THE OTHELLOS AND IAGOS OF STAGE HISTORY

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THE OREGONIAN'S HOME STUDY CIRCLE: DIRECTED BY PROF. SEYMOUR EATON

POPULAR STUDIES IN SHAKESPEARE

Contributors to this course: Dr. Edward Dowden, Dr. William J. Rolfe, Dr. Hamilton W. Mabie, Dr. Albert S. Cook, Dr. Hiram Corson, Dr. Isaac N. Demmon, Dr. Vida D. Scudder and others.

IX. OTHELLO.

The Play as an Acting Drama.

Considered simply as a dream of passion in action, "Othello" is Shakespeare's greatest play, and the greatest play the world has seen. "Hamlet" may send its plummet down to greater depths of wisdom and philosophy, and may also rise to much higher flights of poetic expression. "Macbeth" and "King Lear" may reach their tragic culminations by a subtler evolution of their dramatic motives. But "Othello," in its swift and certain development of theme from simple beginning to awful end, stands supreme. As a tragedy of elemental human passion it is unequaled in literature.

Thomas Betterton.

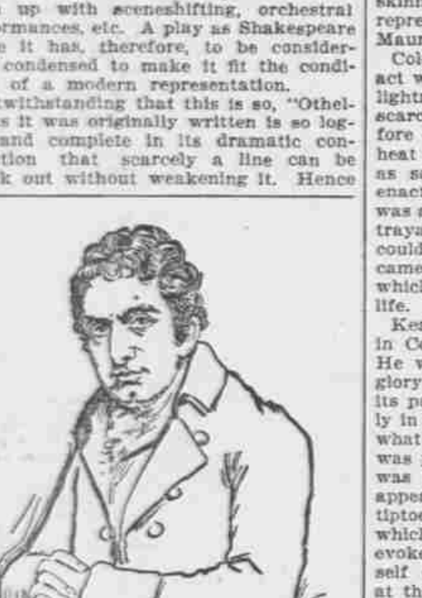
The history of "Othello" as an acting play justifies these statements. Its popularity in this respect, with the possible exception of "Hamlet," is without rival. "Othello" was popular in Shakespearean times when Burbage played the Moor. And, except in the puritan and Cromwellian epoch, when all plays were forbidden, it has been popular ever since. From the time of the Restoration (1660) down to the very present there has never been a year in which "Othello" has not held its place on the boards as one of the best "drawing" plays in the theatrical repertoire.

And in one respect "Othello" has outdone "Hamlet" in its hold on popular favor. "Othello" has never been "adapted." It has always been presented, with the exception of some shortening, practically as Shakespeare wrote it. This cannot be said of "Hamlet." Even Garrick, Shakespearean lover as he was, altered Shakespeare's "Hamlet" to suit his fancy. And other adapters and improvers of "Hamlet" there have been of lesser fame. But no playwright, great or small, has ever presumed to lay desecrating hands on "Othello."

Fine as "Othello" is as an acting play, its quality as a play for reading only is equally fine. No other play that Shakespeare has written holds the attention of the reader from beginning to end with such enthrallment of mind and sense. Its spell is continuous and complete.

The acting editions of "Othello" do not present the play in its entirety. Theatrical representations in Shakespeare's day were much longer than those of our day. None of the time of the spectators was taken up with sceneshifting, orchestral performances, etc. A play as Shakespeare wrote it has, therefore, to be considerably condensed to make it fit the conditions of a modern representation.

Notwithstanding that this is so, "Othello" as it was originally written is so logical and complete in its dramatic construction that scarcely a line can be struck out without weakening it. Hence those who know "Othello" only from seeing it played do not know it completely. No person should go to see "Othello" upon the stage without first reading and studying the play in printed form.



John Philip Kemble.

"Othello" has the distinction among plays of having two parts of almost first-class importance for male actors, and one part of almost first-class importance for a female actor; while several of its minor parts call for acting of more than an ordinary character. It follows, then, that the history of "Othello" as an acting play would be a history of the entire English stage. This consideration will show how imperfect a treatment of its history is possible here.

