

SHAKESPEARE AND HIS FAMOUS CONTEMPORARIES

BY WARWICK JAMES PRICE

HALF the world, if not more, studies Shakespeare a good part of the time, even unwittingly, like the old lady who objected to him because his plays were nothing but a string of familiar quotations. Always studying him, however, is there not a danger that one may come to see only the master's self, or if, almost perforce, he sees as well something of the England of Shakespeare's day, is he not apt to fail to look across the narrow seas that rim round the tight little island, and to note what is going on in the worlds of Spain and France and Italy—yes, even here in the first faint but sure beginnings of these United States?

We know more or less of Tintoretto and Veronese, for instance, and of Guido Reni and Paul Rubens; but how often do we realize that these mighty artists were Shakespeare's contemporaries? He outlived the first two; Reni and Rubens outlived him. We know something of Giordano Bruno and the thirteenth Gregory; but how often do we realize that it was while Will Shakespeare was at work that the one was burned at the stake for conscience' sake, and that the other was reforming the calendar? Quite the same sort of questions might be asked of "starry Galileo," who was born in the year when Shakespeare first saw the light of Stratford, and of Cervantes,



CARDINAL MAZARIN (1602-1661), THE ITALIAN WHO RULED FRANCE DURING THE MINORITY OF LOUIS XIV



CARDINAL RICHELIEU (1585-1642), THE FOREMOST FRENCH STATESMAN OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



CATHERINE DE' MEDICI (1519-1589), WHO, DURING SHAKESPEARE'S CHILDHOOD, INSTIGATED THE MASSACRE OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW



LOUIS XIII (1601-1643), SON OF THE GREAT HENRI QUATRE, AND KING OF FRANCE AT THE TIME OF SHAKESPEARE'S DEATH

who died on the very day—April 23, 1616—of the great English dramatist's passing. Ronsard and Montaigne, Catherine de' Medici and the cruel Duke of Alva—all these were of Shakespeare's time.

It is worth while to take even a cursory glance at the whole world's stage, between the years 1564 and 1616, and note what often-heard-of men and women were playing their many parts while the author of "Hamlet" and "Othello" lived and wrote.

In the year when William Shakespeare was born in



HENRI IV (1553-1610), WHOSE GREAT CAREER AS KING OF NAVARRE AND OF FRANCE WAS NEARLY CONTEMPORANEOUS WITH THAT OF SHAKESPEARE

that bare upper room in the timbered Elizabethan house on Henley Street, John Calvin and Michelangelo were buried. Here in the New World, the Huguenots were settling at St. John's, Florida, sent out by Admiral Coligny, and doomed to murder at Spanish hands before another twelvemonth. Just north of Shakespeare's native England, Mary Stuart, beautiful and twenty, was turning away from a marriage with Elizabeth's Dudley to wed young Darnley, ill-starred and ill-deserving.

In 1579, when

the fifteen-year-old Will left King Edward's Grammar School with "small Latin and less Greek," the Dutch Republic was being constituted, one day to be the text for our own Motley. In 1583, when Susannah Shakespeare was born, Sir Humphrey Gilbert was seizing Newfoundland in the name of his queen. In 1586, when the Shakespeare of twenty-two was holding horses outside the London theaters—if he really did so—Sir Philip Sidney, but ten years his senior, was laying down his life on the bloody field of Zutphen, with his last breath refusing the cup of cold water, that a wounded private at his side might wet his black and swollen tongue.

When the lines of "Love's Labor's Lost" were taking shape under the master's hand, Spain's Armada was being driven around the stormy shores of Britain, the Duc de Guise and Henri III were being assassinated, and the fourth Henri was founding the long line of picturesque Bourbon monarchs. When Richard Crookback's cry, "My kingdom for a horse!" was ringing through Shakespeare's brain, the canny Scots were changing religious horses, banning Episcopacy even as they had Romanism, and labeling their kirks "None genuine without the stamp Presbyterian." The same year that saw the printed page of "Midsummer

Night's Dream" saw also a charter issued to a certain British East India Company, destined to make over the map of the Eastern world.

