



ESSAY

# Prophets Without Honor: From Galileo to Looney

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SUBMITTED December 12, 2022

ACCEPTED January 30, 2023

PUBLISHED June 30, 2023

<https://doi.org/10.31275/20233099>

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## HIGHLIGHTS

History shows that new ideas in Shakespeare studies—as with broader academia and science—often upset or threaten those whose careers depend on maintaining the status quo.

## ABSTRACT

There are many ideas in the annals of science that were once ridiculed because they deviated from established “truth,” only to be rehabilitated with the passage of time. Among them: Galileo (1564-1642), punished by the Pope with house arrest for challenging the Ptolemaic theory -- a theory taught by Aristotle -- that the sun revolves around the earth; Alfred Wegener (1880-1930), who developed the theory of the movement of continental drift (later known as tectonic plates), to explain why matching prehistoric fossils could be found in places such as Europe and South America, with no known land bridges connecting them; J. Harlan Bretz (1882-1981) who showed that only cataclysmic floods could explain erosion and land formation in the Pacific Northwest, rather than the then-current theory of gradualism and “uniformitarianism.” Senior scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey in 1927 humiliated him in public; Ignaz Semmelweis (1818-1865) observed that the incidence of “childbed fever” could be significantly reduced by the use of hand disinfectant in obstetrical clinics, c. 1847. He could not provide a medical explanation beyond his observation that maternal mortality was reduced to only 1% when hand washing with disinfectant was used. He was ridiculed for going against received medical practice and committed to an asylum by colleagues after supposedly suffering a nervous breakdown. There he was beaten by guards and died from an untreated gangrenous wound. It was not until Louis Pasteur confirmed the germ theory of disease and Joseph Lister showed the benefits of surgery using hygienic methods that his life-saving observations were credited. One can add to this list the name of J. Thomas Looney (1870-1944) who began researching the question of whether the name “Shakespeare” could be a pseudonym and, if so, who the author really was. Basing his work on attributes in the plays that might match little-known poets of the Elizabethan era with the real author, he identified Edward de Vere, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, as the man responsible in his book *Shakespeare Identified* published in 1920. Criticized almost immediately, his research has nevertheless stood the test of time, with more and more people worldwide now arguing for Oxford in a debate that continues unabated. This paper looks at these personal histories as well as the psychology of why “authorities” feel a need to immediately reject challenges to established positions.

## KEYWORDS

Shakespeare, Shakespeare Authorship Question, Shakespeare Identified Edward de Vere, J.T. Looney, Authority.



## INTRODUCTION

Why are some scientific ideas mocked when they are presented, only to be accepted after the passage of time? Why are other ideas accepted at face value? Why are some ideas, based on evidence, never accepted? What role does the personality and academic training of the original presenter play in ultimate acceptance or rejection?

Among those whose life's work fit this description are the Italian astronomer-mathematician Galileo Galilei, the Hungarian medical doctor Ignaz Semmelweis, the German climatologist-geophysicist-meteorologist and polar researcher Alfred Wegener, the American geologist J. Harlan Bretz and the British literary scholar J. Thomas Looney.

All were skeptical observers, practitioners of rigorous inquiry whose ideas were initially ridiculed by so-called experts in the field yet later, for the most part, accepted.

Why?

Perhaps there is an answer to be found in even a brief examination of the lives of these innovative thinkers:

**Galileo Galilei (1564–1642)** lived in an age when the principles of science – provable and verifiable observations that could be replicated – had not yet been established. In 1580, at the age of 16, he enrolled for a medical degree at the University of Pisa, which he did not complete, because he had discovered mathematics, a subject that was to consume his life. He worked as a tutor and as a professor, teaching both mathematics and engineering. In 1609 he heard about an invention called a *spyglass*, obtained one, and improved on it to make his own celestial discoveries. These involved motion, trajectories, comets, and views of the mountains on the moon.

A prolific author, he famously wrote in 1623 in *The Assayer* that the book of nature was written in the language of mathematics. A lovely image but not a wise decision in Italy, where the teaching of the Church – all is God's creation -- remained absolute. The Church's position was that the planets, including the sun, revolved around the stationary earth, an immutable truth articulated by Ptolemy. Galileo's book was referred to the Inquisition, which declined to prosecute.

