It is not only the repetition lesson which will gain new delights from the feeling that it is all by way of preparation for the annual festival. Various elements in the school life should co-operate for the due success of the Day. The pupils whose tastes are for painting, carpentry, and manual recreation may be told: 'Build up the stage, paint the scenes, exercise your craft for Shakespeare Day.' The sewing-class will take a special pride in providing the picturesque costumes. The young dancers will prepare for a display of their skill in morris-dancing and other old English revelry. As for the school songs, what could be better than to include in the repertory a selection for 'Shakespeare Day' of Shakespeare's own words, wedded to fine old melodies.

There is no question to-day between the rival claims of classics, modern languages, and natural science, for no one would gainsay the desirability, from every point of view, of this tribute of homage to Shakespeare and all that he stands for.

The influence of Shakespeare Day will be felt beyond the school walls. Parents and friends, as in the good old times, will witness with pleasure the performance of the children; and a local participation in education may well be fostered by this means.

In the new scheme for the continuation of education after the ordinary school life the value of Shakespeare should not be lost sight of, and the relation of what I

would call recreative education, through Shakespeare and Drama, to the more technical side of education, should be encouraged for all it is worth.

Their love of Shakespeare quickened by Shakespeare Day, the boys and girls of the immediate future will secure the due recognition of Shakespeare in the life of the nation. As citizens they will see to it that municipal theatres throughout the Empire will safeguard the best interests of Drama. Through these aspirations there will, I trust, arise in the metropolis of the Empire, as a living tribute to the Poet, the great Shakespeare Theatre, for which we have been waiting too long (Applause).

Last year, as your Excellency may perhaps remember, I chose as our motto for the observance of the Shakespeare Tercentenary in the Schools certain significant words by an English poet addressed to your countrymen some sixty years ago. I venture to think that the words may well be taken as the motto for Shakespeare Day throughout the English-speaking world. It is of the nature of a message which we send to-day, linking the children of the Empire to their kinsfolk in Shakespeare—the children of America:—

‘ Children brave and free
Of the great Mother-tongue, and ye shall be
Lords of an Empire wide as Shakespeare’s soul,
Sublime as Milton’s immemorial theme,
And rich as Chaucer’s speech, and fair as Spenser’s
dream.’

(Applause).

SIR JAMES YOXALL, M.P. :

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,—On most occasions a Bill or proposal has to be put forward before an amendment is adopted, but on the present occasion I venture to adopt an amendment before putting the resolution. I adopt the

amendment suggested by Dr. Page, for which we thank him, and I ask you to approve the resolution as amended. At such a meeting as this and on such a theme one might say many things; but remembering a certain Shakespearian maxim—I think the poet may have meant it as a hint to public speakers (perhaps to Lord Burleigh himself)—I will say as few words as possible.

Let us have, as Professor Gollancz proposes, every year a Shakespeare Day in our Schools; let it be celebrated in each school, as was done last year at the Tercentenary observance, and as the school authorities think best. If they so desire it, let them have a special morning service, with the reading of that famous passage from Ecclesiasticus, 'Let us now praise famous men.' Let us have scenes from Shakespeare, and the singing of some of his songs set to those tunes by English composers which have received the sanction of time. Let us have the old dances. Let the matter be dealt with according to our experimental English way, our inductive English way, Shakespeare's own way—and not didactically, nor in a pragmatic way by lecturing or preaching. Let each school do the best it can according to its means and students, but above all let it be done. By means of this Shakespeare Day we may do much to lead the lads and lasses to love their Shakespeare, and to continue their study of his words. I do not much care for the pageant. I do not attach great weight to the mere symbol, though there is value in that too. What we want to achieve in every school and every college is a quickening love for the Poet, enthusiasm for his work, and the pursuit of his wisdom in the years to come. Let us make a beginning. I am proud to be called upon to move that the resolution should be widened, in accordance with Dr. Page's excellent proposal, so as to include not only the schools of the Empire, but also the schools and other educational institutions of the United States.

Accordingly, I have the honour to move the following resolution :

‘This Meeting cordially approves of the proposal to promote the institution of an Annual Shakespeare Day in the Schools, learns with much satisfaction that the proposal has the hearty sympathy of the Rt. Hon. H. A. L. Fisher, M.P., President of the Board of Education, and appeals to teachers, education committees, managers of schools, and to others interested in education to help forward, in due course, and under fitting conditions, the aims of the movement this day inaugurated by the Shakespeare Association and those supporting the Association in its efforts; and on the motion of the American Ambassador the hope is expressed that the Schools of the United States of America will in a similar way see fit to observe the day’ (Applause).