As the scenes and acts of "Timon of Athens" grew to a completed whole,



PHILIP II OF SPAIN (1527-1598), WHO LAUNCHED THE ARMADA AGAINST ENGLAND WHEN SHAKESPEARE WAS TWENTY-FOUR

From a photograph by the Berlin Photographic Company after the portrait by Titian in the Prado at Madrid

Quebec was being founded by the French; and when, in 1623, Henning & Condell issued the famous first folio of collected



EDMUND SPENSER (1552-1599), ONE OF SHAKESPEARE'S MOST FAMOUS LITERARY CONTEMPORARIES

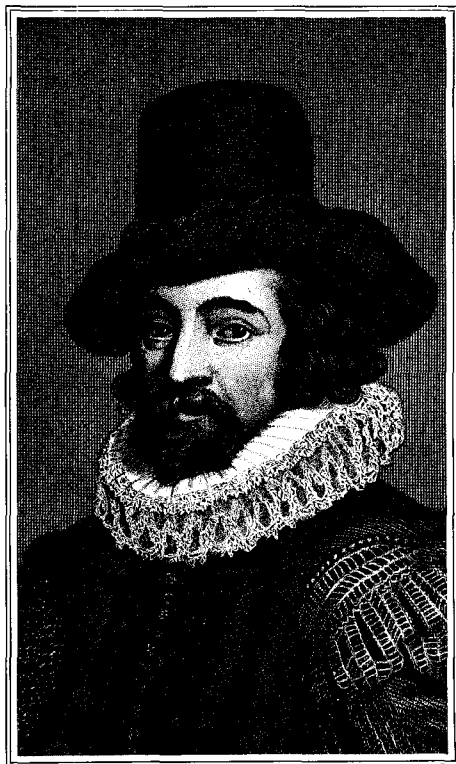
plays, the Dutch were settling Albany. When the man who was "not for an age, but for all time" ended his allotted days in the flesh, do not think merely that the creator of "Don Quixote" was also *in extremis*, but give a thought as well to the far-off corner of northeastern Asia, where the Manchus were sweeping down into China to establish a dynasty which has lasted to to-day. Think, too, of Sir Walter Raleigh, who, only a month before, had come out from London's Tower, where he had lain in prison for a dozen years, to start upon that Guinea project which was to mean his death.

A TRAGEDY OF SHAKESPEARE'S DAY

One is apt to forget that Shakespeare's England was the England of James I, as well as of Elizabeth; of Arabella Stuart, as well as of Mary Stuart. Indeed, how many associate the tragedy of the Queen of Scots herself with the days of Will Shakespeare? Had there been morning papers then, even such as Addison was to introduce little more than a century later, he might have read some item telling, in diplomatically guarded

language, how Fotheringay Castle witnessed that brutal execution within its black-hung hall.

Francis II had died in 1580; his young widow had sought again her native land; had wedded that handsome drunkard, Darnley; had seen the scheming Rizzio stabbed, with fifty-six wounds, before her very eyes; had borne the son who was to unite two thrones and end age-long dissensions; had heard, under her very bedroom windows, the explosion



FRANCIS BACON, LORD VERULAM (1561-1626), REGARDED BY THE BACONIANS AS THE REAL AUTHOR OF SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS

which brought violent close to the violent life of her unworthy second husband; and then had been forced to the castle of pock-marked Bothwell, and so to her third marriage. Then had come the cowardly flight of that adventurer, when, his new wife at his side, he had faced the Highland lords with battle threatening; and is it not an instance of poetic justice that he should have ended his ignoble days a madman, in a Danish jail, where he was held as a pirate?

Mary, meanwhile, had been held pris-

oner by the chiefs of the Scottish Congregation, and had fled from them to what she was tricked into believing was the safer refuge of her cousin's realm. Then she had known nineteen years' imprisonment — nineteen years marked by broken promises, mean intrigues, and unworthy plottings against her single self, a lone woman, unschooled in the traps laid for her on every side. And, at last, she died as bravely as she had lived wretchedly.

Shakespeare was then in London, and at work. Did he not recognize this rich material ready to

