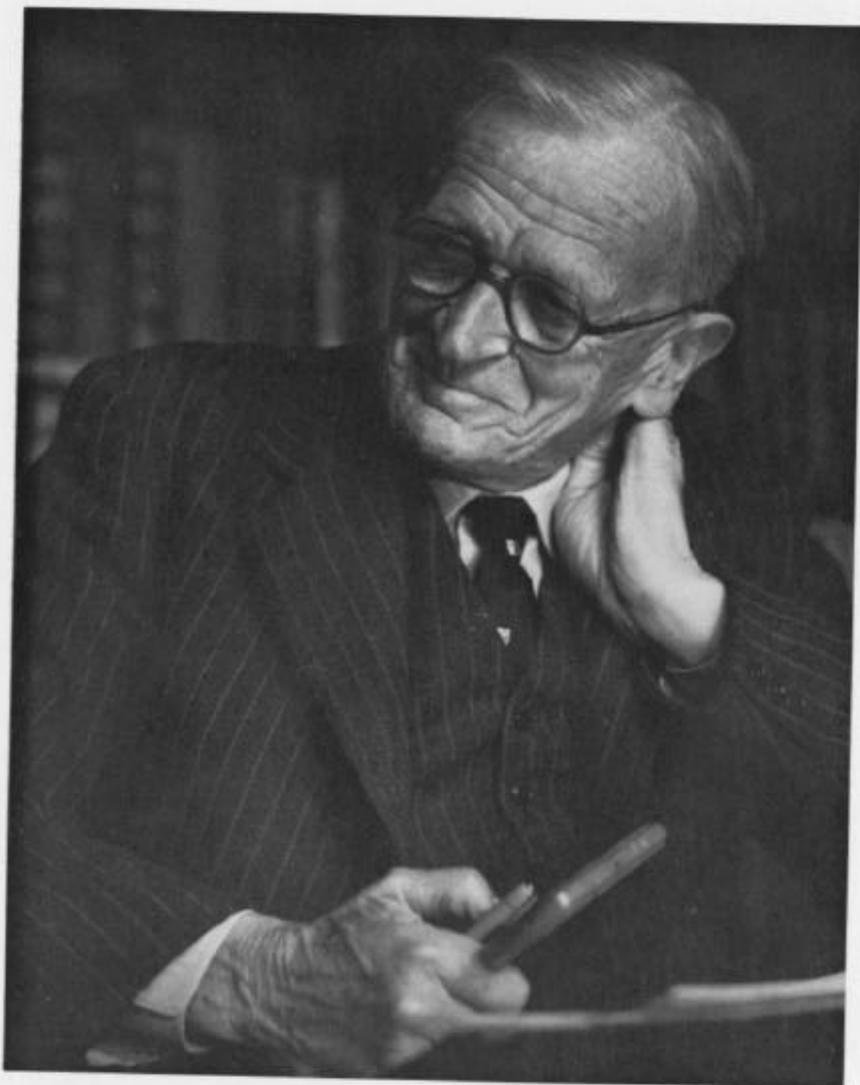


PLATE XXXIII



JOHN DOVER WILSON, C.H.

JOHN DOVER WILSON

1881-1969

IN the book of reminiscences which it amused him to be able to call *Milestones on the Dover Road*, the author tells with equally characteristic amusement how, when he was an inspector of education, his superior suddenly required him to use his second name to distinguish him from another John Wilson who was in charge of an adjoining district. But since he had already chosen to appear as an author by the name of John (or even J.) Dover Wilson, it was evidently without reluctance that he assumed the style by which he afterwards became famous. Though the brevity of scholarly notes might sometimes refer to 'Wilson', he was normally 'Dover Wilson' to a wide and varied public, while to his numerous friends in later life he was, affectionately, 'Dover'.