PROFESSOR CAROLINE SPURGEON :

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I have very great pleasure in seconding this resolution, and I have an added pleasure in doing so since it includes the amendment which Dr. Page has added to it. This movement will, I feel certain, be welcomed by the women teachers of this country, and they will support it and help to carry it out to the very best of their ability. Women owe a great debt to Shakespeare. Shakespeare understood women—the best and the worst of them—as no other great poet of this or any other race has ever understood them, and he has familiarised the world with women who are remarkable for qualities which more superficial observers than Shakespeare have sometimes denied to them. Shakespeare’s women have all the charm and grace and waywardness which we find in the creations of other writers, but the finest of Shakespeare’s women are remarkable

also for their qualities of self-control, of keen sense of honour, of balanced judgment, of power of strong action without waste of words, and above all for their strength. And those are qualities which in these days are of incalculable value to us in this country and in any country. Think for one moment of the self-control of Hermione and Queen Katherine when they are pleading their causes under such cruel circumstances; of the wonderful self-control of Juliet, a mere slip of a child, when her nurse fails her, or when she jests with Paris in her agony. Think again of the fine sense of honour of Volumnia, or of Portia in the casket scene when she would give all she possesses that Bassanio should choose aright, but yet will not help him by the slightest indication. Think of the sense of justice, the sense of proportion shown by Hermione, by Volumnia, by Portia. And you know that Cordelia and Virgilia are alike remarkable for the small amount that they say. You remember how Portia in sending Balthazar with his message to Bellario urges him to waste no time in words. And then think of their strength—their strength of purpose, of resolution, of loyalty, of patience, of courage. One has only to name Imogen, Hermione, Cordelia, Portia, to call up these qualities. Surely it is well, and especially in times like these, that the girls of this country—and I am glad now to add of the United States—should be familiarised with these pictures of women, and that girls and boys alike should have so great a standard of womanhood put before them. I only mention this as one item, familiar to us all, of the extraordinarily far-reaching ethical value of Shakespeare to us.

With regard to the institution of the Day itself, there are just two practical points which I should like to emphasise. First, I would urge that whatever arrangements are made—and I think the proposer has made some excellent suggestions—that they should be

of a pleasurable nature, so that the children shall like them and look forward to them. Let the day be one of enjoyment; I should like to see half of it a holiday, and I am sure that Shakespeare would have been the first to wish the same. If it is held in April or May, that is an excellent time of year for a half-holiday. It is a most curious and unfortunate thing that the teaching of Shakespeare, at any rate in some Secondary Schools in this country—I think the Elementary Schools are far better and more alive in this respect—is so often associated with boredom and weariness and pain. And one of the reasons why I so warmly welcome this suggestion is that I think it will tend to give more life to the knowledge and study of Shakespeare, if it be of such a nature that the children can share in it themselves. I constantly experience with my own College students that when a certain play is suggested for acting or reading they say, ‘Oh no, not that one; I did it at school and I shall hate it all my life.’ Now we do not want that sort of association with Shakespeare Day. The reason why children in some schools do have this association with Shakespeare—we want to get rid of it—is that the study of him is made lifeless and dull. He is not to them the most laughter-loving, the most sympathetic of human beings, but he is someone who wrote a large number of dull plays, to which he—or someone else—appended a still larger number of intolerable notes in order to explain the obscure words and strange phrases and faults of grammar and spelling in which he seems to have delighted. I believe that the institution of a day like this might sweep away some of these misconceptions, if it were arranged so as to be a living thing in which there would be acting and singing, the children themselves taking part therein.