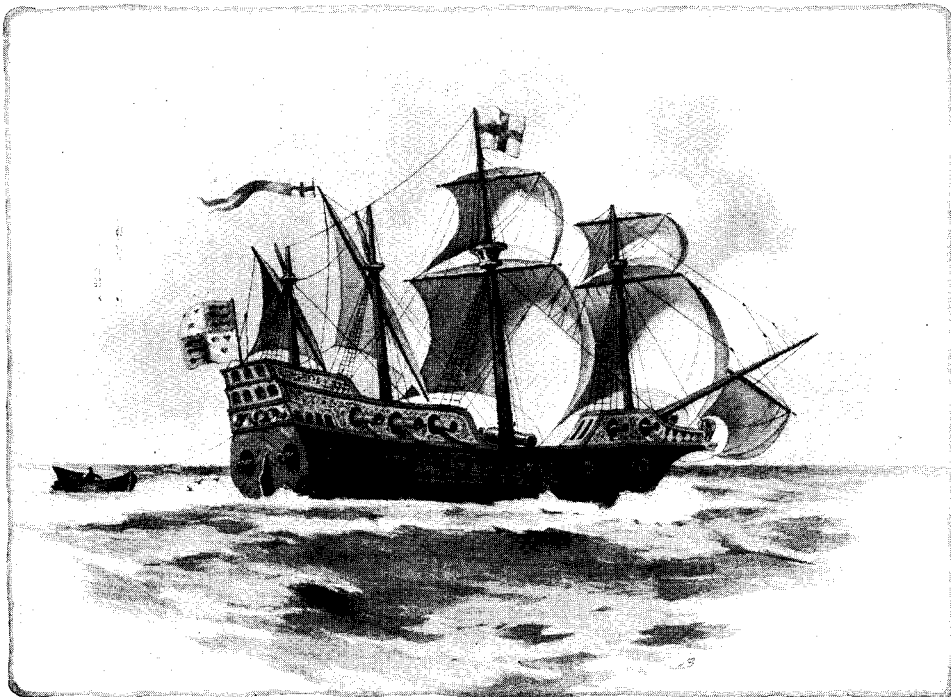


SIR FRANCIS DRAKE (1540-1596), THE FOREMOST ENGLISH NAVAL HERO OF SHAKESPEARE'S TIME

his hands? Did he, perhaps, stand too close to it? Or was it that the ever-jealous Elizabeth would not have permitted the telling of the story? At any rate, he left it for Maurice Hewlett to draw the sad picture of that unhappy queen's life drama; even as he left it for Harrison Ainsworth to tell of the plot of Guido Fawkes, and for Charles Kingsley to recount, so stirringly, the conflict with King Philip's Armada.

KINGS OF SHAKESPEARE'S TIME

Surely, there again was a mine of pure ore offered and ignored—Philip's wed-



THE GOLDEN HIND, THE SHIP IN WHICH DRAKE SAILED AROUND THE WORLD IN 1577-1580, WHEN SHAKESPEARE WAS MASTERING HIS "SMALL LATIN AND LESS GREEK"

ding with Bloody Mary in the long nave at Winchester; his proxy proposal to Elizabeth scarce four years later, and in the very month of Mary's demise; with the sharp following insults heaped upon him by British captains on the Spanish Main and in the Low Countries, and, at last, in the very harbor of Cadiz itself. Who

England; of the fire-rafts and the storm, and of the ignoble and complete collapse of that "invincible" fleet?

That culmination fell when Shakespeare was twenty-four. Surely he must have been deeply impressed by it; but he called it to his stage no more than he did that other tragic happening of the closing



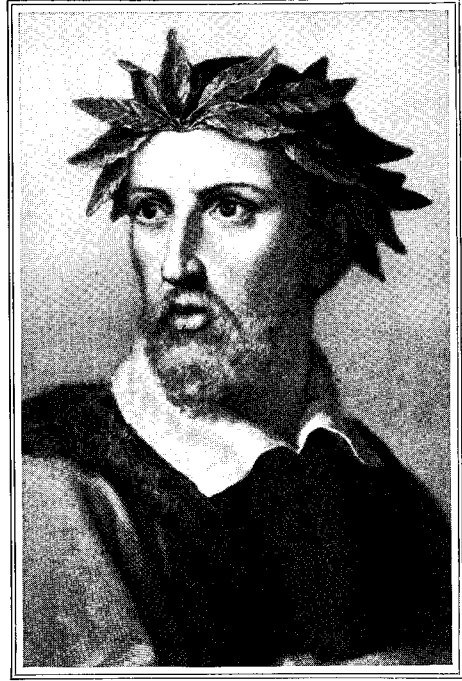
FERNANDO DE TOLEDO, DUKE OF ALVA (1508-1582), WHOSE CRUEL RULE IN THE NETHERLANDS WAS SYNCHRONOUS WITH SHAKESPEARE'S BOYHOOD

does not know the story of Drake's game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe, interrupted by the news that the Spaniards had been sighted; of the beacon-fires sparking their warning messages from the Lizard to Skiddaw; of the worryings of the mighty galleons by the little bulldog ships of

years of the sixteenth century, the Tyrone Rebellion in Ireland. He stood first-hand witness to the attempted treason of the brilliant Essex; and one may well imagine him one of the fashionable crowd gathered beneath the gray walls of Westminster that saw the promise of thirty-



MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDRA (1547-1616),
AUTHOR OF "DON QUIXOTE," WHO DIED ON
THE SAME DAY AS SHAKESPEARE



TORQUATO TASSO (1544-1595), THE GREAT ITALIAN
POET, WHO DIED WHEN SHAKESPEARE
WAS AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS FAME

three brilliant years ended so redly with the fall of the executioner's gleaming ax. That was the year in which John Shakespeare, father of the poet, was buried.