This was the name of his mother's family, one with a long farming history in Buckinghamshire. His Wilson ancestors included merchants, a Lord Mayor, and a bishop, but his father was an engraver and lithographer, in whose skilled craftsmanship he took a filial pride. He liked to think he inherited from him the care for minute detail essential to a bibliographer. When John was born on 13 July 1881, the eldest of six children, his father was employed at the Natural History Museum, but before he was three the family moved to Cambridge. To pass through several schools might seem an appropriate prelude to a lifelong interest in education. He began at the village school at Chesterton, went next to a private school at Kenley in Surrey, and then had a year at the Perse School in Cambridge before going on to Lancing. His upbringing was not less typically English for its combination of chance and design. At Kenley there were grandparents to give the schoolboy lodging; the head of Lancing was his uncle, who sat him down one holiday to write papers for a scholarship which he unpremeditatedly won. By his account there was something equally casual about his scholarship to Cambridge: his headmaster uncle, mishearing his choice of King's, put him down for Caius instead. That he went up to read history rather than classics was the school's doing rather than his own, and the chance of his having his home in Cambridge withheld him from the full

benefits of collegiate life. Yet it says something of his temperament that memories of Lancing were of 'five happy years of boyhood', which made Sussex his 'favourite county', and that Caius, once he had entered it, became his 'home from home'. His warm regard for his college did not extend to his uninspiring tutor, who failed to send him to the distinguished lecturers he presently discovered for himself. Men like Lowes Dickinson, Neville Figgis, G. M. Trevelyan showed him the larger perspectives of history. His human interest in the lives of individuals was deepened by an understanding of the impact on them of the political and social order; and this was something which years later would inform his study of Shakespeare's history plays and, more significantly, all his work in education.

In the Historical Tripos in 1902 and 1903 he took a second in each part. Greater distinction came through university essay prizes, such as once, before the general availability of student grants, were eagerly competed for. Ready to have a go at any subject within the range of possible reading, he had already in his second year won the Members' Prize for an essay on Byron. In 1904 he carried off the more valuable Harness Prize (then worth something in the region of £50) for an essay on Lyly, defeating among others Lytton Strachey, whose charming invitation to his unknown vanquisher to call on him began a lasting friendship. In assessing Lyly's achievement as euphuist, novelist, and playwright the winning essay was uncompromisingly historical. Its author was probably right to attribute his success more to diligence than brilliance, but Strachey, in an anonymous review of the published version, was equally right to recognize 'a thoroughly scholarly piece of work'. The candidate's grasp of the problems and his lucidity in laying them out had so impressed one of the judges, A. W. Ward, that he invited him to undertake two tricky chapters for the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, which he was just then beginning to edit. The accidents of circumstance may be also golden opportunities, and the young scholar eagerly set to work. The seemingly forbidding subjects of his chapters, 'The Marprelate Controversy' and 'The Puritan Attack upon the Stage', and especially the first, were an exhilarating challenge, which put him firmly on the road of Elizabethan literary research. Hardly ever can a prize essay competition have had a greater consequence for English scholarship.

In an attempt to identify the printers of the Marprelate tracts he was soon deep in matters of typography. But typo-

graphy led him to Robert Waldegrave, a Puritan printer, and his secret press, and theirs was a story which enabled one to watch 'an early struggle in the history of democracy'. He recognized young that big achievements demand a constant effort in the small, and came to perceive conversely that little things might hold the seeds of great. Yet when he proclaimed 'that bibliography, a study still comparatively young, has before it a future great beyond the dreams of its present handful of adherents', the words were prophetic in ways that he could hardly yet discern.