However, in that same year, a friend, Maffeo Barberini, was elected as Pope Urban VIII, which may have given Galileo a shield against prosecution. Galileo's next work was *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, which were Ptolemaic and Copernican (with the sun at the center of the universe). Galileo's text seemed to favor the Copernican system.

This heresy proved too much for the judges of the Inquisition to ignore. This time, he had to fall to his knees and recant. He did so and was sentenced to one day in

prison and then home arrest for the remaining eight years of his life. (It is thought that his friend, the Pope, played a role in securing the sentence.)

Galileo continued his research, however, seeking verifiable information: for work on gravity, he used pulleys and sloping boards; for work on the movement of celestial bodies, he developed a refined and powerful telescope. *He sought out the evidence for his theories.*

Galileo's problem was not his scientific accuracy but what the powerful Church *thought* of his scientific conclusions. The Church had to reject his findings because they challenged their worldview. He had to state, on his knees, that he was "suspect of heresy." Not of heresy itself but of the *suspicion* of heresy. A nice Jesuitical distinction when your friend is the Pope who will let you work at home.

The Church banned the study of his work for more than 200 years until 1835. But the story wasn't over: In 1979, the Church opened an investigation into that original inquiry and declared, in 1992, that Galileo had been right all along. It was some 500 years late, but better late than never.

**Ignaz Semmelweis (1818-1865)** was born in what is today Hungary. Having recently graduated from a medical school in Vienna, in 1847, he was given an appointment as an assistant in obstetrics in a large hospital. It quickly became clear to him that women who were delivered by male physicians and male medical students had a 13-18% rate of post-delivery mortality, much higher than that of women delivered by female midwives or midwife trainees. The affected women were said to have contracted *puerperal*, or childbed, fever. The cause was unknown.

One of the things that Semmelweis noticed was that the male physicians routinely handled corpses, then moved on to delivering babies. (Refrigerated units



**Figure 1** Postage stamp of Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis, 1818–1865.

for corpses did not exist, nor did closed rooms or other sanitary environments.) By contrast, midwives were not permitted to perform any medical functions except those limited to midwifery.

Semmelweis theorized that diseases, or what today we would call “germs,” could be resident in or on the corpses and could be transferred to the male physician’s hands and then to the women giving birth. Handwashing was not practiced, and gloves were not used. Midwives did not handle corpses.

Semmelweis put into place what, in effect, was a controlled experiment, with some physicians conducting themselves as usual and others washing their hands and instruments before approaching their patients. Instances of childbed fever dropped in all patients seen by doctors who washed their hands or who did not handle corpses.

Semmelweis could not provide a medical explanation beyond his observation that maternal mortality was reduced to only 1% when hand washing with disinfectant was used. Nevertheless, his medical appointment was not renewed. He went home to Hungary and, in other medical posts, insisted on handwashing, often haranguing his superiors. He was ridiculed for going against received medical practice and committed to an asylum by colleagues after supposedly suffering a nervous breakdown. There he may have been beaten by guards and died from an untreated gangrenous wound.

It was not until Louis Pasteur confirmed the germ theory of disease in 1861 and Joseph Lister showed the benefits of surgery using hygienic methods that Semmelweis’ life-saving observations were finally credited.

**Alfred Wegener (1880-1930)** switched fields as Galileo had, leaving astronomy to work as a meteorologist. He believed deeply in first-hand observations. To study the flow of air masses, he and his brother used weather balloons and later rode in hot air balloons; in 1906, he set a record time aloft of more than 52 hours.

In 1906 Wegener made the first of four trips to Greenland, always seeking accurate measurements through weather balloons and other means. He began wondering why the edges of various continents (as depicted on printed maps -- for example, South America and Africa) seemed to fit into each other. He also saw that similar fossils and rocks could be found on both continents, although there were no known land bridges between them.