Nor has the immortal dramatist left a single word to give his opinion of James I and VI, selfish son of a generous mother, weakling nephew of a mighty aunt. Fat, with large, wandering eyes, and legs all too thin for his flabby frame, seemingly the more corpulent because of the padded clothes which he wore in fear of assassination; with



LUIZ DE CAMOENS (1525-1579), THE GREAT
PORTUGUESE POET, WHO DIED WHEN
SHAKESPEARE WAS FIFTEEN

an unkingly cap thrown almost at random on his unkingly head; with a tongue too large for his mouth, as Nero's was — this man, who had his saddle built chair-fashion that he might not fall off his horse, and who, nevertheless, fell off with most undignified regularity, would scarce seem the figure to inspire a poet's praises. The undying genius who saw truth so clearly might not safely hold the mirror up to nature in this case; it is quite understandable that he should have left it for Sir

Walter Scott to paint the portrait in "Peveril of the Peak."

As for the world across seas, Europe and the half-guessed continents beyond, history was being made rapidly when the greatest William was little Will. In the boy's seventh year, Don John of Austria, leading the combined fleets of Spain and Venice against the Turks at Lepanto, destroyed two hundred vessels of the enemy and thirty thousand of their men, breaking forever the Mohammedan power in Europe. Some years later, when "The Winter's Tale" and "The Tempest" were being shaped for immortality, another power was to appear in Europe's north, when Gustavus Adolphus, scholar, musician, gentleman, and one of the world's great captains, came to Sweden's throne at seventeen. He was to outlive Shakespeare sixteen years, standing, when the poet died, just on the eve of his most splendid triumph—his victory over Russia.

That same Russian power, too, may be said to appear in history during Shake-



MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE (1533-1592), THE FOREMOST FRENCH WRITER OF SHAKESPEARE'S DAY



SIR WALTER RALEIGH (1552-1618), THE FAMOUS ENGLISH COMMANDER, WHOSE CAREER WAS NEARLY CONTEMPORANEOUS WITH THAT OF SHAKESPEARE

peare's career; for, when he was settling down at New Place to the peace of his closing years, Michael Romanoff, a mere youth, less than twenty, was founding, in the ancient capital of Moscow, the imperial house which still sits upon the Russian throne.

Such happenings as these may not seem to be of a religious sort, and yet they were; in that day practically all world-history was religious. Think of the part that creed and bigotry played in the life-story of Mary Stuart; in the despatch of the ill-fated Armada, and in the mad attempt of Fawkes. Look southward across the Channel into France and Spain for further proof.

SHAKESPEARE'S FRANCE AND SPAIN

The France of Shakespeare's day was no longer a France arrayed in arms

against Spain or England or Austria fighting for European supremacy, but a France where, with fanatical passions unchained, Guise fought Bourbon, Huguenot fought Catholic. It was the kingdom of the eighteen months' reign of weak Francis II; of the fourteen years' reign of the equally weak and far more wicked Charles IX; of Henri Trois, and the last of the Valois monarchs, and of the first five years of Henri Quatre, with Navarre and Ivry writing the refrains for Macaulay's ballads. Shakespeare's France was the France of Catherine de' Medici; and, after the monk Clément had stabbed the third Henry to death, the France of his successor's mistresses, Gabrielle d'Estrées shining like a star among them. The student of that period needs read of her and of Sully, Henry's stalwart friend and finance minister, to leave his history with a good taste in the mouth.

Then befell the fearful massacre of St. Bartholomew. Shakespeare was not yet even his "schoolboy, with shining morning face, creeping like snail unwillingly to school," and one must turn to the brilliant pages of Prosper Mérimée's "Chronicles of the Reign of Charles IX" for that grim story, with its fiendish plottings and the yet more fiendish murders which, for four dark days, reddened the streets of the French capital, while the twenty-two-year-old king shot down fugitive Huguenots like rabbits from the royal balcony. Go then to the Tate Gallery in London, and see the picture which calls back once more the ominously silent reception accorded the French ambassador after the bloody news had reached Elizabeth's court. Queen and courtiers and ladies in waiting stand mute and in unbroken black, while the brilliant-clothed Parisian, bowing unabashed in their midst, serves only to emphasize the ceremony's black threat. La Rochelle was to be defended and sacked, Ivry was to be fought and won, the edict of Nantes was to promise a just and tardy peace for the persecuted—this was the France of Shakespeare.

