

The Daily Herald
October 5th 1916.

"I wanted to find out from the best available material and by conversation with some of the leading Shakespearian scholars what were the actual indubitable facts of Shakespeare's life. There are not many indubitable facts, but there are some which it is almost impossible to reject in view of the available evidence. It is important to know these facts, because of the theories concerning the development of Shakespeare's mind. One school holds—and it is represented by George Brandes and Dr. Furnwal—that the plays taken in chronological order reflect the state of Shakespeare's mind as it was influenced by important personal and public considerations; for instance, it is said that he began to write tragedies after the death of his father, but as a matter of fact his three greatest comedies were written after the death of his son Hamlet, whose loss Shakespeare would feel more deeply than that of his father, because at that time he was anxious to re-establish family tradition. This is only one instance of many which might be given to show how dangerous it is in the history of Shakespeare's life to connect the kind of work he was doing with the state of his own mind as far as it could be affected by personal considerations. I do not believe, as far as I have been able to gather, that we are justified in offering any such theory of this extraordinary man's inward development. On the contrary, it is safe to affirm that these tragedies were written at a time when Shakespeare was most prosperous both in regard to material fortune and in fame. He was probably making something like £4000 or £5000 a year for the last eight or nine years of his life, and his fame in London was fully established in the city and the court. Shakespeare's genius was of an extraordinary impersonal kind, and I am disposed to believe that it was almost as much a mystery to him until the last year or two as it was to his fellowmen. At all events there is good reason to believe that he lived a very simple life, and preferred it. He moved about among all classes of men with an easy familiarity, and he was sweet-willed to the roving humorists of Warwickshire as well as the contemporary poets who visited him in his retreat at Stratford-on-Avon. It all suggests that we understand very little about what this genius, or inspiration, to a very great man is. It almost seems like a great power working through him, using, of course, his extraordinary faculties in order to work

successfully. At all events, the more I study this question the more I am constrained to believe there was something peculiarly impersonal about the operation of this force in Shakespeare which we call genius. I would like to express my indebtedness to men like Sir Sidney Lee, Mr. Bassington (of the Memorial Theatre), Mrs. Rose ("Shakespeare's Birthdays"), and the secretary of the Shakespearian Club at Stratford-on-Avon, for the assistance they gave me while I was in Stratford, and especially in directing me to the most authentic material, which it would have taken me a longer time to have discovered myself. They are all experts in their way in the life and work of Shakespeare. Nearly all of them have spent 20 or 30 years in trying to find out what is fact and what is fiction."

Questioned about the feeling in Ireland concerning the Home Rule question, Professor Henderson said he was only there a fortnight, and he did not feel qualified to express an opinion on it. "I found there was a great deal of feeling, even in Donegal, where the votes at the last election were nearly equal," he remarked. "I wish I could say that I came away with the conviction that this matter was settled, but I am afraid the people are determined to be loyal to England in the present crisis, at the end of which I hope that means of settling the differences between the Irish people shall have been found. Up to the time I left the impression was that the Home Rule question had only been suspended, and not settled. One thing which appeared to me to be beyond doubt, and nobody in Ireland contradicted it, was that the feeling of the Irish towards England has become very much more favorable during the last 15 or 20 years. This is due, for the most part, to the measures which have been passed for

the relief of the Irish peasants and the amelioration of the conditions of the people generally. I found that the most important of all was the security of tenure which Mr. Balfour's Bill gave to the Irish peasants. The agricultural schools teach them improved methods; the poorer peasants get medical relief free; houses are being built—places of four or five rooms—for which the peasants have to pay 1/3 to 2/3 a week. This does not cover the actual cost of the upkeep or the interest on the money expended on the house. The deficiency is made up by the Irish councils. England previously lent money at a very low rate of interest so that this could be done. The result has been a considerable improvement in the conditions of the peasants, and the people of Ireland are naturally anxious to keep their laborers in the country. Before coming away I could not help feeling that by an efficient Imperial organisation the question could be settled in a more satisfactory way than by these subsidies on the income or wages of the laborers. Probably one result of the war will be to bring the different parts of the Empire into much closer touch with each other through some such immigration system."

The Advertiser

October 5th 1914.

SHAKESPEARE'S MIND AND GENIUS.

INVESTIGATIONS BY PROFESSOR
HENDERSON.

Professor Henderson, of the Adelaide University, who has been nine months in Europe, returned by the R.M.S. Osterley on Saturday morning. He was interviewed on board the liner by a representative of "The Advertiser."