Wegener theorized that at one time, there had been a supercontinent made up of a land mass that split apart. He coined the term “Pangaea” to describe this continent. He hypothesized that there was a geological force which pushed the continents away from the poles and towards the equator. In 1912 he presented his first theory of what he called “continental drift” in a lecture at the Sencken-

berg Museum in Frankfurt am Main. His theories were largely ignored or mocked. He was not a trained geologist, and a large majority of geologists were vigorously opposed to his ideas coming from someone outside their discipline. Geologists said his theory of the *cause* of continental drift was unlikely and discounted evidence of similar fossil remains found thousands of miles apart. He died in 1930 on his fourth Greenland expedition while trying to resupply a remote camp, where temperatures often dropped to -60 degrees Celsius (-76 degrees Fahrenheit).

It was not for another 30 years, into the 1960s, with the development of powerful lasers and other measuring tools, that his theory could be accepted. Now called “plate tectonics,” it holds that the continents float on a fluid mantle bed. Wegener, ignored for so long, is now the acknowledged father of that theory.

**J. Harlan Bretz (1882 – 1981)**, trained as a geologist and with a doctorate from the University of Chicago, speculated that only cataclysmic floods could explain erosion and unusual land formations in the Pacific Northwest. Bretz had hiked in the region for years and seen with his own eyes its deep gorges and sinuous cuts in the terrain. He felt that the then-current theory of gradualism and “uniformitarianism” (in which changes occur through incremental, steady, and uninterrupted forces) could not explain what he saw. The geological establishment thought otherwise.

Bretz published papers beginning as early as 1923, arguing that massive flooding provided the energy needed to cut through rock and schist. In 1925 he dubbed the area the Spokane Floods; few were interested.

In 1927 senior scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey humiliated him at the annual meeting of the Geological Society of Washington. Opponents of Bretz claimed



Figure 2. Spokane Floods

with all the certainty of the ignorant that formations on Earth had gradually evolved and were not the result of cataclysmic events. As it happened, a government scientist at that meeting, Joseph T. Pardee, had been thinking along the same lines but had kept quiet because of his government position. They began to collaborate.

The fact was, however, that there was no conclusive proof for the theory – until 1996, when an ice dam in Iceland burst, causing considerable devastation in the valley below. The devastation was captured on film. The mechanism for creating the unusual features in the Pacific Northwest landscape was identical to Bretz and Pardee's hypothesis – a thick ice dam blocking waters in a lake finally gives way. Bretz was alive to see his theory proven and accepted.

**J. Thomas Looney (1870-1944)** had been teaching Shakespeare for many years to pre-college students in England when he decided he could no longer teach the traditional biography of William Shakespeare – a glover's son, poorly educated, who hobnobs with royalty, works as an actor, leaves London at the height of his powers and then retires to Stratford to sell grain. Looney didn't believe the standard biography and suggested that his students not believe it either.

Looney knew that London in 1600 was comprised of a hierarchical society of no more than 200,000 people. Royalty was on top, followed by nobles, then the merchant and business classes, peasants, farmers, etc. Education was spotty, and upward mobility was nearly impossible. And the Queen could be ruthless to critics. (The right-handed author of a pamphlet she didn't like had his right hand cut off.) How could this *commoner* from provincial Stratford-upon-Avon have surmounted all these obstacles to write the great canon?

In 1915 Looney began a five-year research effort to learn what he could about the author, freed from the moss and tangled ivy of history. Based on the evidence of information displayed in the plays and poems, he compiled a list of characteristics the author must have possessed: knowledge of literature, art and the law; ability to read and speak multiple common and arcane languages; wide travel experience; and knowledge of chivalry and for-royals-only sports such as falconry and jousting, among many others.

He looked at the output of all the minor poets at the time and sought to match them to his own list of required proficiencies. The only viable candidate who emerged from Looney's analysis was Edward de Vere, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, whose noble lineage dated back to 1066, and the Norman Conquest. Then Looney researched de Vere in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, where he found support for his authorship theory in de Vere's life. The

evidence included a documented and exceptional education in not only the classics but also in languages, art, and law; training in gentlemanly and chivalric pursuits; and extended travels in France and Italy. Looney felt he had his man.