Immediately, however, Dover Wilson had to earn a living. He had in fact begun to, in 1904, as a schoolmaster at the Whitgift School at Croydon. By a coincidence that made one of its attractions this school had been founded by the very Archbishop Whitgift with whom he was concerned as a central figure in the Marprelate controversy. A fact of more far-reaching, though unforeseen, consequence was that its headmaster was S. O. Andrew; for it was Andrew's brother-in-law, Frank Pullinger, who some years later would enlist him in the cause of national education. Proximity to London infected him with the excitement of the theatre at this historic time of the Vedrenne-Barker productions at the Court; but vacations, happily, could still be spent at Cambridge, with visits to his friends at the rectory of the nearby village of Harston. His engagement to the rector's daughter, Dorothy Baldwin, led to a long and happy marriage, and in subsequent summers at Harston a son and a daughter were born.

While a thesis on 'The Marprelate Press' was being submitted, unsuccessfully, for a fellowship at Caius, destiny—or opportunity—was once more at work in Dover Wilson's life. A. W. Ward was able to recommend him for the post of English Lektor in the University of what was then called Helsingfors, where he arrived at the beginning of 1906. There it was his job to teach the too big elementary class, but in a city where a real English lektor was an event he was drawn into many other activities. He was the natural choice for an official examiner of spoken English; he was in demand for private tuition, including at one time conversation lessons with the great Mannerheim himself; his professor suggested public lectures on 'the writer most talked of just now in England', for which he inevitably chose Shaw, and he advised on sets and costumes for a local production of *Candida*. All this was exciting enough for a young man in his first university post: what made it 'a great adventure'

was that Finland, then a corner of the Russian empire, was an almost unknown country and a country on the edge of revolution. Indeed the new lektor had encountered on board ship the revolutionary, Nicholas Tchaikovsky, returning from twenty years of exile; and through him he made contact with a strange political underworld. A. W. Ward (again), as a friend of C. P. Scott, had put him in touch with the *Manchester Guardian*, which enjoyed a sensational scoop when it printed, on 23 April 1906, the first article of this 'correspondent in Russia' describing the assassination of the revolutionary leader Father Gapon, who was lured to an empty *dacha* and there hanged by former comrades for having double-crossed them. The newspaper was denounced for this cock-and-bull story but was able to vindicate itself in a further article on 14 May, and raised its correspondent's normal fee of two guineas to ten on the authority of C. P. Scott himself. Dover Wilson continued to send material to the *Guardian* throughout his three years in Finland—and then recommended as a 'sound radical' the lektor who succeeded him. Under the anagrammatic synonym of Wildover Johnson he also contributed to *The Independent Review* an account of 'The Aims and Methods of the Social Revolutionary Party in Russia', for which, in its fight against oppression, he avowed a trembling admiration. At Cambridge he had acquired an interest in 'political theory and constitution-making'; he now experienced the thrill of watching history in process. The general strike of 1905 had forced the Tsar to concede a representative assembly and Dover Wilson could boast of being in Petrograd at 'a session of the first Duma' and mingling with 'the members of that historic assembly in the lobby of the Parliament House'.

Each summer found him back in England going ahead with his research. Though this had won him no fellowship, it did something ultimately more important by bringing him into touch with A. W. Pollard. As secretary of the Bibliographical Society Pollard persuaded him to join it, and as editor of *The Library* he received an article from him in 1907 'with all the pleasure in the world'. Pollard recognized from the first that quality of mind and style which made Dover Wilson's contributions more 'alive' than the 'wooden' writing all too usual in a bibliographical journal. A further article was said to be 'good stuff, quite what *The Library* exists to print'. McKerrow, whose great edition of Nashe was then nearing completion, was naturally interested in the Marprelate discoveries and corresponded with him in Finland before they eventually met in the summer

of 1909. Others whom he got to know about this time included Greg, the other member of a famous bibliographical triumvirate, and perhaps Moore Smith, editor of the recently founded *Modern Language Review*, which published several short things of his on Elizabethan pamphleteers. When reading in the British Museum he would call on Pollard or have lunch with him and sometimes others of this circle in an Express Dairy near by.¹

