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Descendant of the poet's  
grandfather.

VIVIAN WOOD,  
Descended from Shakespeare's  
grandmother on mother's side.

SHAKESPEARE.

FRANK HART,  
Descended from a sister of  
Shakespeare.

REV. J. H. SHAKESPEARE,  
Descendant of Shakespeare's  
grandfather.

#### SHAKESPEARE AND HIS LIVING KIN.

### DISINHERITED HEIRS OF GENIUS

WHILE the Peers are considering Lord Rosebery's implied doubt of the soundness of the hereditary principle as applied to the first-born, another example of British heredity put itself on exhibition recently at a dinner held in London, where the descendants of great poets met to toast their ancestors, or those with whom they could claim kin. A goodly number were present to show that poets in the past were not advocates of race suicide. Most of the Olympian names in England's galaxy were represented, tho Lord Coleridge, who occupied the chair, confest he couldn't swear that the Herald's College would stand for all their pedigrees. Shakespeare found at least four to claim him as kin, tho none of direct descent. Relatives of Chaucer, Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Scott, Burns, Shelley, Byron, to mention only the great names, were there, tho not many of these names were represented at the "top table." In this place of honor were prominent the kin of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Walter Scott, Helen Lady Dufferin, the Earl of Rochester, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, with the playwright Wycherley, and Spenser, Milton and Coleridge to add a democratic flavor. Representatives of poets prior to and including Elizabethans were seated in company, while the following centuries gathered their offspring at other tables. The company led Lord Coleridge to wonder if the poets themselves, could they be on hand, would enjoy so harmonious an evening. He express some further doubts, as well as some impregnable convictions, such as:

"I am not quite sure whether we are here to testify to the soundness of the hereditary principle or the reverse. Of course, it may be that we are all of us poets, either actual or potential, and illustrating the saying that *poeta nascitur non fit*. Or it may be that we are sitting ranged round these tables waiting, like the *Scholar Gipsy*, for the spark from heaven to fall. And I could wish, indeed, that, as with Halley's comet, there was a periodicity, and that at stated intervals the divine afflatus revisited the descendants of the poets. If in the case of any of my hearers that long periodic time has at last run out and the poetic star has again mounted into the heavens, let not modesty in him or her prevent us from sharing in that inspiration. This is said to be a material age, but it is sentiment, pure sentiment, that has brought us all together to-night. While we are said to be a nation proud of our deeds rather than our arts, and truly we are proud of the great men of action that our race has produced, still we may claim to surpass all other nations that ever lived upon the habitable globe as a nation of great poets. Wonderful, truly wonderful, is the output of our poetry from Chaucer right down to our present day. Here we are

inhabitants of quite a small country, living in a foggy air, given over to industrial pursuits, dubbed, as we have been dubbed, a nation of shopkeepers, and yet no country, not Greece, not Palestine, not Rome, no European country, not America, can vie with us in the wealth, the continuity, or the variety of our poetic thought. I can not even conjecture an explanation. It may lie in the inspiration that we have received from our struggles for liberty and order. It may lie in the variety, the flexibility, the music of our mother tongue. It may lie in something that defies analysis, an indefinable inspiration that seems to breathe upon our land. It is all unaccountable, but it is not to be gainsaid."

He went on to question what the British Islands would be without the poets, "for, above all things, it is they who have consecrated the land to us." Further:

"They have ennobled, they have beautified, they have transfigured the sights and sounds of Nature. The winter's frost, the spring with its flowers, the high midsummer pomp, autumn with its mists and mellow fruitfulness, sunrise, sunset, the moon throwing her silver mantle o'er the dark, the galaxy of the stars, the mountain, the lake, the river, the sea, the melody of the birds, the plow driven along the furrow, the sower, the reaper, the churchyard at eventide, the eye traveling from mount to mount through cloudland, the thunder and the rainbow, the wind and the rain—what would they be to us without the poets? Who is there so stockish as not to find these sights and sounds more eloquent to him from a study and a reading of our singers? Turn from Nature to human life. The greatest poet of all time—who held the mirror up to Nature—of whom it was said of old that, tho his line of life went soon about, the lifetime of his like would never out—on the royal stage of Shakespeare all the great figures of history pass before our eyes. Greece, Rome, Italy, Scotland, England—on all he casts what has been rightly called his kingly gaze. He takes mankind from the cradle to the grave—the innocence of *Arthur*, the passion of *Juliet*, the ambition of *Macbeth*, the palsied will of *Hamlet*, the jealousy of *Othello*, the pathetic and retributive death of *Lear*. He brings us into the forest and sets us down under the greenwood tree, or, again, he takes us into the gossamer world of fairyland, and, finally, with *Prospero* as his spokesman, he bids us all be cheerful and think of all things well, and with this sweet and wholesome parting our great poet closes his book and his message to mankind. Time would fail for me to tell you of all the poets who have drunk deep at the Castalian spring. Of many of them, alas, the world was not worthy. Many of them died neglected and forlorn. But we tell them to-night that their words still live. We are grateful to them as the enchanters who in the moment could dissolve us into ecstasies and bring all heaven before our eyes. Whether we be in joy or in sorrow, whether we be in sickness or in health, in youth or in manhood or in old age, we tell them that they have left us a rich storehouse for the glory of the Creator and the relief of man's estate. I give you 'The Immortal Memories of the British Poets.'"