In reply to a question, Professor Henderson said:—"I went to England to do some work at Stratford-on-Avon, and also to enquire into the preservation of archives so as to guide us as to the best way in which to store our own documents at the Adelaide University. I had intended to go to Italy. Before I could undertake the journey war was declared. I was in the north of England, at Bamburgh, at that time, studying with my tutor (Mr. A. L. Smith). Then I crossed to the north of Ireland to learn something at first hand about the Home Rule difficulty, and subsequently went back to London. As there seemed to be very little hope of continuing my work, I decided to return to Australia by the Osterley."

Shakespeare's Genius.

Referring to his Shakesporean studies, Professor Henderson said, "I have been working on "Shakespeare the Man," both in Stratford-on-Avon and at Southwark, in London. I wanted to find out from the best available material and by conversation with some of the leading Shakesporean scholars, what were the actual indubitable facts of Shakespeare's life. There are not many indubitable facts, but there are some which it is almost impossible to reject, in view of available evidence. It is important to know these facts, because of the theories concerning the development of Shakespeare's mind. One school holds, and it is represented by George Brandes and Dr. Furnival, that the plays taken in chronological order reflect the state of Shakespeare's mind as it was influenced by important personal and public considerations. For instance, it is said that he began to write tragedies after the death of his father; but, as a matter of fact, his three greatest comedies were written after the death of his son Hamlet, whose loss Shakespeare would feel more deeply than that of his father, because the poet was at that time anxious to re-establish family traditions. This is only one instance of many which might be given to show how dangerous it is in the history of Shakespeare's life to connect the kind of work he was doing with the state of his own mind, as it could be affected by personal considera-

long. I do not believe, so far as I have been able to gather, that we are justified in offering any such theory of this extraordinary man's inward development. On the contrary, it is safe to affirm that these tragedies were written at a time when Shakespeare was most prosperous, both in regard to material fortune and in fame. He was probably making something like £3,000 or £4,000 a year of our money for the last eight or nine years of his life, and his fame in London was fully established in the city and in the court. Shakespeare's genius was of an extraordinarily unpersonal kind, and I am disposed to believe that it was almost as much a mystery to him until the last year or two, as it was to his fellow men. At all events there is good reason to believe that he lived a very simple life, and preferred it; but he moved about among all classes of men with ease and familiarity, and he was swarming to the roving humorists of Warwickshire, as well as to the contemporary poets who visited him in his retreat at Stratford-on-Avon. It all suggests that we understand very little about what this genius or inspiration to a very great man is. It almost seems like a great power working through them using, of course, their extraordinary faculties in order to work successfully. The more I study this question the more I am constrained to believe that there was some operation of these forces in Shakespeare which we call his genius. I am very much indebted to men like Sir Sydney Lee, Mr. Brassington (of the Memorial Theatre), the secretary of the Shakespeare Club in Stratford, and Mrs. Rose, of Shakespeare's birthplace, for the assistance which they gave me while I was in Stratford, especially in directing me to the most authentic material, which it would have taken me a long time to discover for myself. They were all experts in their way, in the life and work of the great bard. Nearly all of them have spent from 20 to 30 years in trying to find out what is fact and what is fiction in connection with Shakespeare's life."

Home Rule.

How did you find the question of Home Rule viewed in Ireland?

"I was only there a fortnight, and I do not feel qualified to express an opinion on the subject. I did find that there was a great deal of feeling then in Donegal, where the votes at the last election were nearly equal. I wish I could say that I came away with the conviction that this matter was settled. I am afraid I cannot. North and South are determined to be loyal to England in the crisis through which we are passing. I hope at the end of the crisis a means of settling the Irish trouble will have been found, but at the time when I arrived in the country I had the impression the question was only suspended, not settled. One thing, however, appeared to be beyond doubt, and nobody in Ireland contradicted it on either side, that the feeling of Irishmen towards England has become very much more favorable in the last 15 or 20 years. This is due for the most part to the measures that have been passed for the relief of the Irish peasants and the amelioration in the condition of the people generally. Most important of all, I found, was the security of tenure which Mr. Balfour's Bill gave to the Irish peasants. Agricultural classes are doing much to teach them improved methods. Poorer peasants get medical relief free; houses are being built—comfortable little places of four or five rooms—and all the peasant or laborer has to pay is 1/3 or 2/3 per week. That does not cover the capital cost and the upkeep or interest expended on the houses. The deficiency is made up by the Irish councils, but England has previously lent money at a low rate of interest in order that this could be done. The result has been a considerable improvement in the condition of the peasantry, and the people of Ireland are anxious to keep their laborers in the country. This is natural enough, but I could not help feeling before I came away that by an efficient Imperial organisation the question could be settled in a more satisfactory way than by these subsidies to the income or wages of the laborer. It may be that one result of the war will be to bring the different parts of the Empire in much closer touch with each other through some immigration system."