A point worthy of remembrance is that it was in "Othello" in the part of Desdemona that the first woman impersonator of a Shakespearean heroine, the first English woman to act any part of any sort, ever appeared. This was December 8, 1660. So extraordinary was the innovation that it was thought necessary to apologize for it in the prologue. A part of this prologue ran as follows:

"In this reforming age
We have intents to civilise the stage.
Our women are defective, and so siz'd
You'd think they were some of the guard disguis'd;
For to speak truth, men act, that are between
Forty and fifty, wenches of fifteen;
With bone so large, and nerve so uncompliant,
When you call 'Desdemona,' enter 'Giant.'"

This, it must be remembered, was in the first few months of the Restoration period. In the days of Shakespeare and afterward until puritan ideas became so dominant that all playing was prohibited, the parts of women in plays had been taken by young boys, duly apprenticed and trained. It was from the ranks of these boy players that the players of men's parts were generally recruited. Theatrical playing was then a respectable and lucrative profession. The puritan regime changed all this. When the Restoration again allowed playing to be done, the apprenticeship system was no longer in vogue. As a consequence female parts were soon generally assumed by women.

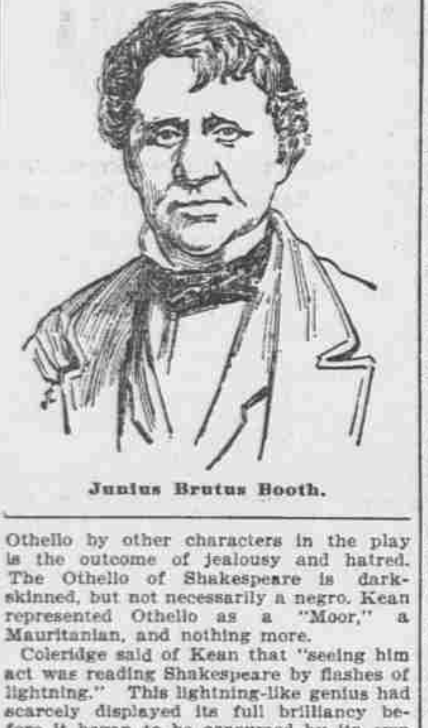
All the great players in tragedy known to the history of the stage have taken part in "Othello," either as Othello or as Iago, and in some cases as both. These great players in "Othello" form a regular succession of "kings of the drama." Beginning with Shakespeare's Burbage, the succession or "dynasty" may be set down as follows: Burbage, Betterton (who in 1709 played Othello for the last time at the age of 74), Barton Booth, Quin, Macklin (who, however, played only Iago), Garrick, Barry (sometimes Garrick played Iago to Barry's Othello), Thomas Sheridan (the father of Sheridan, the dramatist), John Henderson, John Kemble, George Frederick Cooke (who, like Macklin, also played only Iago), Edmund Kean, Junius Brutus Booth (who played Iago to Kean's Othello), Edwin Forrest (who also played Iago to Kean's Othello), Macready, Samuel Phelps, Edwin Booth and Henry Irving. Booth and Irving at one time played Othello and Iago together, alternately. Of distinguished foreigners who have played Othello, the more noted are the Frenchman, Charles Fechter (with whom, however, the part was much inferior to his Hamlet) and the great Italian Othello, Tommaso Salvini.

Interesting notes could be written on the parts taken in the play of "Othello" by all these players; but on the principle that something about one thing is a great deal better than nothing much about many things, let us confine our attention to that greatest of all Othellos, that greatest indeed of all Shakespearean actors, Edmund Kean.

Though Kean's genius for the highest form of acting was so transcendent, it must not be understood that it was without limitations. His art was not universal. Nor was it without many blemishes that actors of far less ability and fame have been guiltless of. Moreover, Kean was not physically well qualified for the realization of many of the great roles he essayed. His figure was not commanding. His voice was harsh and unpleasing. But in his best range, and especially when he was in the full plenitude of his powers, the fame of Edmund Kean's acting eclipses that of every other actor in tragedy. The only actor or actress whose fame is at all comparable with his is Mrs. Siddons.