The three years spent in Finland Dover Wilson afterwards looked back on as the happiest of his life. But in 1909, somewhat to Ward's dismay, he threw up his appointment before he had another to replace it. What offered itself as the reward of courage was a lectureship in English Literature at Goldsmiths' College in London. The subject was big, the students numerous, and the lecturers two; on the one hand there was teaching practice to be supervised in the London elementary schools, on the other, for the benefit of a handful of degree students, Dover Wilson was getting up Anglo-Saxon. But scholarly work was never dropped: along with more Marprelate articles and a review of Feuillerat's *Lyly*, he was preparing a couple of Malone Society Reprints. What perhaps was especially characteristic of one always ready to put experience to use was the cross-fertilization of research and teaching, the one suggesting ideas for the other. It was producing *Hamlet* with the Goldsmiths' students that first lodged some of the play's problems in his mind; while the excellent knowledge of Elizabethan pamphlets he had acquired through his work for Ward's two chapters bore fruit in an anthology initially designed for students to enable them to learn about *Life in Shakespeare's England* by reading the Elizabethans themselves. This was planned to be one of a series of anthologies with his colleague W. T. Young. It exemplifies a principle that was constant in Dover Wilson's educational work—that the ordinary mind is more easily interested in people and things than in abstractions. Sixty-nine works in all were drawn on, mostly borrowed from the London Library with Mrs. Dover Wilson copying the passages out, for accounts of how

¹ Dover Wilson's recollections in later life are not always reliable as to dates. *Milestones on the Dover Road* (pp. 154–5) describes his acquaintance with Pollard and Moore Smith some years before his British Academy obituaries of them say that he first met them. *Milestones* need not be in the wrong about Pollard, who was writing to him in 1907 in friendlier terms than one generally uses to an unknown correspondent; but it certainly antedates the first meeting with McKerrow and probably the lunches at the Express Dairy (there called an A.B.C.).

Elizabethans dressed, ate, read, amused themselves and so on. Some of the material, it has to be confessed, is but tenuously related to the Shakespeare texts it is supposed to illustrate, but the organization of it around Shakespeare's life and works was a shrewd part of the book's appeal. It soon had two reprintings and after thirty years went into paperback.

While the Shakespearean scholar the world would presently know was being thus foreshadowed, his appearance was delayed by a new turn in events. On his first holiday from Finland, through his Whitgift headmaster, he had met Frank Pullinger, then assistant to Robert Morant, the Permanent Secretary of the Board of Education, and Pullinger had imparted to him Morant's vision of the role of education in an 'industrial democracy'—which was nothing less than to restore to the manual workers what the Industrial Revolution, by creating a schism between culture and the crafts, had taken from them. Pullinger remembered the impression he had made, with the result that some half a dozen years later Dover Wilson was surprised to be offered a post as inspector of education in the Technical Branch, of which Pullinger had become chief inspector. In September 1912, at a starting salary of £400 a year, he was 'plunged into a new life' in the industrial north, 'a hitherto undreamed-of country' and one almost as strange to him as Finland itself.

The Technical Branch had in its scope all educational activities which fell outside the regular schools and universities. They included a wide variety of adult classes, and the popular abbreviation, T Branch could be jocularly explained as deriving from the meal which was the pivot of the day's routine, since doing the rounds of evening schools condemned one to perpetual high tea. Besides being in charge of one particular district, an inspector was responsible for his own special subjects throughout a much larger region, so that when Dover Wilson was appointed to the Batley district of Yorkshire he had to travel from his home in Leeds throughout the northern counties of England to inspect and advise on the teaching of English, history, and allied subjects. These were the crucial subjects, as both he and Pullinger believed, if industrial society was to be humanized. At Cambridge he had done some economic theory; now, as he sat in at the class discussions of the evening students, he learned practical economics from their revelations of their working lives. While humbly confessing that they thus educated him, he saw that the education to be offered them must try to

give an understanding of the context in which their lives were lived. When war broke out in 1914 while W.E.A. summer schools were in progress, Dover Wilson and Alfred Zimmern, finding their students all but ignorant of recent European history, planned a book to remedy this, and with three other collaborators brought out *The War and Democracy* in four months. This included a chapter on 'Russia' by a 'late lecturer in the University of Helsingfors' which drew unashamedly on personal experience. The one thing it had in common with its very different predecessor, *Life in Shakespeare's England*, was its design of presenting specialist knowledge in popular form to supply a student need.

