

CORRESPONDENCE

(To the Editors of the Journal of the Institute of Actuaries)

DEAR SIRS,

The publication of the note *The Professional Name of Actuary*, by Mr M. E. Ogborn, prompts me to mention the discovery of the use of the word in an unusual connection.

In the preface, p. xvii, of an undated edition of *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, edited and annotated by Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke and published by Cassell, Petter and Galpin, there appears the passage:

That the father John Shakespeare had been meanwhile gradually rising...in the estimation of his neighbours...is evidenced by...his having been selected as actuary for the corporation (of Stratford-upon-Avon).

The word 'actuary' does not appear anywhere in the records of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon. John Shakespeare was elected Chamberlain of the Borough, and as the holder of this office was responsible for collecting various moneys, for making payments, and at the end of his term of office for drawing up a record of his receipts and payments. It seems therefore that the word 'actuary' was coined by the Cowden Clarks for the purpose of the preface of their 1874 and 1886 editions of their work in which the term appears. It does not appear in the earlier editions published in 1864 and 1869.

It is interesting to speculate why the Cowden Clarks chose the word 'actuary' in their later editions. No record appears in any earlier commentaries on Shakespeare. Were the Cowden Clarks indulging in their favourite pastime of using a fancy word rather than the historically accurate one? They were reputed never to use a plain term when a slightly picturesque one would do.

Mr Ogborn suspects that they were influenced to make the change between the 1869 and 1874 editions because the failure of the 'Albert' in 1869 and the 'European' in 1872, coupled with the passing of the Life Assurance Companies Act in 1870, may have brought the title 'actuary' before the public at that time.

Yours faithfully,
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