Othello was Kean's greatest part. As to this there is a fullness of evidence. The elder Booth told Edwin Booth that "no mortal man could equal Kean in the rendering of Othello's despair and rage"; that "his voice when he spoke the words, 'Farewell, Othello's occupation's gone,' sounded like the moan of the ocean or the soughing of wind through cedars."

One characteristic of Kean's impersonation of Othello is worth noting. Actors prior to him, even Garrick, Barry and John Kemble, had represented Othello as an African, or, in other words, a negro. There is nothing in the play of "Othello" as Shakespeare wrote it to justify this. The ascription of negro characteristics to Othello by other characters in the play is the outcome of jealousy and hatred. The Othello of Shakespeare is dark-skinned, but not necessarily a negro. Kean represented Othello as a "Moor," a Mauritanian, and nothing more.



Junius Brutus Booth.

Coleridge said of Kean that "seeing him act was reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning." This lightning-like genius had scarcely displayed its full brilliancy before it began to be consumed by its own heat and flame. Edmund Kean's life was as sorrowful a tragedy as any he ever enacted upon the mimic stage. He who was able to transport thousands by his portrayal of imaginary passions, which he could assume or throw off at will, became the victim of a passion of his own which he could throw off only with his life.

Kean's last appearance on the stage was in Covert Garden theater March 23, 1833. He was then only 46. But for years the glory of his genius had been waning, and its power by this time, except occasionally in flashes, was only the mere wraith of what it once had been. On this night he was playing Othello to his son's Iago. It was the first time father and son had appeared together. Expectation was on tiptoe, and in answer to the applause which the performance of his favorite part evoked, the great actor seemed to be himself once more. But in the third act, at the fatal words "Othello's occupation's gone," while the applause seemed even deeper and more fervent than it had ever been before, he hesitated and stammered. A moment later, in tottering toward Iago, to utter the injunction, "Villain, be sure thou prove it," he fell into his son's arms. "Oh God," he cried, "I am dying! Speak to them, Charles," he implored. These were his last words. The career of the greatest Othello, the greatest Shylock and the greatest Richard III the world has known was ended. A few weeks later he was in his grave.

Questions for Research and Review.

1. Are you prejudiced against Othello at the outset? Why? Are you still prejudiced at the close of act 1? By what means does the poet cause Othello to grow in your esteem through the remainder of the play?
2. How does Shakespeare keep us from sympathizing much with Brabantio?
3. What is the dramatic purpose of the various scenes in which great affairs of state are introduced?

Edwin Forrest as "Othello."

4. Is Desdemona equally great with Othello when both are on trial in the presence of her father? Does Brabantio's description of Desdemona's character show complete comprehension of her?
5. Is Desdemona's lie concerning the handkerchief a dramatic necessity? How is her lie just before her death to be regarded?
6. What is Othello's motive in killing Desdemona? Is it jealousy?
7. What use is made of race differences in bringing on the tragic conclusion of the play? Is there anything unnatural in Desdemona's love for a Moor? Does Othello show race peculiarities?
8. Does Iago become either better or worse as the play advances? How explain Othello's esteem of him?
9. Do you think Iago's face and form completely belied his character? Is he old or young? Has he any real excuse for his villainy? Any real motive?
10. How do Iago and Richard III compare as villains? Which is the more artistic? Which the more cruel? Which the more plausible?
11. How does Iago gain his ascendency over Othello in act 3, scene 3? Does he take lower moral ground apparently? In the reunion scene (act 2, scene 1) what is the significance of Iago's part?
12. By what means does Iago keep Roderigo on the road to ruin? What are the successive steps in Roderigo's degeneration? How often does Roderigo serve the main plot? At what point does he cease to be necessary?
13. Is Cassio necessary? At what points in the play?
14. In what scenes is Emilia most serviceable to the plot of the play?

Charles Albert Fechter.

15. Is Othello's suicide a dramatic necessity?
16. For what sins do the various offenders against moral laws pay the extreme penalty?

J. V. Denney.

Ohio state university.

APPEAL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Moody's Charitable Work May Suffer If Not Assisted.

EAST NORTHFIELD, Mass., Dec. 29.—(To the Editor.)—You will be glad to have the accompanying authentic information, which corrects many current misstatements and answers inquiries as to the future of the work D. L. Moody left behind. Any publicity you can give will be appreciated and will no doubt help in the work:

"I have been ambitious not to lay up wealth, but to leave work for you to do," were almost the last words of D. L. Moody to his children.