The second plea I would make is that the day should be established in *all* the schools of the country, Secondary

as well as Elementary, Public as well as Grammar Schools. My own experience is that the ignorance of Shakespeare is greater and more profound among the so-called educated classes in this country than among the people as a whole; at any rate I can say that two of the keenest Shakespearian scholars I know got their love for him in Elementary Schools. I do not know of any similar case in a Public School. But I do know many men—keen and intelligent—men who have gone through the usual Public School and College career, to whom Shakespeare is only a name, who have no knowledge whatever of his mind or of his art; men who to-day are giving their lives for England, and yet who know nothing of England's proudest possession; her 'greatest ambassador abroad' as I think Dr. Page once most aptly called him. If those men in their school days had been accustomed to see a day set apart, of the nature of a holiday, in honour of Shakespeare, their attention might have been drawn to him; they might have been led to read some of his works; if they had, their lives—and so England herself—would have been the richer. What we want is to arrest the attention of children; we want the ordinary routine and lessons on one day to be suspended, so that English children of all classes throughout the length and breadth of the land, together with the children of the United States, shall for a few hours have their attention focussed on the mind, the art and the genius of the greatest Englishman who ever lived. I have great pleasure in seconding the resolution (Applause).

MR. H. B. IRVING:

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen;—I much appreciate the fact that you have asked an actor here to-day, and that the stage should be represented on this occasion, so impressive and important to all who really care for Shakespeare.

People are too apt to forget that Shakespeare was before everything an actor and a practical dramatist, and that this fact is of no little importance for the right understanding of his plays. Shakespeare wrote for the theatre, of which he was a manager, so that his plays might be acted, and enable his comrades and himself to make their livings. For a right understanding of Shakespeare we must recognise how fully the technical side of the theatrical art enters into his work. It is that which keep his plays alive on the stage to-day, while the work of most of his contemporary dramatists is forgotten. I rejoice that this proposal made by Dr. Gollancz for a Shakespeare Day is to be associated with the acting of scenes from his plays in the schools by the scholars. By this means the citizens of the future will help forward the due recognition of Shakespeare in the theatre, and advance the best interests of the theatre through Shakespeare and all that he stands for. We must indeed pull ourselves together now and in the future, and turn our attention to securing the only fitting memorial for his genius as a dramatist—a permanent theatre dedicated to the performance of his plays—for we, the people who speak his language, lag behind every country in Europe in the right appreciation of the place of the drama in national life; we do nothing as a nation for the greatest man that ever lived in the world of the theatre. In this country Shakespeare has still to battle with all the difficulties that great works of genius have to struggle against to keep alive. We have indeed at last been told that the theatre is essential. That fact has been discovered. It has not been classed as an essential industry; but we have been told that it is essential.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there is much in to-day's meeting which is of the nature of a vigorous protest against the treatment meted out to Shakespeare, and it fills one with some hope for the future. There are

forces we have still to fight against, and more especially a puritanical attitude towards the theatre, which is unknown in other European countries, and is apt to make us both ridiculous and unworthy of Shakespeare. Education may do much to remedy this. I recently read in a popular Sunday paper, 'We are not surprised that Shakespeare is played so seldom, we are only surprised he is played at all.' To-day Shakespeare is thrown into the common lot and jumbled up with every kind of light-hearted entertainment; and the best work of the theatre, the legitimate drama—the first, the oldest, and the highest form of entertainment—is in no way protected from the vagaries of public taste, from the callousness and vulgarity which so many causes go to foster and encourage in the public mind at the present time. We simply leave all these higher interests of the drama in a state of heartless neglect. Let us hope that by means of the present proposal and the sentiments which prompt it a generation will grow up prepared to claim the adequate public recognition of Shakespeare and his plays in the life of the people. I cordially support the resolution.

Let me conclude, Ladies and Gentlemen, with a little story that shows how the public can and will be reached by Shakespeare, if we will only give him to them. I happened to be in the box office of my theatre where we were playing *Hamlet* at the time, when a clergyman and his daughter came to the window. They wanted some 4s. seats for the play. We had not, I am happy to say, any left. The clergyman turned to his daughter and said, 'Well, we do not often see Shakespeare now. What other seats have you?' And finally he bought two 8s. seats. After he had secured the seats—and this shows you his love of Shakespeare and Shakespeare alone—he turned to the box office keeper and said 'Who is playing *Hamlet*'? (Laughter and applause). I had one moment of awful trepidation, and

then to my intense relief he did not ask for his money back (Renewed laughter).