## WHAT ARE THE BEST PLAYS?

PLAYWRIGHTS who are busy writing failures are urged to study the causes that have given the great successes of the past their vogue. A tentative list of the one hundred best plays contain some that appealed to the earlier generation, which, says *The Dramatic Mirror*, "reveal a dignity of subject that is not seen to-day in the theater, particularly among plays that are esteemed among the most popular." Of these old-timers mention is made of "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," "The Hunchback," "Ingomar," "Belphegor," "The Fool's Revenge," "Damon and Pythias," and "The Lady of Lyons." These may be compared with a composite list to which several hands have recently contributed in an effort to determine which are "the ten plays most acted" at the present. Mr. Edwin Hopkins, who furnishes this list, writes:

"A tabulation of the five opinions show three plays unquestionably in the lead in the order named: 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' 'Ten Nights in a Barroom,' and 'East Lynne.'

"Closely following are 'Camille,' 'The Two Orphans,' 'Rip Van Winkle,' 'Hamlet.'

"After these first seven, opinions differ widely, but the list is completed by 'Jerry the Tramp,' 'Hazel Kirke,' 'Faust,' with 'Colleen Bawn' on a par with 'Faust,' being twice mentioned; the following being mentioned once: 'Monte Cristo,' 'The Octoroon,' 'Fanchon the Cricket,' 'Oliver Twist,' 'Lady Audley's Secret,' 'Streets of New York,' 'Way Down East.'

"Among other plays considered but not included in any of the five lists were 'The Silver King,' 'The Ticket-of-Leave Man,' 'Peck's Bad Boy,' 'Muldoon's Picnic,' 'Handy Andy,' 'Hawshaw the Detective,' 'Frou Frou,' 'The Lady of Lyons,' 'Josiah Whitcomb,' 'The Merchant of Venice,' 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'My Partner,' 'The Danites,' 'The Hidden Hand,' 'The Old Homestead,' 'Arabian Nights,' 'Arrah-na-Pogue,' 'Richelieu,' 'The Shaughraun.'

"'Way Down East' was included in one of the lists on the basis that it had been acted by so many companies. For example, five companies for four years would be equivalent to one company for twenty years, or about 6,000 performances, and 'Way Down East' has been played much more frequently. The eighth play, 'Jerry the Tramp,' undoubtedly deserves inclusion, since it has been played under such a variety of titles. It is, however, a very open question whether or not 'Hazel Kirke,' 'Faust,' and 'The Colleen Bawn' should not give way to 'Peck's Bad Boy' and 'Muldoon's Picnic,' which, tho farces of the lowest order, are nevertheless very widely and continuously performed, even yet."

The lists of the ten most-acted plays, observes *The Dramatic Mirror* editorially, "affords food for thought." Such thoughts as these:

"While among these plays may be found perennial favorites,

there is hardly one among them, except 'Hamlet,' that compliments the taste of the general public. It is true that 'The Two Orphans,' 'East Lynne,' and 'Camille' touch varying emotions, yet all appeal to the desire of woman to weep in the theater, and all emphasize the fact that woman is a steadfast patron of the drama day by day. The plays that appeal to the intellect may have strong friends, but these are in a minority. It may be different some day, and when that day comes the intellectual play may dominate, as really it dominated in 'the palmy days.' At present, however, the drama that satisfies the multitude is simple drama, and it deals with elementary matters."

*The Mirror* gives the "hundred best plays" compiled by Mr. Howard Herrick. He points out this as probably the only list thus far attempted, tho numerous lists of the hundred best books have appeared. Perhaps, as he suggests, Mr. William Archer, or Mr. William Winter, would be the man best adapted to make the choice. Shakespeare is excluded because his plays are in a class of their own. Also no foreign plays are mentioned except those that have been presented on the English or American stage. This is the list:

"A New Way to Pay Old Debts," Massinger.

