



A reproduction of the portrait, recently discovered at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, England, which many believe to be an authentic portrait of Christopher Marlowe at the age of 21. Used by permission of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College.

Shakespeare Thy Name Is Marlowe

By *David Rhys Williams*

David Rhys Williams



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A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and enabling them to see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.

—MAX PLANCK¹

FOREWORD

A special interest in Christopher Marlowe, the brilliant dramatist of the Elizabethan era, began for me in high school with a teacher of English who stressed the importance of Marlowe's poetic and pioneering genius. She lamented his early death at the age of 29 and stimulated in at least one of her pupils an enduring curiosity concerning the mysterious circumstances surrounding it.

This curiosity was further stimulated by a lecture given in Cleveland, Ohio, in the spring of 1923 by a distinguished American scientist who offered some evidence that Marlowe must have lived beyond the date of his alleged murder, and that either he was Shakespeare or closely cooperated with him.

Then, several years later, there were published two books, one in 1955 and the other in 1956, which greatly quickened my interest in the controversial issue; for both made plausible claims for Marlowe's authorship, not only of the works commonly attributed to him, but also of the plays and sonnets included in the First Folio of Shakespeare.

In the spring of 1959, my wife and I took a trip to England primarily to get in touch with members of the Marlowe Society, whose London Chapter I was invited to address soon after our arrival, at the gracious suggestion of Calvin Hoffman, the American poet and playwright.

Later we visited many of the shrines sacred to the

memory of Marlowe, such as the Cathedral School in Canterbury, where he came to the notice of the Archbishop; Corpus Christi College in Cambridge, where he received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees; Scadbury, the large estate in Chislehurst, where he lived for some time as the protege of Thomas Walsingham; the Anchor in Bankside, London, which replaced the original tavern where Marlowe and his fellow dramatists were accustomed to gather; and the church in Deptford which has preserved a record of his death and burial. Of course, we also visited the shrines at Stratford-on-Avon.

When we were in Canterbury, Dr. William Urry, archivist for both the Cathedral and the City, showed us a carton containing (we understood him to say) over 500 newly discovered documents concerning Marlowe, either directly or indirectly, many of which identified him as Shakespeare. I have been eagerly looking forward to the publication of a comprehensive report on these documents as Dr. Urry then planned, but we have learned since that illness has delayed the project.

Now I do not claim to be either a Marlovian or a Shakespearean expert. An expert knows his subject from "A to Z." My knowledge of my subject is primarily from "M to S," from Marlowe to Shakespeare, and it goes without saying that there are large gaps even in this knowledge. It would therefore be more accurate to claim merely a sustained interest in the mystery involved and a mounting faith that in searching for the solution, the search itself is at long last on the right scent.

DAVID RHYS WILLIAMS

Rochester, New York

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