MR. H. G. WELLS:

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,—Professor Gollancz is a very persistent man. He has made me come here to speak to-day in spite of the fact that, to begin with, I told him that I did not at all approve of recommending Shakespeare as though he were a medicine, and saw no need for anyone to go about asking people not to forget him, and furthermore that I had grave doubts whether I supported his project for a Shakespeare Day at all. I assured him that at any rate my support of the idea must be a very conditional thing indeed. But he made it clear to me at once, that what he had in view was something quite other than a Shakespeare propaganda; his aims went far beyond that. At the present time in this country there is a strong desire—it extends widely and in some places at least it is very intense—a desire to express our feeling of brotherhood with that section, that larger section, of the English-speaking people which constitutes the United States of America. We want in every way now to express our sense of our unity with that great body of our people beyond the seas, a unity quite unlike the association we have with any other people in the world; and this Shakespeare movement has that unification very much in view. It is an attempt to go back to the common roots of the English tradition, just as the pre-Raphaelite movement was an attempt to carry art back to an old and fruitful tradition, to go back to the roots of the English tradition in order, if we can, to re-unite the feelings of the dissevered portions of the English-speaking people. That is the big thing behind this meeting to-day, and the thing that makes me glad indeed

of the opportunity I have been given of joining in the crowd and cheering that movement on.

As to the question of a Shakespeare Day itself; it seems to me, subject to certain definite conditions, to be a highly desirable project. But it is also a project hedged about with dangers; a Shakespeare Day may easily be a very terrible day indeed both for the young of the United States and of this country. But I am greatly reassured by certain things I have heard from Professor Gollancz, and my heart swelled with approval at the admirable speech of Professor Caroline Spurgeon. The thing I dread is a Shakespeare Day without the Shakespeare spirit; a gloomy day of speeches about Shakespeare; a nightmare of the local parliamentary candidate, the local celebrity, the local benefactor all firing off long discourses about Shakespeare at the unfortunate village children. I dread a perpetual talking about Shakespeare that will make Shakespeare into a Cant and, in the minds of our children, a Bore. We do not want to insist upon the greatness of Shakespeare; that is a claim that will not appeal to the children. We do not want to make out that he was a large important person like a Bishop or the Lord Lieutenant of the County. Shakespeare was something more than great, his was a varied sympathetic spirit which could clothe itself in the happiest, most beautiful language imaginable. That is his real claim upon all of us. And the one person, the only person, who ought to speak for Shakespeare on Shakespeare Day is the greatest of all living Englishmen—for he lives still—and that is Shakespeare himself. So let Shakespeare be read and played for our Shakespeare Day celebration and let the rest of us keep silence while he speaks. My ideal of a Shakespeare Day is a day on which in every school in the country his plays or scenes from his plays are acted by the children themselves. If we can have that, and not a sort of

extra Sunday in the year on which our children will suffer from bad criticism instead of bad theology, then I throw aside my reservations altogether. Professor Gollancz will be pleased, at any rate, to hear of something that happened to me last night. I had a conversation with a Public Schoolboy of fifteen whom I happen to know rather well, and he indulged in a very lengthy and penetrating, and Mr. Irving will be pleased to hear, on the whole a highly favourable criticism of the present production of *Hamlet*. Now, this boy and his brother, if I may go on a little with them, because it will lead up to what lies at the very root of success or failure of this Shakespeare Day, are extraordinarily keen performers and students of Shakespeare. Let me tell you how they became so. They began the business at a very early age by dressing-up and acting. All children want to do that, and every really civilised home nowadays contains a box of pretty coloured garments for dressing-up. These youngsters used at first to play Dumb Crambo, and then do charades, and then came the idea of doing something a little better, and their governess got them to do some simple play—I think of Lessing's—then some original minded person said, 'Why not Shakespeare?' 'Oh,' was the reply, 'isn't that rather difficult.' You see the mischief of making Shakespeare out to be too great! English people think at once that he must be *hard*—like Euclid. But we tried, we picked out and acted a few duologues and so on, and we did not let on to those children while they were doing them that Shakespeare was anything out of the common. They thought he was just an ordinary person who was very amusing. There was no sense of intellectual strain. They took to him with very great zest; they have never taken to any other playwright in the same way. Their original productions have increased until they have now a perfect repertoire of Shakespearian scenes. Now they begin to read Shake-