At a meeting of Mr. Moody's friends, held in Northfield on the evening of his funeral, it was resolved that a statement regarding the institutions founded by him be given to the public.

These institutions are unique in character, and offer an unequaled opportunity for young men and women of limited means to secure an education that will thoroughly equip them for Christian life and service.

They consist of the Northfield seminary and training school for young women, Mount Hermon school for young men, and the Bible institute, Chicago. All are incorporated.

The Northfield plant consists of about 1200 acres of land and about 30 buildings, beautifully situated and excellently equipped. With present endowment it is valued at $1,125,000, and is practically free from debt. At Chicago the buildings, land and endowment exceed $250,000 in value.

Edwin Booth as "Othello."

The Northfield schools have about 400 students each, who are charged $100 per annum for board and tuition. The actual cost is about $200. At Chicago the amount required approximates $150 each for 300 students.

In brief, therefore, a sum of about $125,000 is annually required to maintain the work inaugurated by Mr. Moody on the principles successfully pursued for the past 20 years.

This sum has heretofore been largely raised by his personal efforts. We believe his friends will now wish to express their appreciation of him and their gratitude to God for his accomplished work by sharing the responsibilities bequeathed to his children by raising the present limited endowment to $3,000,000, the interest on which, at 4 per cent, would guarantee the perpetuation of his work in all its present prosperity. Such an endowment would be a monument to his memory more enduring than brass or marble, and just such a memorial as he himself would have most desired.

The appeal is therefore made now to Mr. Moody's friends throughout the world to contribute, without curtailing their support for current expenses, to a Moody memorial endowment, notifying his elder son, W. R. Moody, East Northfield, Mass., of the amount they are moved to give.

H. M. MOORE, President.

Not a Dying Race.

Providence Journal.

German newspaper talk about the decadence of the British empire is as silly and impertinent as the talk in the same quarters about the military and naval inefficiency of the United States was two years ago. It is an old cry, and it is as futile as it is old. The English-speaking race is not in a period of decadence. Even if it should meet worse reverses than any which have yet befallen it, the spirit that has built upon a world-wide empire would not be broken. Like the companions of Ulysses, that race is "one equal temper of heroic hearts, . . . strong in will to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

DEFECTS IN CALENDARS

LIKE ALL HUMAN INSTITUTIONS, THEY ARE IMPERFECT GROWTHS.

The Evolution of Our Present and Gregorian Arrangement of Times and Seasons.

Anno Domini 1899 is now history, and the eager question is, "Is this year to be or not to be the beginning of another century?" But whether the 20th century starts off with 1900 or 1901, what matters it, for are we not living under a most arbitrary and unreasonable calendar anyhow? I venture to say this because the new calendars are in, and those of the dead year will soon be buried out of sight, says a writer in the Boston Transcript. There is nothing much to regret in this substitution of "new lamps for old"; indeed, the fresh ones will be far more useful in our studies, our counting-rooms, our shops and our business marts. Besides, they are radiant with bright hopes born at the approach of A. D. 1900.

These calendars are of all shapes and sizes, and often include many colors. They can be purchased "most anywhere," but generally speaking they are given away, to serve as "ads" for banks, printing offices, apothecaries, insurance companies, etc. Thus "business" is aided by ephemerides, and as from time to time we look at them to see the correct date of our reply to a club invitation or to some discreet billet-doux, our eyes are attracted to industrial and commercial things which, while quite prosaic, are decidedly useful and well to remember. Each firm or corporation has its own kind of cardboard, and prepares its own mise en scene. A shoemaker offers a calendar made up like a baby's boot; a manufacturer of fluid food presents us with the image of a rather stylish-looking woman tasting of cocoa, or with the "presentment" of a hearty-appearing individual enjoying a glass of beer. Perfumery distinguishes itself with dainty almanacs, while soap is quite as esthetic. The printer's gift is a fine specimen of the art that will never die, and the "old and reliable" that longs to underwrite a policy which will protect property or life against this or that accident ornaments its contribution of times and seasons with pictured casualty of dreadful sort, or of some conflagration, burning volcanoes having the preference.