It was in the early war years that the friendship with Pollard which had grown out of Dover Wilson's bibliographical work developed into a deep mutual affection. When in 1915 Dover Wilson lost 'the dearest of fathers' and within a month Pollard lost the second of his two sons both killed in action, Dover Wilson wrote suggesting that they had better find comfort by being father and son to one another. Pollard replied that he would 'love to have' him as a son, he made him free of his house whenever he should be in London, and in a deeply serious make-believe, lightened with many little gaieties, as when Pollard insisted on the father's privilege of paying at the theatre, they 'adopted' one another. Presently they were exchanging regular letters in which each chronicled his weekly doings. Pollard said that he now knew for the first time the joy of having an intimate who could enter into his work. Mrs. Pollard once wrote to 'John' that he had so quickened Alfred's interests that when he might have retired into his sorrow, he had become, in spite of it, happier than before. Dover Wilson on his side could years later say that Pollard's 'friendship and character' had been 'one of the chief influences' in his life.

From the correspondence with Pollard one may learn something of Dover Wilson's wartime life. There was much hard routine and constant travel, regret at having too little time at home with his wife and growing children, and prolonged uncertainty when he was neither released for military service nor granted more than temporary exemption. His state of mind can be gauged from Pollard's sympathy with his 'regret at not being in it', and his subsequent advice, 'As long as the Government thinks you more useful at home, you ought to be content'. Yet there was a medical examination in 1917, threat of a call-up a year later, and a final reprieve four months later still when the

'combers out' once again recognized the value of his educational work. For a time he doubled his inspectorship of schools with another of Munitions Area Dilution Offices, as they were called, which had the task of sorting out which munitions workers should be retained and which released for the army. The industrial experience was useful and he proved a capable administrator: proud of training some local clerks, he spoke of offering his services 'to Selfridge's after the war'. A single week in December 1917, though admittedly exceptional in totalling sixty-six and a half official hours of work, may give some idea of his activity. He left home at eight on Monday morning to spend two days in Newcastle. He first visited the Munitions Office there and next the one at Sunderland, where he found a serious matter to put right, and then went to a W.E.A. class in history at North Shields. On Tuesday he met in turn two university professors, visited another evening class—this time on Shaw in a mining village reached by half an hour's train ride and half an hour's pitch-dark walk—and got back to his hotel to find a caller who kept him up till after midnight. On Wednesday he did correspondence before taking train for Leeds, where, with no time to go home, he inspected the Munitions Office and a tutorial class near the station before going on to Sheffield, which he reached at 11.30 p.m. ready to confront its unsatisfactory Munitions Office on Thursday. A report on the Sheffield situation was written in the train to London, and consultations at two ministries took up most of the next two days. The week's interstices were filled in with appointments over lunch or tea or even breakfast, some late-night talk with his uncle and aunt at Chelsea, and a little work on *Hamlet* in the train. And such was his lively interest in it all that he felt still quite fresh when he finally got home to his 'poor wife and family' at 9.30 p.m. on Saturday.

