

THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LETTERS

UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

7-9-54

SUBJECT

The Life and Poetical Works of Henry Kendall

CANDIDATE

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University of Adelaide.

1953

INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

The regulations governing the degree of Doctor of Letters require that a candidate shall send, when submitting a thesis for the degree, a "statement indicating what parts of the work he believes to be original and what he considers to be the most notable contribution to knowledge contained in it." This introduction is the statement required by the regulations.

The thesis is divided into two parts - (1) the Life of Henry Kendall, (2) a definitive edition of his poems. It was planned and begun in 1930 at the suggestion of the late Sir Archibald Strong who, at that time, was Jury Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Adelaide. He pointed out to the candidate the amount of work that had been done on the life and poems of Adam Lindsay Gordon and how little had been done for Kendall, whom he regarded as the first great Australian lyric poet, and he strongly urged the writing of an accurate life of Kendall, based upon careful research, and the collection and editing of a complete edition of his poems.

The originality of the thesis consists in its being the first attempt to write the life of Kendall, and to edit his poems, with a full recourse to the materials available.

The candidate would state, as the regulations require him to do, that he believes that the life of the poet, the critical appreciation of his poetry, the apparatus criticus

which accompanies the poems, and the introduction to them, are the most notable contributions to knowledge contained in the thesis, and that he offers the thesis, as a whole, as an original and substantial contribution to that branch of letters which may be described as Australian Literature.

In revising the thesis for re-submission for the degree, the candidate has been guided by the suggestions made and the advice given him by the examiners. The Life has been revised and partly rewritten. The critical appreciation, which forms the final chapter of the Life, has been enlarged. The annotations, which formerly accompanied the Poems, have been omitted in so far as they were concerned with flora and fauna mentioned in the poems; but that portion of them which concerned the text has been transferred to the Introduction, which has been completely rewritten. Before revising the thesis the candidate appealed once again throughout Australia, by means of notices in the public press, for letters or manuscripts from the hand of the poet, or any other information concerning him, which might be of help in writing his life or editing his poems. The additional information thus obtained has been used by the candidate in the thesis as now submitted.

Toorak Gardens,
South Australia.

R. Hamilton Seed

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My aim in the following pages has been to tell as fully as possible within a reasonable compass the story of the life of Henry Kendall and thus to provide a background against which his poetry may be read with greater enjoyment because of a fuller knowledge of the man who wrote it. I have deliberately chosen neither to paint the historical setting of his life nor to describe the economic condition of Australia during his lifetime. To have done either of these things would have been to overload the simple story with almost extraneous matter because Kendall, took little interest in the affairs of the day, and though, towards the end of his life, he wrote satirical verses, which sometimes dealt with prominent politicians, these were composed for the sake of the money they would bring him and not because he was deeply interested in politics. Kendall's one consuming interest in life was Australian poetry and it was upon the poetry of his native land that he left his mark. For this reason I have chosen to give some attention to those writers who influenced him and to those who were his friends, rather than to describe the scenes amidst which they lived. Wherever possible I have allowed Kendall to speak for himself by quoting from his poems, his prose writings, and his letters.

I have been acutely conscious of the Scylla and

Charibdis between which a biographer is forced to sail and have tried to avoid "white-washing" on the one hand and "de-bunking" on the other, and to give an honest, objective account of the poet's life and character. Like the overwhelming majority of mankind Kendall had his faults and failings. To omit them would have been to give a misleading picture of the man. Remembering, however, Huxley's words to Beatrice Webb ("All a man wants in a literary executor is a sympathetic friend") and applying them to biography I have, where extenuating circumstances existed, been at pains to record them, though I have not, as one biographer of Kendall attempted to do, tried to convert his sins into virtues and to whiten his character by blackening that of his devoted wife.