Looking south of the Pyrenees, one sees, eight years before Shakespeare's birth, the second Philip, a youth of twenty-eight, proudly ascending the steps of the throne of an empire which had been the greatest of the medieval world; which

was yet to know days of glory, though even then tottering on the edge of its fearful fall. When little Will, a toddler of four, was peering up the cavernous depths of the great chimneys in his Stratford home, Don Carlos was dying at twenty-three, hopelessly insane. As for the rest, the Spain of Shakespeare's day tells but one story, a story of wars and persecutions—of war with the Turks, war with England, war with France, war with Portugal; of persecutions of the Moors, the most industrious dwellers of Andalusia, till they were at last driven from the peninsula. There were persecutions of the Protestants, too; not only there in Spain, but also in Spain's refractory province of Holland, where Wilhelmina rules to-day.

History was made with every sunrise in the Netherlands then. There, for forty years, was waged war for the freedom of conscience, the struggle of patriot Hollanders against a bigot king, represented by a bigot general yet more cruel than his master. From Shakespeare's fifth year to his forty-fifth the tide of battle rose and fell, with Alva, the relentless, and William of Orange as protagonists, and with Leyden and Antwerp and Zutphen as the climaxes of the struggle. Leyden's siege, when Shakespeare was a boy of ten, was marked by a heroism and constancy such as has seldom been recorded on the pages of history. Then Elizabeth refused the sovereignty of the brave little country; there followed the so-called Spanish Fury at Antwerp, the assassination of William, the coming of Leicester and Sidney, and the truce at last that led to independence.

Adventure is in the very air when a man has to fight for his religious belief, and when new worlds are being found like pebbles on the shore. The year after Shakespeare was born, Spain took possession of the Philippines, where we now are helping a people to work out their own salvation. When the Stratford boy was yet at his school-books, Francis Drake circumnavigated the globe. At that same time Yermak and his Cossacks were sweeping down the eastern slopes of the Urals to lay so solidly the first foundations of Russia in Asia. Dutch captains were sailing around Africa's southern cape when the Earl of Southampton was

befriending Shakespeare in London. The Portuguese discovered Australia in 1601. Eight years later, John Hawkins, the first representative sent out by the British East India Company, set foot on the giant peninsula of South Asia, which the seventh Edward rules to-day as emperor.

On the western shore of the Atlantic, meanwhile, events which have written themselves large on history's page came so thick and fast that one can do little but list the happenings then starting a hemisphere into civilized life. The Huguenots in Florida, with the Spaniards following at their heels; Frobisher's search for the Northwest Passage, and Gilbert's landing in Newfoundland; the English settlement at Roanoke, in North Carolina; Gosnold's failure in Massachusetts, with the prompt-following successes of the London and Plymouth Companies; the French footholds made good in Arcadia and at Quebec; the crossing of the Pilgrims to Delft, and Hudson's discovery of the river that still bears his name—such were the entries which time was making in the world's broad ledger between the day when Will Shakespeare first saw the light, and the year when his sonnets were published—1609, an even three centuries ago.

SHAKESPEARE'S FELLOW WRITERS

If the student of Shakespeare is in danger of overlooking the history contemporary with his idol's day he is fully as apt to forget or undervalue Shakespeare's fellow workers in literature. On the Continent at least six names demand true reverence. There is François de Malherbe, a boy not nine when Shakespeare was born, and outliving him in years if not in fame. "The poet of princes and the prince of poets" rined his way to honor through Maria de' Medici. Older than he, and more famous by far, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra was seventeen when the gentle Will arrived in the world; and he departed from it, as has already been said, on the same day as his greater contemporary. Nor may any deny Cervantes his own full right to "great": "Don Quixote" is the only Spanish book with a world-wide reputation, and Sancho Panza is every whit as immortal as the best of Shakespeare's clowns, and more often quoted.

