

Shakespeare Still Lives Here

By Sixto D'Asis

THE WORLD'S best collection of Shakespeareana is housed at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C. This library, next to the British Museum, is a major research center for literary study. Its collection is not limited to Shakespearean materials; it includes almost all significant topics in the history of English civilization in the 16th and 17th centuries. This library is managed by the trustees of the Amherst College.

The Folger library was founded by Henry Clay Folger. In 1879 Folger, a poor senior at Amherst College, wandered in-

to a lecture by Ralph Emerson. The philosopher impressed the young Folger with his beautiful English and subtle intellect.

Later Folger read a speech delivered by Emerson in Boston in 1864, tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth. The lines read:

England's genius filled all
measure

Of heart and soul, of strength
and pleasure.

Gave to the mind its Emperor,
And life was larger than before:

Nor sequent centuries could
hit

Orbit and sum of Shakespeare's wit.

The men who lived with him
became

Poets, for the air was fame.
These lines so inspired Folger

that he made a thorough study of Shakespeare. When he left Amherst, he had developed a deep love for Shakespeare.

After graduation, he took a job with a New York oil-refining company. He studied law in his spare time and in 1881 he was admitted to the bar. He did not go into private practice but chose to stay with the petroleum industry. It was a wise choice because he rose to become president and later chairman of the board of the Standard Oil Company of New York.

Folger never lost his interest in Shakespeare. In 1885, shortly after his marriage to Emily Jordan, he purchased for \$1.25 a reduced facsimile of the First Folio. "Here you may see Shakespeare's plays as they were actually presented to the world," he told his wife. His wife considers that volume "the cornerstone of the Shakespeare Library."

FOLGER bought his first rare book, a copy of the Fourth Folio, at an auction in 1889. He got it for \$107.50. Later when he became a millionaire he collected Shakespeare materials with passion. Fortunately, his wife was an enthusiastic partner.

He did his collecting in complete silence. Not even the other collectors knew about his activity. In order to buy the rare

items, Folger and his wife were forced to live beyond their income. Thus even as a millionaire he lived in a modest brick row house in Brooklyn. The Folgers undertook every step of the project from ordering to classifying. Gradually Shakespearean items became scarce. Then Folger's name became known.

The British press raised a cry against this wholesale export of national treasures. Nobody saw the items, thus even the scholars were forced to join in the general uproar against Folger.

The British tried to persuade Folger to leave his collection as a Shakespeare memorial in Stratford on Avon. He refused because his ambition was "to help make the United States a center for literary study and progress."

Late in 1928, Folger quietly announced his intention to construct a library in Washington D.C. to house his collection. He chose Washington because he felt that it would be the nation's research center in the future and, besides, proximity to the Library of Congress is a decided advantage for the scholars. He bought the land and approved a plan for a 2 1/2 million-dollar building. The architect was Paul Philippe Cret.

THE CORNERSTONE of the Folger Library was laid May 28, 1930. Two weeks later Henry Clay Folger died. He never saw the library that had become his only dream. He left the library ample funds and the management was put in the hands of the trustees of Amherst College.

Folger wanted an Elizabethan building but the architect was able to convince him that such a structure would clash violently with the existing buildings in the neighborhood. A compromise was reached. The exterior of the building would be modern classic but the interior would be Elizabethan.

To give the interior more character, the effect of age was created artificially. The marble wainscoting was punctured with holes and stained with acid. The stones of the doorway were plastered in the rough. Solid bronze fixtures were treated so that they may look ancient.

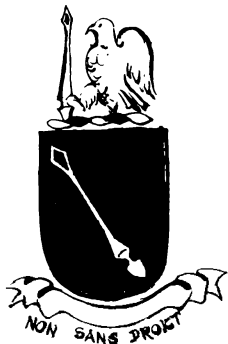
The Folger library has three main sections: the exhibition hall, the theater and the reading room. Four large air-conditioned vaults hold all the rare manuscripts. Some of the more interesting are on permanent exhibition.

The theatre is seldom used because of local fire ordinances; it does not have fire escapes. The large, two-story reading room resembles the hall of a Tudor manor. Despite its

size, however, it conveys a sense of closeness and intimacy. Over the fireplace in this room are the lines from Emerson that launched Folger on this massive enterprise.

The non-literary materials such as busts, paintings, costumes, statues, prints, furniture, tapestries, stage properties, relics and curios of the Elizabethan and Tudor eras are stored in the attic rooms. Some of them are displayed with the manuscripts.

To illustrate the wealth of the library, here are some figures: of the 240 known copies of the First Folio, Folger has 79; its nearest competitor, the British Museum, has five copies. The library has in its vaults 57 copies of the Second Folio, 25 of the third and 37



of the fourth. Of the Shakespearean plays in quarto, the Folger has the biggest collection, the most precious of which is the first edition, 1594, of **Titus Andronicus**.

In addition to the rare editions, the library has about 1,300 different editions of the collected works of Shakespeare and countless separate play publication. There are also volumes of Shakespeare once owned by George Washington, King George III, Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas Gray Shelley, Burns, Hawthorne, Emerson, Lamb, Madame de Pompadour, Napoleon III, etc.

The shelves also contain rare books by such contemporaries and predecessors of Shakespeare as Jonson, Marlowe and Bacon. The library also possesses the only known obituary of Shakespeare. It is an entry in the diary of the Rev. John Ward, vicar of Stratford. The minister wrote: "Shakespeare, Drayton and Ben Jhonson had a merry meeting and it seems

drank too hard for Shakespeare died of a feavour there contracted."

A **SIZEABLE** addition to the Folger library was the acquisition of the Harmsworth collection. This collection is supposed to have cost Sir Leicester Harmsworth more than two million dollars to assemble and yet he parted with it for less than one-tenth of its original cost because the family liked the Folger library. Sir Leicester did collect Shakespeare and drama and in nearly every other phase of Elizabethan culture—poetry, history, exploration, theology, music and printing—his collection is priceless.

The acquisition of the Harmsworth collection changed the character of the Folger—it now became a major library of 16th 17 century English civilization. The close rivals of the Folger in this field are the Bodleian Library at Oxford and the Huntington Library at California. The only library that beats them all is the British Museum.

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FLYING SAUCERS — or falling saucers — have been developed to drop fuel, water other liquids to stranded troops, explorers, hunters. Saucer-like containers, 30 in. in diameter, are made of rubber, hold five gallons, have oil-resistant liners for petroleum and rubber liners for water. Test drops of 2,000 ft. have not burst them.