speare; they want to study him because they know what he is and what he can give them. A few years ago I went into a new part of the country where I happened to see several children's performances in the school houses and private houses; they were producing perfectly imbecile little plays written, apparently, by demented vulgar-minded old maids. I said to the people who were producing these plays in the school house, 'Why do you let the children have this rubbish? Why don't you give them Shakespeare? Children can act Shakespeare beautifully.' They replied with that sort of pitying smile with which English people always receive any rational suggestion whatever that isn't perfectly familiar to them. 'Oh, isn't Shakespeare a little *above* us?' But the point was carried against them, and I have had the pleasure of hearing my local barn theatre roaring with applause at a performance of *The Midsummer Night's Dream* in which there was not a single actor over the age of seventeen. He wasn't *above* a soul there. Now our Shakespeare Day, if we are not careful, may just foster an opinion which I think is very largely at the root of the neglect of Shakespeare in this country, that detestable idea that he is *above* us. He is not; he is all about us. He was indeed the broadest, most human of beings, and it is the last disloyalty to his memory to preach him up as merely *great*. I do not know if anyone here has seen children acting Shakespeare; it is done in quite a number of schools at the present time, and it is steadily ousting the text-book study of his plays. Shakespeare has such extraordinarily dramatic quality that he can *carry* a caste of actors and actresses of from ten to fifteen years old quite easily. I have been deeply moved by a little girl of thirteen playing Cæsar; I have been moved almost to the verge of tears by the scenes in the Forest of Arden played by an equally juvenile troupe of actors. It is one proof of

the—I do not like to use the word ‘greatness’—the real divinity of Shakespeare that his drama is so sound and so strong that it can inspire little children; it can make actors and actresses of them, and at the same time it can call forth the very greatest powers of the very greatest actors we have. It can make enthusiastic actors and actresses of boys and girls in their early teens; it can give Mr. Irving, as it gave his father, the fullest scope for every gift he has (Applause).

MR. G. R. PARKIN, C.M.G.:

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,—The only reason I can think of why I should be asked to address you among so many distinguished speakers this afternoon is that in some ways, perhaps, I may be considered a representative of those great Dominions which lie outside these Islands. I dare say most of you remember that notable expression of Wordsworth in one of his Sonnets where he says that ‘they must be free who speak the tongue that Shakespeare spoke’ (Applause). It is a striking way in which to express the profound idea of liberty which exists in our English minds: that as a matter of fact any man who speaks that language feels that sense. Wordsworth was thinking of his own people in these little Islands. But the people from these small islands have planted themselves at the gateways of the world; they have carried the language which gives this inspiring love of liberty to every Continent and to almost every Island. When Shakespeare wrote of England it was as a ‘precious stone set in the silver sea.’ When Tennyson wrote of it it was of ‘a nation of people who have ‘sailed wherever ship can sail,’ who have ‘founded many a noble State.’ When Kipling comes to speak of it he has to talk of ‘the Seven Seas’ and what they have to tell of the English race. Now, as we have

flung ourselves out to what I have called the gateways of the world, so within these last three years there have been seen coming back from those gateways of the world, from the great Dominions, from the smallest islands and most distant colonies, and even from alien countries those who, inspired by that language and the teaching that they have got in that language, are glad and ready to prove that they, too, must die if they cannot be free (Applause). Now, last and greatest of all, after long waiting, after anxious thought, after the most deliberate consideration by a vast body of people, we see our great sister Anglo-Saxon nation deliberately making up its mind that it, too, must be ready to die in order to be free. That is what makes us welcome here so warmly to-day the presence of the American Ambassador. I do not hesitate to say that no Peace League that can be formed by any combination among the nations of the world will ever go so far as to secure the future of civilisation and humanity as a sympathetic understanding, I do not say an alliance or anything of that kind, but a sympathetic understanding between the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race. Any man who looks at the map of the world, who sees the position of that great nation which is assimilating so many millions of people, and sees how our own British Empire is spread over the world: the man who studies these things and the wide range that our English races cover will be convinced that their united effort will go further to preserve the peace of the world and civilisation than anything else.

There is one marked change which is coming over the educational world which particularly emphasises the importance of this movement which Professor Gollancz is pressing forward. You will remember how Milton, describing one of the great statesmen of the Commonwealth Days, speaks of him as one 'by ancient learning to the enlightened love of ancient freedom warmed.'