But why call them calendars, these almanac "mems" of the coming year, since we no longer count by kalends? I suppose it is a question of word only, and yet words are everything to many people. All of us are compelled to accept certain words whether we will or not. We are a more conservative people than we suppose ourselves to be, and in one form or other we are as unyielding as so much pig iron or a stone wall. Take this word calendar—the season of the year naturally suggests the subject—it is entirely an error to use it now; and this is one of the reasons why the very first day and the very first date in every year are being argued against and being earnestly contested by thoughtful men throughout the world.

The choice of January 1 as New Year's day is wholly arbitrary, for certainly the new year did not always begin with it. But it seems "so natural" to associate what we call the first day in January with the beginning of the new year. It never occurs to most people that it would be just as easy, if all of us were agreed, for New Year's day to come the first of September.

The present system of almanac and calendar is, so far as some countries are concerned, only a very modern system anyhow; and it is a singular proof of the reluctance with which great masses of mankind accept new ideas and better ways that, though the Romans who abolished in all the countries under their sway the system of reckoning time by lunar months and made the year begin on January 1, it was not until the year A. D. 1752 that England conformed to that system. Scotland had adopted it in 1600, the year which witnessed the birth of Oliver Cromwell; and thus arose a strange anomaly. For while both countries held that the execution of Charles I took place on the 30th of January, the year in England was 1648, but it was 1649 in Scotland.

The Julian calendar, by which, up to 1582, dates were regulated throughout Christendom, assumed the solar year to contain 365 days 6 hours; the Gregorian calendar, so called from Pope Gregory XIII, under whose auspices it was introduced, made the year consist of 365 days, 5 hours, 49 minutes, an estimate that differs only by a few seconds from the true value; and this small error, as well as the excess of the true year over the year of 365 days, was compensated for by the institution of leap years, which come, as everybody knows, every four years, except—well, that by and by. Notwithstanding the almost perfection of the calendar introduced by Julius Caesar (B. C. 46), it involved an annual error of 11 minutes, a difference which after a lapse of 1628 years, i. e., in 1582, had grown to the portentous one of 10 days, so that the vernal equinox fell on the 11th instead of the 21st of March, as it did at the time of the council of Nice, 325 years after the birth of Jesus.

If this had been allowed to go on, the time would have come when the months would no longer have coincided with the seasons. Fancy sunny June being in midwinter, and a celebration of Christmas in the dog days! So Pope Gregory XIII consulted with mathematicians and astronomers, and then he ordered that 10 days should be deducted from the year 1582, by calling what, according to the old calendar, would have been reckoned the 5th October, the 15th October, and in order to keep the years straight for all time it was further ordained that every 100th year should not be counted a leap year, excepting every fourth 100th, beginning with 2000.

This great reform was at once, or very shortly afterward, accepted by all Catholic countries, but the Protestants of that age were too much opposed to the "Romish" church to accept even a purely scientific innovation at the hands of the pope. Thus, while the Swiss Catholic cantons took to the new calendar in 1584, the Protestant cantons would have nothing to do with it until 1700, and England attested the fervor of her religious principles by clinging to the old style for 52 years longer. The last Protestant country to abandon the Julian calendar was Sweden, which followed the example of England in 1753. The Eastern or Greek church still refuses to adopt the new style, however, and owing to the year 1800 not having been considered as a leap year, the difference between the styles is really 12 days, so that Russians when they correspond, say with Americans, double date their letters; that is, if they write on the 10th of December, they put down 10-22 December.

I have said that the choice of January 1 as New Year's day was purely arbitrary. In the Middle Ages, Charlemagne decreed that New Year's should be fixed for Christmas, that is to say, the 25th of December, and the only reason which that hoary-bearded emperor had for doing so was the desire for having an important holiday open the new year. But "reformation" did not stop there, and we all know what results followed his peculiar fancy. Under the Capetian kings the feast of Easter in some parts of France replaced that of Christmas; the year 1347 began with April 1 and ended the 20th of April the year following, so that all the dates included between the 1st and 20th of April were repeated twice in the same year, during the first month and during the 13th month, which is still a source of error for chronologists. But all the French provinces did not accept this error, preferring rather their own, so that there were numerous disagreements, all bad for commerce, as well as for judicial and administrative acts. Finally, Charles IX, then 12 years of age, was induced to sign an edict in 1563 fixing the 1st of January, the date already in use at Rome and in Germany, as the beginning of the year 1564.