Of Dover Wilson's views on practical education as experience was shaping them something may be gathered from inspectors' reports and more from their fuller formulation in the memorandum which he wrote on *Humanism in the Continuation School*. In English an unfailing emphasis gave the central place to written composition, not simply for the practice it afforded in the use of language, important as this was, but as a training in 'exact, sustained and consecutive thinking'. The tutor therefore should give particular attention to the choice of themes, should discuss them with the class and comment fully on the essays. An education 'adapted to the needs of citizens in an industrial demo-

cracy' should be relevant to their lives. He envisaged an early lesson in which the students might describe their jobs: far from disdaining their industrial work, they should be encouraged to consider its origin and significance. An attempt to understand the here and now would lead them into history and geography. Whereas, as he remarked in a sly aside, 'few historians are interested in the present, or, if they are, the interest leaves little mark upon their writings', Dover Wilson conceived of a history course which would 'explain the origin of modern England'. English Literature, not being a factual subject but an outlet for the imagination, would need a different sort of teaching. But it would link with history in the expansion of horizons, and again the approach must be practical in a choice of books with which the students could make contact. The teacher might have to lower his own standards to meet an immature taste. A report on a technical college advised more heroic and narrative poetry instead of its anthology of lyrics. Rather than the laborious study of a single text over many weeks, it might be better for the teacher to read a single episode—he was a strong advocate of reading aloud—the supreme aim being to sustain the student's interest so as to get him reading for himself. Always students should be encouraged to participate, and the advantages of drama for this purpose often led to a recommendation for the plays of Shakespeare. What is splendid about all this is its combination of a large vision with the practical realism of relating means to ends. 'We must try to make poetry out of spinning-mules', he said, so that work and life together could be 'significant and joyous'.

The memorandum on Continuation Schools was being written through 1918 in a state of enthusiasm when a long-cherished dream seemed about to become realized. A scheme for part-time day-schools for working adolescents was incorporated in the Education Act of 1918 and it was because Pullinger clearly regarded him as a key man in its implementation that he asked Dover Wilson to prepare this statement of how in the new kind of school the humanities should be taught. After an exciting conference on the subject in the preceding winter with colleagues of the inspectorate, he was already busy in February on a commissioned project for continuation schools in Halifax, which gave him the chance to see a model school in his mind's eye. It was fun to work out 'imaginary timetables for schools not yet in existence'. While the Act was being passed, Fisher, the President of the Board of Education, came to speak in Dover

Wilson's own Batley area, and by the turn of the year plans for schools were going ahead in many parts of the West Riding. With such signs of local fervour Dover Wilson meant 'to astonish the Fainthearts at the Board'. The schools as he foresaw them 'ought to be great places', he told Pollard. He was fully aware of the importance of what he was concerned with: 'it means determining the lines upon which the New Culture of this country is to be built up'; but the responsibility was one that he was happy to assume because he believed that 'in this business . . . I have got near the truth'. On this wave of optimism his Memorandum was delivered in February 1919, and he received many congratulations on it. Albert Mansbridge of the Workers' Educational Association thought it 'perfectly wonderful' and likely, when put into practice, to benefit the whole country 'immeasurably': officials of the Board saw that he had expressed their ideas better than they could themselves—which was not perhaps surprising in view of his more intense conviction and his first-hand knowledge of working students.

At the end of the War by his own request he was transferred to the London area with his inspector's travels henceforth to the Midlands and the West. The summer of 1919 found him building a house at Purley, where he lived for the next fifteen years. After the reception of his Memorandum he was a natural choice for membership of a committee set up in 1919 under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Newbolt to advise on the teaching of English in schools and colleges of all types. This committee occupied much of his time over the next two years, and he wrote several sections of its report, including almost all that had to do with the education of industrial workers. His hand is clearly visible in the recommended programme of beginning with what is familiar to the students and setting them off from there on a 'spiritual adventure' as literature and history are 'made actual' by being brought into touch with the 'main preoccupations' of their working lives so as to 'bridge the gulf between industry and culture'. The report, when published in 1921, had a wide acclaim and Dover Wilson was glad to think it had a wide influence in the schools. But this was no great consolation for one of the major disappointments of his life when, after Pullinger's death in 1920 and the 'Geddes axe' of 1921, the whole project of Continuation Schools was silently let die. Those who had seemed to welcome it now found it both expensive and impractical, but Dover Wilson saw in its abandonment a betrayal of the country's youth which aroused his rare indignation. If one

is ever tempted to find compensation in a deflection of his vast mental energy into Shakespearean scholarship, it is necessary to remember that Dover Wilson himself thought there were more important things than editing even Shakespeare and that one of them was national education.