Mr. A. J. A. Symons in his excellent and original biography of Baron Corvo ("The Quest of Corvo", p. 83. Penguin Edition) says, "Among the privileges of a biographer is an assumption of omniscience in respect of his subject. And, when sufficient material is available, something very near full knowledge is possible. The evidence of a man's letters, of his contemporaries, his work, and the indisputable facts of his life, do sometimes make it possible, when the material has been collated and sifted, to write with certainty". There is much truth in this statement, and yet, since most of us would agree that we find it very difficult to penetrate into the innermost recesses of the minds of our intimate

friends and to discover their motives and desires, he is an intrepid biographer (though not an unusual one) who presumes, except very occasionally, to consider himself omniscient.

For this reason I have been chary of making dogmatic statements about Kendall's reasons for his actions. He was a man subject to moods and easily swayed by circumstances and to be dogmatic in any way concerning him would be more than rash, it would be foolish. The dead have secrets which the living can never know.

During the course of my researches I have come to appreciate the truth of Dr. Johnson's dictum, "The mind is prompted to study and inquiry rather by the uneasiness of ignorance than the hope of profit," and, wishing myself to know what could be known about Kendall's immediate ancestors, I have given at the beginning of this biography such information as I have been able to gather in the hope that the reader may be spared that "uneasiness of ignorance" which at one time in my researches lay heavily upon me.

The number of those who have helped me in the collection of the data upon which this life rests, and who have encouraged me, is large, and it would be impossible to record them here, but gratitude demands that I mention the following, and while thanking them for their help reserve to myself all responsibility for those errors of fact or judgment which may be discovered in this work :- The Rev'd. H. H. Ashley, Mr. W. J. Ahearn, Mr. Kenneth Binns, Miss C. M. Black, Mr. C. H. Bertie,

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D.Nichol Smith, Mrs.A.M.Turnbull, Mr.W.E.Thomas, Mr. S.T.
Whiting, Mr.H.Wright, Mrs.D.J.Walker, Mr.J.F.Young/.x

Some of these have died during the twenty-two years that I
have spent on this work but I have thought it wiser not
to record the fact as in some cases I have lost ~~touch~~ touch
with my earliest helpers and were I to put "the late" before
some it might be presumed that all the others were still
alive - a fact of which I am not certain. My thanks are
also due to the staffs of the Adelaide Public Library,
the Melbourne Public Library, the National Library (Canberra),
the Mitchell Library (Sydney), and the British Museum Library.
I am also grateful for permission given by the Trustees of
the Mitchell Library and the National Library to quote
from documents in their possession.

THESIS FOR DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LETTERS

UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

PART II

THE COLLECTED POEMS

OF

HENRY KENDALL

Edited by

Thomas Thornton Reed

Dean of Adelaide;
Honorary Scholar, Trinity College,
University of Melbourne;
Fred Johns Scholar for Biography,
University of Adelaide.

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VOLUME I

Poems and Songs
Leaves from Australian Forests
Songs from the Mountains

-*-*-*

1953

PREFACE

This edition contains all the known verse of Henry Kendall with the exception of the ephemeral verses he contributed anonymously to the press and which were of a humorous, political, or satirical nature. Of these excluded verses a selection is given in an appendix. Eighty-~~three~~^{nine} poems and fragments are here collected for the first time from manuscripts, newspapers, and periodicals.

During the twenty-three years which have passed since I first began the collection of material for this edition I have received help from very many persons including the Staffs of the Mitchell Library, Sydney; the National Library, Canberra; the Public Library, Adelaide; the Public Library, Melbourne; Mr. J. K. Moir, O. B. E., Dr. G. Mackanless, Mr. J. N. Rawlings, the late Mr. C. H. Bertie, Professor D. Nichol Smith, Dr. E. Morris Miller, the late Mr. Percival Serle, and the late Mr. A. G. Stephens, to all of whom I would express my thanks. My deepest obligation is to the late Frederick C. Kendall, the eldest son of the poet, whose enthusiastic encouragement and help were invaluable, and who placed at my disposal and finally bequeathed to me his valuable collection of Kendalliana.

Toorak Gardens,
South Australia.

T. Thornton Reed

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VOLUME II

Miscellaneous Poems
etc.

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1953

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