There are many defects in the Gregorian calendar actually in use almost anywhere, as, for instance, irregular months of 31, 30 and 28 days; the names of September, October, November and December; years constructed in such a way that all the dates of anniversaries remain fatally incomplete, inasmuch as they correspond only every seven years to the same days in the week; the holiday of the renewal of the year placed in the season the most disagreeable for that part of earth inhabited by most people, together with numerous other imperfections. There are a great many persons who would like to have these things remedied or got rid of forever, but how is it to be done, that is the question. Of course, a large number of inhabitants of this terrestrial globe will hardly admit that there is need of making any change in the present almanac. Ever so long ago the same kind of people were not willing that Julius Caesar should reform the ancient and arbitrary computation of the pontiffs from the time of Numa Pompilius, as later on there were human beings opposed to Pope Gregory's shortening the year of the 10 days that had been accumulating since the period of Caesar's reign. There are some folks who are so conservative as to be forever satisfied, even when the price of potatoes increases 50 per cent, and the toothsome codfish touches 10 cents a pound. De justibus non est disputandum. Happily, there are others, those who wish to go from good to better, and who, without becoming pessimists on that account, prefer that things should be well done rather than done imperfectly. It was one of these latter—and his name is not even known—who eight or nine years ago sent the French Astronomical Society a sum equal to $1000, and asked that learned body to offer the money as a prize for the best plan of remedying the imperfections of our calendar. For this competition some 50-odd papers were presented, and the project for which the prize was awarded remedies one of the capital irregularities (I will mention it more fully further on) by arranging for a perpetual changing of the days corresponding to the dates of the year, and this by a process which is claimed to be "eminently practical."

The irregularity of the years is produced by the fact that there is not an exact number of weeks in a single year, for there are really fifty-two weeks, plus one day. It is this supplementary day which is the cause of all our present embarrassments, and what can we do about it? One may "kill time" in some ways, but not to such an extent as that. Very well, then, if we may not suppress this odd day altogether as a fact, let us do so in appearance by calling it January 0, and having January 1 arrive the day after. This, at any rate, is what the French prize-winner proposes. According to his project New Year's day is neither the 1st of January, nor the first day of the first week in the new year; it is nothing more nor less than New Year's day, or a day to which may be given whatever name you please to call it. The year would perpetually begin on Monday, so too would the quarters, each of which would count 91 days; that is to say, two months of 30 days and one month of 31 days. The months of April, July and October are identical with that of January, and so on with the others. When usage has made us familiar with the days of a quarter, the days of the year will be known, as at the same time, the days of all the years will be also known. No one is going to deny that that would be considerable of a change, if not a desirable improvement. The dates of historical events, private or political, would constantly return the same days. Who knows, for instance, that the battle of Chickamauga, or of Mission Ridge, was fought on a Tuesday, or that the battle of Waterloo was fought on a Sunday! If you celebrate the anniversary of a birth, a marriage, or a death, you do not know on which day in the week that date will fall until you have counted up the days or have consulted the calendar. But by this project the date of the month would tell one the name of the day itself. And if this reform were adopted no doubt the Christian churches would in their turn fix their religious calendars, that is to say, the date of Easter, which actually is so mobile as to cover a space of 35 days, and which perpetual displacement plays so great a role today in civil affairs, in some countries, where so many things end on Shrove Tuesday.