The result of Looney's inquiry was the 1920 publication by Cecil Palmer in London of *'Shakespeare' Identified in Edward de Vere, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford*.<sup>1</sup> This was the first mention of de Vere in connection with the works so long attributed to the Stratford man. Criticized almost immediately, and ever since, Looney's work has, however, stood the test of time. More than one hundred years of independent research have confirmed the multiple points of convergence between de Vere's life and prominent, particular elements in the works attributed to Shakespeare.

For example: the orphaned de Vere at age 12 became the ward of William Cecil, Lord Burghley, the Queen's principal secretary (read Polonius), whose daughter Anne (read Ophelia) married de Vere (read Hamlet). De Vere also lived for over a year in Venice (more than a dozen Shakespeare plays were set in Italy), and street scenes and artwork found there were incorporated into the plays and poems. Only in the version of the Titian painting of Venus and Adonis that hung in the Doge's palace in Venice does Adonis wear a cap. That cap, or "bonnet," is actually mentioned in Shakespeare's long poem *Venus and Adonis*. Only an author who had viewed that singular painting could have described that singular and unusual detail.

Myriad additional lines supporting de Vere as the author have now been drawn by scholars in a variety of fields (most of them, interestingly, from fields outside of literature). So was the name *Shake-speare* (as it was most often spelled on the works themselves) a pseudonym?

Looney's conclusions, however, were severely attacked (his Manx name made him a particularly easy target for ridicule). That is -- recalling the examples of Galileo, Semmelweis, Wegener, and Bretz -- his work was attacked not because it was inaccurate but because it challenged received belief by so-called experts.

Traditionalists -- and especially many who were professionally connected to Stratford-upon-Avon -- asked (and continue today to ask) who is this J.T. Looney, this secondary school teacher, to be rejecting the long-accepted teachings of erudite literature professors?

In fact, Looney's meticulous research launched a worldwide movement of scholarly skeptics, people who argue for a more factually-based approach to the life of the man called Shakespeare. Looney's refreshing approach to the works has given permission for others to take a new look at what has been known for years.

Fact: Will Shakspeare (as his name was spelled) of Stratford -upon-Avon died in 1616. If this man were re-

ally the “soul of the age,” as Ben Jonson said in 1623 in the *First Folio*, why were there no eulogies, no national mourning, no immediate monuments ordered to be built, no rushing to the press of any of his works, no broadsheets published lamenting his passing? All this was done for other much lesser writers. If the Stratford man was so important, what happened here?

Fact: Many in the 16th century seem to have known even then that the authorship attribution was a fake. Scholar Bryan H. Wildenthal has compiled more than 30 separate writings dating before the Stratford man’s death that “express or indicate authorship doubts.” (Wildenthal, 2019)

Fact: The Stratford man’s own son-in-law, a physician who kept a diary of the prominent patients he treated, does not even mention him. And scholar Diana Price has shown that not a scrap of paper exists that connects him to the writing of plays or poems.<sup>2</sup>

Fact: The first tribute bust in the Stratford church shows the supposed writer with his hands on a bag of sheep’s wool-- not something most writers use for support. The bust-- perhaps of the Stratford man’s glover father -- was redone later to add a pen and make it appear more like a writer.

Indeed, the evidence list goes on and on concerning Stratford Will’s total invisibility as an *author*.

So how did the Stratford man get to become “Shakespeare”? And why? These are the real questions.

It was not until 1769 – almost 150 years after the Stratford man’s death – that the actor David Garrick decided to organize a “Shakespeare Jubilee” in Stratford-upon-Avon. It was the first such event of its kind and had the potential to make Garrick a lot of money. Carriages were hired, accommodations were secured, scenes from Shakespeare plays were presented before those attending (though no full plays were performed), and people walked around in costumes. Unfortunately, it rained heavily during the Jubilee, and mud was the principal product. (Deelman, 1964)

But it was with this unusual event that the idea of somehow sanctifying the glover’s son and, by association, the town of Stratford was born, making it an emblem of national identity, something that quickly took root in the English consciousness. In an age where Commerce and Industry were the real pillars of striving and success, Will Shakspeare of Stratford was adopted as a guy just like us – a common man battling against the restrictive powers that be, a man struggling to achieve note where he could, a regular guy anyone could have a pint with. He was everything everyone wanted to be. Just don’t let his lack of credentials get in the way.