There is no doubt at all that in past generations the orators or poets of Greece and Rome, Demosthenes, Cicero, great writers, great dramatists, have stirred the minds of men to highest levels of thought and action. Men were stirred to an enlightened love of freedom by the genius of these writers and thinkers. You have all noticed that there is at present a considerable revulsion against this classical teaching which has so profoundly influenced our English world, and in fact, the whole modern world. One of our speakers to-day has lately taken an active part, publicly, in trying to divert our English education from that classical study which has been the inspiration of many of our greatest minds. What is going to take the place of that? The change is real; it is actually going on in this country, and is very marked in the Dominions; it is still more marked in the United States, where the change is overwhelming, almost an entire turning away from the study of classics. They tell you in many parts of the States, that in this practical life of theirs they have little use for the classics. 'Where there is no vision the people perish.' And where do nations and people get their vision? From the highest and clearest thinkers of their own race and tongue, or from the great voices of the past.

If we are now going to throw aside the splendid inspirations of the past, then we are bound to give ourselves with new devotion to the classics of our own language, to the great spirits of our own race. And there is this much to be said, that with our own language we can reach the whole body of all our people; and if we could make a study of Shakespeare, Milton, and the great thinkers of our time, but supremely that of Shakespeare, we may be perfectly sure that the mass of English people could be permeated with the noblest and highest ideals. Can we help this by a Shakespeare Day? As one who knows the Colonies intimately, I may say that there is great reason for instituting such a

day. In old countries like this you have a great many traditional days around which history has gradually woven its charm. In new countries we have to form new traditions. For instance, we have an Empire Day. It is not much noticed in this country, but in every Colony Empire Day has become one of the institutions of the country. This is not, I think, in any spirit of pride about the greatness of our Empire, because, of all the changes I have seen come over the English mind during the last twenty-five years, the most profound has been the deepened sense of responsibility for the Empire, rather than any false pride about it. I believe that that growth of Empire Day is one that ought to be cultivated, and I would suggest that so far as the great colonies are concerned there is no fitter memorial that could be made between two ideas, this idea of Empire Day and its immense sense of responsibility, and the splendid inspirations that can be got for the English race and the whole world from the mind of Shakespeare. I feel that now for the first time in a century and a half there is the opportunity for what I call a sympathetic understanding between our two great nations. It should be carefully cultivated. I know no greater or truer line on which that could be done, than by the institution, as His Excellency the Ambassador has said, of a Shakespeare Day in that country as well as this. I have always felt in my teaching and in my observation of our race in various parts of the world, that there are two books which have influenced it more than any other—the Bible and Shakespeare; the one represents the highest, the spiritual side of life taken in its best form, the other represents that wide understanding and intense sense of humanity which we owe to the perception of a great human genius. Between these two the best traditions of our race have grown up, and these, I believe, we are bound to preserve.

Another thing we must remember about our race, particularly in the United States and in the great Dominions. We have to make a fight for the purity of our language and of the ideas which that language conveys. Why? Because in Canada, in Australia, in New Zealand, more than all in the United States, we are assimilating races of every kind from every corner of the world. This must profoundly affect our ways of thinking, and we who believe in the Anglo-Saxon race, in our English language, in the ideals which its great teachers and exponents present to us, must strive that in our systems of education we shall study to preserve the purity of our language and the strength which it gives our race. Any man who has taught boys knows that if Greek and Latin are taught with a living power they may be made a great inspiration, and so with Shakespeare, with the additional advantage that he can be used in the lowest as well as in the highest schools of our countries. I endorse and support the proposal for having a Shakespeare Day (Applause).

The Chairman then put the Resolution to the Meeting, as proposed by Sir James Yoxall. It was carried unanimously amid acclamation.

DR. BURROWS (Principal of King's College) proposed a hearty Vote of Thanks to the Vice-Chancellor for taking the Chair, to His Excellency the American Ambassador for his presence among them, and to all the speakers who had taken part in the meeting. He expressed, in the name of King's College, the intense pleasure it had given the College to be in the position of host to the Shakespeare Association on this eventful occasion. The College, standing in the very centre of London, considered it one of its highest privileges to welcome other bodies which, while closely connected with the Academic work carried on within its walls, at

the same time brought it in healthy touch with outside literary life. It was appropriate that Mr. H. B. Irving had been with them to represent the great profession to which he belonged, for the College ought to be closely associated with the theatrical life of this busy quarter of London. Indeed, it stood within a stone's throw of the Lyceum, where Mr. Irving's revered father did more for Shakespeare than almost any man in the century. One and all of the speakers claimed their grateful acknowledgment for 'this very brilliant and wonderful afternoon.'