This reform changes nothing in the weeks or months to which usage is now so intimately tied that it seems impossible to make any change, for they could be so easily adopted that the difference would hardly be noticed. An international commission might be appointed by the several governments of the world to decide that at the commencement of the coming century this reform would go into immediate and perpetual effect. Perhaps the Russians and the Greeks, who are actually 12 days behind us, even the Mahommedans, who still hold to the lunar year, would be disposed to profit by this circumstance and put themselves in accord with the sun. As for the date of the beginning of the year, this prize project leaves it just where it is now, because the inconveniences of a change would be greater than the advantages which might result therefrom. The revolution of our planet is a circle, and we may imagine the origin of a circle no matter where. The geometricians might object that this circle is not perfect, that in reality it is an ellipse, and perhaps they would propose to admit, for the origin of this ellipse, the point of it nearest to the solar focus; that is to say, the perihelion. But this point is not yet fixed on. It makes the circuit of a year in 21,000 years. Four thousand years before our era it came on the 21st of September, the day of the autumn equinox. In about 5000 years from now it would come round to the 21st of March. So you see even the perihelion is not a point of absolute datum. But this is true, too, of all other astronomical points.

The ancient Romans had the year begin with March 1, and simply gave to their months certain numbers of order, of which four are still in use by us. These we misapply, however, by calling the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th months by the wrong numbers. What right have we to call the ninth month of the year September, when we know very well that that word comes from the Latin septem, or seven? And our present month, the 12th in the year, why should it be called December, inasmuch as the derivation of that word is decem, which is Latin for ten!

I have already stated what the eldest son of Pepin the Short did in the way of causing each new year to commence at Christmas, as I have also referred to the action of the Capetians, with their curious double use of some 20 days in April. Next the Gregorian reform set in, the 5th of October, 1582, was called the 15th, and a great many ladies, especially those in England, were much annoyed when in 1752 it was found necessary to suppress three months so as to advance the beginning of the year from the 25th of March to the 1st of January. Finally came this new plan of eight or nine years back; and when it added that besides dividing the year into four quarters of 13 weeks each, and that under this project one is obliged to add a complimentary day, in ordinary years, and two of them in the bissextile years, in order to have each year begin always on the same day of the week, I think I shall have presented that project fairly, and as fully as is necessary at this time. It is not my intention to say whether or not it is meritorious, as that is a question which will serve for argument; but it can hardly be denied that the present calendar is the fruit of knowledge accumulated during many centuries.

Another thing, our present calendar has not only an astronominal character, but it also has a social, a moral and a religious character, and from this point of view alone it is susceptible only of a reformation that must be worthy of the word. The social importance of the almanac is prodigious, although, like that of all the products of civilization of which we make daily use, it remains unobserved to all those who do not occupy themselves with the care of disengaging the philosophy of things. The almanac, that is to say, the calendar, not only settles for us the return and duration of the season, the course of the moon, the respective length of the days and nights, the period of eclipses, in brief, a mass of astronomical phenomena the exact knowledge of which is indispensable for the perfect accomplishment of agricultural, industrial, maritime, commercial and civil operations, for, thanks to the numbering of the days and the grouping of them into years, months and weeks, it determines besides the employment of public and private time. It introduces numerical relations into the least uniform phenomena. It regularizes human intercourse—both national and international—labor, payments, business enterprise, holidays, in fact, all our everyday actions. Indeed, it may be safely asserted that all social life, peaceful or military, rest on the calendar. Moreover, it permits us to distinguish with precision, in the ensemble of time long since elapsed, the rank which every event may have occupied. It serves as the base for chronological history, and in the appreciation of the different phases of individual existence; and it delivers from all uncertainty all considerations relative to the future. Briefly the calendar is a social institution which permits us to repass, in the past, the present and in the future the successions of human events, whether they be collective or individual, for it is the primordial bond of the joint responsibility of and continuity of human kind. For the same reason the calendar is also a remarkable instrument of moralization, in this, that it so powerfully regulates personality, thought, activity, etc., and permits an individual to efficaciously contribute by his co-operation to the general or the special functions of the national and planetary life. This is why, and since the very beginning, the great conductors of human kind, priests or politicians, have recognized and attributed to the calendar eminent properties as regards the regulating of our social and moral affairs.

THE POET WITH THE HOE.

Markham's Production Won Its Way by Its Fine Rhetoric.

New York Sun.