There had certainly been other names suggested as

the real author – by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the favorites were Francis Bacon and Christopher Marlowe; in 1918, the French scholar Abel Lefranc persuasively argued for William Stanley, the sixth Earl of Derby in his volume *Sous le masque de Shakespeare*. But it was J.T. Looney’s 1920 volume that shook the ground most effectively in arguing the real Shakespeare was Edward de Vere, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, the highest-ranking nobleman in all of England.

A brilliantly-argued volume, his *Shakespeare Discovered* not only put Oxford in the public eye for the first time, but subsequent research has kept him there ever since. If only traditional literary scholars would read it, they too might well be convinced.

What questions does all this 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>-century scholarship actually answer?

### Why Would a Nobleman Like Edward De Vere Keep His Name Off the Plays and Poems?

It was the custom of the time for artistic ‘work’ by nobles to be done and published anonymously. To do otherwise was seen as *declassé*. It was also often safer since they were usually writing, sometimes critically, about members of their own class.

### Why Are There No Papers Showing De Vere as Author of the Plays?

It is believed by many that his father-in-law, William Cecil (Lord Burghley), the most powerful politician in Elizabethan England, erased him from the public record out of vengeance or spite. There are, however, business letters de Vere wrote to Burghley, written in an exceedingly fluid style echoing his extraordinary education and travels.

### Couldn’t William Shakespeare Have Traveled to Italy on His Own to Research the Plays?

Travel outside England during this period required the Queen’s permission. There is no record that Shakespeare ever applied for permission to travel or was ever granted permission. Travel was also expensive and dangerous – one had to travel with bodyguards and enough money to support a travel group. American attorney Richard Paul Roe (2011) spent more than a decade researching references to people and places found in the plays set in Italy. He traveled up highways that had once been canals; he located churches mentioned in passing, and he found buildings long thought lost. His book, *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy*, is stunning. He does not identify any specific authorial candidate, but he does make it clear that the author must have had on-site experience. De Vere lived in Italy, principally Venice, for more than a year.

## Couldn't Will of Stratford Have Just Been a Genius?

Geniuses can create, but even geniuses need to have knowledge. A genius could not read, write or speak classical Greek if he were not somehow exposed to it. Because books were not widely available to the Stratford man, even an auto-didact, a polymath with great intellectual facility, would not have been able to produce the works without real access to classics, history, art, music, languages, the law, and poetry. De Vere had wide access to innumerable books (even rare and foreign ones) as well as to private tutors. All of this is well documented. (See especially Anderson, 2005 and Ogburn, 1984.) Will of Stratford had no such access.

## Why Has All This Research Been Ignored?

Skeptics today not only have to deal with the religious nature of Bardolatry (“I believe that the Stratford man wrote Shakespeare and *belief* is enough. End of discussion”), but they also have to confront what might be called the Shakespeare Industrial Complex (SIC). The SIC is comprised of more than 50,000 books published about Shakespeare and Stratford, as well as more than 50 major Shakespeare festivals taking place around the world, staging hundreds of productions by the Bard annually. Most people feel they know enough.

As well, research in favor of almost any idea supporting the Stratford man as the author that is put forward by financially interested organizations like the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (located in Stratford-upon-Avon) or even the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. has the possibility of being financially supported by those same or similar organizations. Anyone looking into the SIC from the outside would simply not know that any question exists. That said, scholars in the field should be reading a much wider range of materials, especially those concerning the authorship. Generally, though, they do not.

Putting it another way, ‘Shakespeare’ has become a brand, and that brand has become part of not only the cultural inheritance of humanity but also the *business* of humanity. More than a decade ago, Gareth Howell, an international attorney based in Washington, D.C., who consulted for the World Bank and the United Nations, sought to define the financial extent of that brand in England alone. He found that in 2013, 817,500 people visited Stratford-upon-Avon spending some \$513 million (the town’s largest source of revenue). He also found that the Birthplace Trust’s income that year was itself some \$15 million. He noted that the Trust also had its own ongoing endowment, which was then at \$34 million.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, encouraging the idea that the name ‘Shakespeare’ was a pseudonym would challenge not only received wisdom but would also threaten the professional status and even the livelihoods of innumerable academics. It could also possibly interrupt the free flow of money within and to these established financial enterprises.