One cannot doubt that whatever had happened now he would have become in any case a considerable Shakespeare scholar. The road that began with the Lyly prize essay and Ward's two chapters had brought him to Elizabethan bibliography, to Pollard, to *Life in Shakespeare's England*; and it was one that no fecundity of other interests could entirely overgrow. No reader of *What Happens in 'Hamlet'* is likely to forget how on a late-night train journey to Sunderland in November 1917 Dover Wilson read in his *Modern Language Review* an article by Greg, which argued that since Claudius does not recognize his crime when it is enacted in the dumbshow, the Ghost's whole tale of the murder must be a figment of Hamlet's brain. By the end of the journey Dover Wilson had decided the article was 'devilish ingenious but damnably wrong' and on the dark station platform he posted a card to the editor, Moore Smith, offering a rejoinder. In that moment he dates his 'conversion' to Shakespeare studies, and the effect upon his life was hardly less than the word implies. He wrote at weekends, between appointments and in trains, and in a little over a month, in a period when his dual inspectorship was at its busiest, he was sending to Pollard the draft of his rejoinder with the remark that Dorothy was relieved to get it out of the house. Investigation of the problems of the dumbshow and the ghost revealed 'dozens' of other puzzles in *Hamlet*. Problems of interpretation led inevitably to problems of the text. Before Christmas he could tell Pollard he believed he was on the way to solving the mystery of the bad quarto and was threatening an article for *The Library*, which subsequently became two. He lamented not having his own Shakespeare facsimiles, but by February he was so familiar with the bad quarto that he could work at it without the book. He was 'possessed with this Hamlet devil', he wrote to Pollard, and three weeks later, 'He haunts me still. I find myself dreaming about him at nights.' Moore Smith groaned to hear of the size of the rejoinder, but Dover Wilson already saw that he would have to place the bulk of it elsewhere. So a refutation of Greg duly appeared in *The Modern Language Review* in April 1918 and Dover Wilson's own interpretation of the play-scene, having gone the rounds of editors, came out in four articles in *The*

Athenaeum in the autumn in time to pay for the facsimiles he had succumbed to buying.

His letters to Pollard were now filling themselves with *Hamlet*. They could have had no more interested recipient nor a period more propitious. Pollard himself, having inaugurated the biggest revolution there has ever been in the study of Shakespeare's text with his *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos* in 1909, had followed this up within the last two years with *Shakespeare's Fight with the Pirates* and his introduction to the newly discovered quarto of *Richard II*. He had demonstrated that the First Folio's famous denunciation of 'stolne and surreptitious' quartos applied only to some of them, distinguished between good quartos and bad, maintained that good texts were closer to Shakespeare's manuscripts than had been generally supposed and might in some cases have been printed from his autograph, and concluded that this 'must alter our whole attitude to the extant texts'. This was just the thing to strike Dover Wilson's imagination: he leapt to the possibility of catching a sight of Shakespeare in the act of composition by deducing from an extant text what a Shakespeare manuscript was like. He hailed Pollard's work as 'a Darien peak in Shakespearean discovery' showing 'a whole new ocean of exploration undreamt of'. Beginning with *Hamlet* and moving on to other plays he began to collect unusual spellings which might conceivably be Shakespeare's and misprints which might give a clue to how Shakespeare shaped his letters. With his wife drawn in to help he was making lists of spellings all through 1918 while he began to pepper his letters to Pollard with discussions of textual cruces. At Pollard's instigation he published in the *Literary Supplement* in May the famous emendation of 'sullied' (for *solid*) flesh. One of his most brilliant discoveries came when he saw that in a celebrated speech of Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the mislined passages about the poet must have been a later addition in Shakespeare's manuscript. Some of his inferences about Shakespeare's script received delightful confirmation from the new palaeographical study of *Shakespeare's Handwriting* (1916) by Maunde Thompson, whose belief that three pages in the manuscript of *Sir Thomas More* were actually in Shakespeare's hand became for Dover Wilson 'an inspiration of incalculable force'. He pronounced Thompson 'tremendous' and through Pollard got his comments on his own work.