"She Stoops to Conquer," Goldsmith.

"School for Scandal," "The Rivals," Sheridan.

"Virginius," "The Hunchback," "The Love Chase," Knowles.

"Richelieu," "The Lady of Lyons," Bulwer-Lytton.

"Ingomar," adapted by Maria Lovell.

"Louis XI.," Casimir Delavigne.

"Belphegor" (The Mountebank), Charles Webb.

"Ruy Blas," Hugo.

"The Fool's Revenge," Hugo-Tom Taylor.

"Faust," Goethe.

"Adrienne Lecouvreur," Scribe and Legouvé.

"Damon and Pythias," John Banim.

"Pygmalion and Galatea," Gilbert.

"The Corsican Brothers,"

"Monte Cristo," Dumas.

"Don Caesar de Bazan," Dumanois and D'Ennery.

"Camille," Dumas fils.

"Frou Frou," Meilhac-Halevy.

"Francesca da Rimini," Boker.

"The Bells," Lewis.

"London Assurance," "The Shaughraun," Boucicault.

"Rip Van Winkle," Irving-Boucicault.

"The Two Orphans," "A Celebrated Case," D'Ennery and Cormon.

"Madame Sans Gêne," Sardou and Moreau.

"Caste," "David Garrick," Robertson.

"Fedora," "Diplomacy" (Dora), "Divorçons," "A Scrap of Paper," Sardou.

"Black-Eyed Susan," Jerrold.

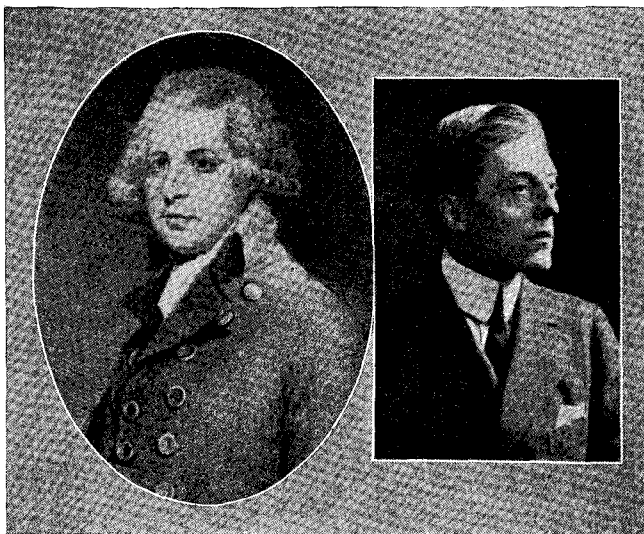
"Article 47," Belot-Cazauran.

"Uncle Tom's Cabin," Stowe-Aiken.

"East Lynne," Mrs. Henry Wood.

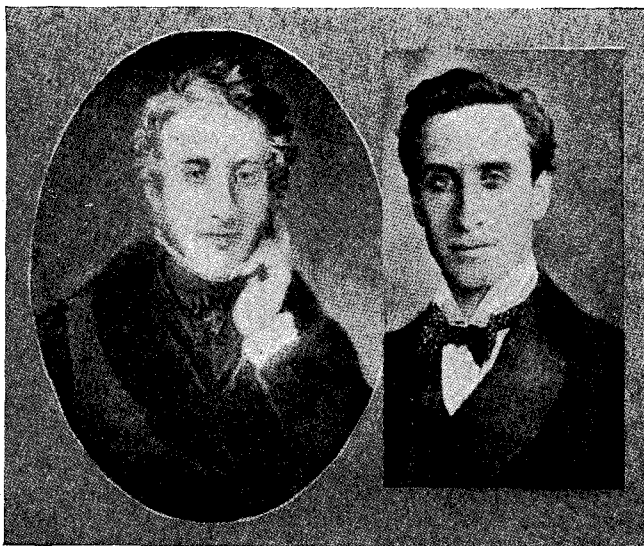
"Fanchon," Waldauer.

"A Parisian Romance," Feuillet-Cazauran.



SHERIDAN AND HIS GREAT-GREAT-GRANDSON.

The Marquess of Dufferin here shows some physiognomic traits of his famous ancestor, whom he represented at the poets' dinner.



BULWER-LYTTON AND HIS GRANDSON.

The younger Lytton is one of those who shine in light reflected from the illustrious past, and who lately met together in ancestor-worship.