Yet accumulating evidence is on the side of the doubters, some emerging from the use of new computer tools (the most recent Oxford University Press edition of the *Works*, for example, included an entire volume on the authorship though the Stratford man was still seen as primary).

No doubt the carefully crafted Stratford myth will take decades more before being swept away by facts, facts brought to light by the pioneering work of a still barely recognized scholar like J.T. Looney. Galileo waited 500 years. Looney has some years left to catch up. But he will.

## BIOGRAPHY

**Bob Meyers** led the National Press Foundation for 20 years and expanded its topic-based outreach to thousands of American and international journalists. He was director of a journalism fellowship at the Harvard School of Public Health and worked on the Watergate investigation that was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. He is the author of two books with medical themes.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>An American edition was published by the New York firm of Duell, Sloan, and Pearce but not until 1949. In 2018, a centenary edition was edited by James A. Warren and published by Forever Press. Warren edited a new edition of the Looney book in 2019, which was published by the Cary, North Carolina company Veritas.

<sup>2</sup>Included in the volume is a chart of characteristics that could reasonably be expected of a writer in the Elizabethan period (examples: # 4 – evidence of having been paid to write; # 8 – having been personally referred to as a writer; # 10 – notice of being a writer at death). She then looked at 25 writers to see how they stacked up. Ben Jonson had evidence in each of the categories; 24 of the 25 had evidence in at least three categories. The only name that had no association with writing, with the London writing scene, or any other category was William Shakespeare. Price followed up her chart with a detailed set of references for each of the conclusions.

<sup>3</sup>Howell’s presentation of his findings was made on May 19, 2016, at the Cosmos Club in Washington, DC. For more on Howell, see <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2017/07/title-204264-en.html>.

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## ADDITIONAL REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

### More on authorship doubt:

- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/11/15/trump-fraud-claims-elections-galileo/>
- <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/galileo/>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/31/world/after-350-years-vatican-says-galileo-was-right-it-moves.html>
- <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/the-truth-about-galileo-and-his-conflict-with-the-catholic-church>

### More on Ignaz Semmelweis:

- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/03/23/ignaz-semmelweis-handwashing-coronavirus/>
- <https://qualitysafety.bmj.com/content/13/3/233>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence\\_Nightingale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence_Nightingale)

### More on Alfred Wegener:

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred\\_Wegener](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Wegener)
- <https://publish.illinois.edu/alfredwegener/continental-drift/>

<https://www.famousscientists.org/alfred-wegener/>

### More on J. Harlan Bretz:

- <https://www.earthmagazine.org/article/comment-gsw-celebrated-society-celebrates-its-1500th-meeting/>
- <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/megaflood/about.html>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J\\_Harlan\\_Bretz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J_Harlan_Bretz)

### More on Shakespeare Today:

- [https://www.goacta.org/news-item/study\\_top\\_universities\\_dropping\\_shakespeare\\_requirement/](https://www.goacta.org/news-item/study_top_universities_dropping_shakespeare_requirement/)
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### More on J. Thomas Looney:

John Thomas Looney was a teacher (or master) at an elementary school in Low Fell, Gateshead, County Durham. Assigned to teach *The Merchant of Venice* for several years in a row in the 1910s, he recounts in the preface to *Shakespeare Identified* that repeating the play “induced a peculiar sense of intimacy with the mind and disposition of its author and his outlook on life.” None of what he knew of the traditional author matched what he felt the actual author must have had – experience in travel, knowledge of business, finance, money, etc. Over time he became convinced that the problem of the authorship “has been left primarily in the hands of literary men, whereas the solution required the application of methods of research which are not, strictly speaking, literary methods.” After the publication of *Shakespeare Identified*, he co-founded in 1922 a group in England with Sir George Greenwood, The Shakespeare Fellowship, to research the subject. His work was also taken seriously in France, Germany, and latterly in the U.S. and Canada. A biography of Looney is being prepared by authorship historian and independent scholar James A. Warren.