The Vote of Thanks having been carried, the proceedings terminated with the singing of the National Anthem.

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THE SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATION

1918

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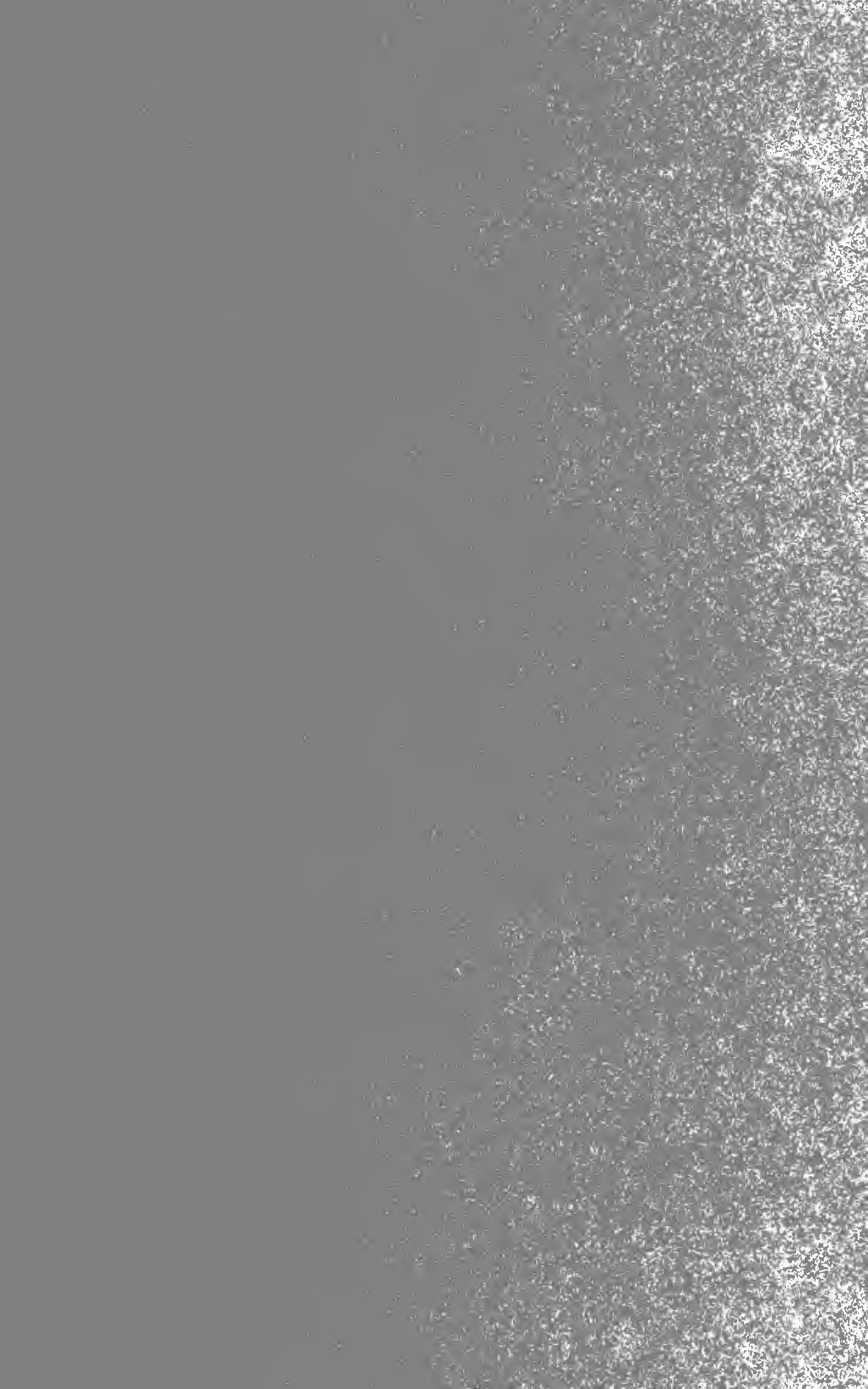
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