In Italy, when Shakespeare was born, one sees a youthful poet of twenty-nine installed at the tables of the Italian nobles. Few literary successes have been so brilliant as were those that made bright the morning of Torquato Tasso's life; few have been so suddenly clouded by unrequited love, and few have closed in so dark an evening. When Shakespeare was writing his "Midsummer Night's Dream," Tasso's too-brief career was flickering out, as he wandered neglected and insulted, called mad by those who would have made him so, in the land which had lately rejoiced to do him every honor. Yet what an afterglow comes up from his "Jerusalem Delivered," first published in 1581, when Will Shakespeare was going and coming across the fields to Shottery, to court Anne Hathaway.

Michel Montaigne—"the first writer of France," as Hallam has it, "whom a gentleman need not be ashamed to have read"—was thirty-one when Shakespeare was born, and died in 1592, when "Richard III" was taking form. Luiz de Camoens, the Portuguese, died when Shakespeare—if the tradition be true—was playing apprentice to the Stratford butcher. Like Froissart and Raleigh and Cervantes, Camoens was a soldier. Unhappy love drove him to poetry, and unlucky political satire drove him out into the world an exile. It was at Macao—which jumped into the news the other day when the Chinese revenue-cutters seized there a Japanese merchantman—that he wrote his "Lusiad," first given to the world of types when Shakespeare was a boy of eight. Last year, when the Lisbon socialists encompassed the death of King Carlos, the average American knew little more of Portugal than that this same "Lusiad" was written by one of her sons—surely no small measure of fame for Shakespeare's collaborator in the field of verse. The last of the six was Ronsard—Pierre Ronsard, who laid by his graceful pen forever in the year when Shakespeare's twin sons were born—1585.

Their name is legion who figure forth in the history of British letters between 1564 and 1616. There was Kit Marlowe, born the same year as his greater fellow dramatist, and dying in 1593 a mere lad of twenty-eight; there was Ed-

mund Spenser, who published the first books of "The Faerie Queen" a few months later than Shakespeare's earliest play, "Love's Labor's Lost"; there were Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger and Ford, "rare" Ben Jonson, sturdy old Drayton, and Chapman, of Homeric fame. These stand forward in the ranks of poetry, and in the allied battalions of prose one sees Raleigh, whose long imprisonment gave birth to his "History of the World"; Hooker, with his quaintly tedious "Ecclesiastical Polity"; mighty-minded Bacon, who joined with Montaigne in officiating at the birth of the

essay; and those clever literary planters who first, in Shakespeare's time, sowed and nourished the seeds which in the slow process of the years blossomed into the modern novel—Lyly and Philip Sidney, Lodge and Greene and Nash.

Well may we wear next our hearts that prime jewel of our literature which we call Will Shakespeare. Wise, too, shall we be if we look also at those other gems, amid which his fame sparkles the more splendidly, in the gold and silver setting of the adventurous years which rewrote the chronicles of all the world at the close of the sixteenth century.

IF YOU WERE TO RESIGN, WOULD YOU BE REELECTED?

BY MERTON H. FORRESTER

WHETHER you are who may happen to read these words, this question is one that you should ask yourself most seriously.

Whether you are a man or a woman, if you have come to mature age, you have attained some sort of a position, either social or commercial or professional or political—or, it may be, all of these together. Possibly it is not a very great position in itself. There are other positions which are higher than yours, and there are positions which are lower. But your own, such as it is, represents something which you have tried to achieve, and which you have achieved. It has been an object of effort on your part, an object of ambition, an object of desire. It was something that you wanted, and upon which you expended thought and time and labor and tact. You wanted it, and now you have it. Ask yourself this question:

If you were to resign, would you be re-elected?

This is the kind of question which it does you good to ask and answer with unsparring frankness. It is one of the questions which make you search your heart, look into all the secrets of your

life, and bring yourself face to face with what is real—perhaps almost brutally real.

Put aside what other people say to you—the pleasant insincerities of daily conversation, the outward appearances which are so often sham—and get down to bed-rock truth. It may hurt you to strip off ruthlessly the pretensions which cover up your nakedness, but it will do you good to see things as they really are. If, then, you were to resign, would you be reelected?

The question may sound at first as if it related only to political office. This is because the word "elect" has come to have, first of all, a purely political meaning. But to "elect" is the same as to "select"; and the real question is whether you would be again selected for the place which you now hold, if you were to give up that place and go back to the beginning?

COULD YOU REGAIN YOUR PLACE IN LIFE?

Whatever talent you may have, whatever gifts you may possess—amounting, perhaps, to so great a thing even as genius—these have not been the only factors in your advancement. They have