Mr. Edwin Markham, of California, who wrote five stanzas in blank verse about Millet's "Man With a Hoe," is now tasting the sweets of easy fame. It came to him as liberty came to Virgil's shepherd, somewhat late in life, but it came easily. The illustration made the fortune of the poem at the first. Then it won its way by its own rhetoric and by its appeal to the sentimental mind of the supposed "wrongs" of labor. Suppose a Dollar Dinner address of Colonel John Brisben Walker's, put into English and versified by a clever rhetorician; or suppose Professor George D. Herron, of Iowa, uttering his sociological oracles in blank verse, and you have about the measure of Mr. Markham's poem. He has, indeed, a finer taste and imagination than his brother sociologists, but his psychology and his political economy are as false as theirs, and make his poem no true poetry, but essentially a bit of heated rhetoric.

"Tonight," said the Minneapolis Tribune last week, "Minneapolitans will hear the greatest poem of the decade discussed by the man who wrote it." Mr. Markham did read the said greatest poem of the decade to the Minneapolitans and was much affected by it; and so, we dare say, were they. In time, perhaps, they will substitute "nine days' wonder" for "greatest poem" and pass to new literary diversions. It was a taking text to a picture, but what is the value of the text? The most poetical lines in it, it seems to us, are these:

"What gulfs between him and the seraphim!
Slave of the wheel of labor, what to him
Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades?
What the long reaches of the peaks of song,
The rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose?"

It is conceivable that there is a considerable gulf even between Colonel Bryan and the Seraphim. What are Plato and the swing of Pleiades and the long reaches of the peaks of song to most of the world? Are we to pity every man who has a delicate literary cultivation, a high imagination, a knowledge of astronomy and a feeling for landscape? Most of us are slaves of the wheel of labor. Most of us lack nearly all, and many lack all, those gifts, the absence of which in a French peasant moves Mr. Markham to a burst of verse and indignation against "masters, lords and rulers in all lands."

Mr. Markham has been a schoolmaster, a noble calling, but perhaps he exaggerates the desirability of learning. Mighty little of the real work of the world is done by mooning on the peaks of song. The French peasant has an education adequate to his needs. There is no immense gap between his desires and his capacities. He is not confused by multiplicity of motive. He has strength if not fineness. His power of action is not paralyzed by dawdling among neurasthenic sensibilities and sham emotions. He eats when he is hungry, drinks when he is dry and sleeps like a log. Brother to the ox? Well, the ox is a highly respectable, useful, strong, and sensible animal, much better than an ass or an esthete, for example. The French peasant known his business. Not being a sociologist he doesn't bother his head about that of other people. He works hard, to better himself and his children. In his heart, if you could see into it through his impenetrable face, you would find, probably, a deep desire for land, more land. If this is wicked, Mr. Markham should build a rhyme of pity for the Astor family.

"Who made him dead to rapture and despair,
A thing that grieves not and that never hopes?"

Mr. Markham, not God. The French peasant, any French peasant, can grieve and hope reasonably. Rapture and despair are a little beyond him. He is not a poet, but a shrewd, level-headed peasant. His place in his family and his power over his family are greater than those of an American father. He is really the head of a small clan. He may not be excessively sympathetic. Hard in money matters, probably. But he is laboring for an object, and there are some holidays and gay little festivals on the way. Life is not all black bread to him. He may be hazy, as to the Pleiades, but he has not studied the sky for nothing. He has acquaintances among the stars and he knows the weather.

In short, he is a sufficiently accomplished out-of-door philosopher. Probably his literary knowledge doesn't extend much beyond the catechism. He is not literary, and "down all the stretch of hell to its last gulf, there is no shape more terrible than this," but he is not aware of his deficiencies. Perhaps, after all, even in the hands of men entirely small, the hoe is mightier than the pen. If our peasant could conceive the idea of a poet, he would haw-haw until the emptiness of ages left his face.

We needn't bother about Mr. Markham as he "cries protest to the Judges of the World" because a French peasant is not a poet, artist and astronomer. In such phrases as "immemorial infamies," "immedicable woes," we see that the hoe poet is promarily a hoer and cultivator of words.

Youth and Age.

Philadelphia Record.

"When a man's young he's anxious to show his knowledge," said the Manayunk Philosopher, "and when he gets older he's just as anxious to conceal his ignorance."