Within a year of his conversion on the way to Sunderland Dover Wilson had published two series of articles on the prob-

lems of *Hamlet* dealing respectively with the action and the text; he had done most of the research for what would ultimately become his article on 'Spellings and Misprints in the Second Quarto of *Hamlet*' (in *Essays and Studies*, 1924); he was spreading out to the kindred problems of other texts, and he had begun the comparative study of the three pages of *Sir Thomas More* which formed the basis of his contribution to the important collection of papers on *Shakespeare's Hand in the Play of Sir Thomas More* which Pollard brought out in 1923. At Pollard's suggestion they were preparing a joint paper for the Bibliographical Society suggesting 'What follows if some of the good Quarto editions of Shakespeare's plays were printed from his autograph manuscripts'; they were also planning for the *Literary Supplement* a series of (five) articles which would go on from Dover Wilson's work on the bad quarto of *Hamlet* to discuss other piratical texts. The future author of *The Manuscript of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet'* and *What Happens in 'Hamlet'* already had in mind a book dealing with 'the whole problem of the *Hamlet* texts', which would be subsidiary to another book reconstructing the action of the play, of which a chapter and a half were written. It is not less than extraordinary that all this went on along with a full inspector's routine in the very year in which Dover Wilson wrote the memorandum on Continuation Schools. Little wonder that he exclaimed, 'If only there were thirty-six hours in the day or one could multiply one's personality by six'.

What he owed to Pollard at this time is acknowledged in his comment on one of his *Hamlet* articles: 'I should never have got where I did but for your suggestion of a shorthand transcript, and your testing of every stage of the argument has been of enormous service, frequently driving me to fresh discoveries.' In their collaborate work the younger man, it will not be unfair to say, supplied much of the drive and passion. When he spoke on the text of *Hamlet* to a postgraduate class at King's College, A. W. Reed reported how he delighted them with 'his infectious keenness'. His daring in hypothesis was such that Pollard, to the amusement of them both, often had to urge restraint. When Pollard talked of leaving him to do the Bibliographical Society paper by himself, he got the reply, 'I shall do all sorts of mad things, I shall hoist the flag, put on full steam ahead and whoop . . .' 'It is delightful to see how you run ahead', Pollard said on one occasion. But though he might 'love' Dover Wilson's 'impetuosity', he could firmly tell him he was 'dangerous' and rebuke him (with a smile at the thought of Greg and McKerrow)

for a 'provocative' choice of adverb in wanting to announce that the three pages in the 'More' manuscript were 'unquestionably' in Shakespeare's handwriting. Yet it was Dover Wilson's pressure that made Pollard get the British Museum to put the manuscript on display.

The standing that Dover Wilson had attained as a Shakespearean within a matter of eighteen months had very practical recognition when he suddenly received a proposal that was to prove one of the major events of his life. It was of course the proposal that he should become joint editor with Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch of a New Cambridge Shakespeare. In a letter of 7 June 1919 A. R. Waller, secretary to the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, wrote, 'Sir Arthur has consented; will you? I need hardly add that you *must*.' There was never any doubt that Dover Wilson would accept. He saw well enough that it would divert him from his 'main objective', the interpretation of *Hamlet*, to which all the business of 'pirates and transcripts' was secondary and the other quartos 'sideshow'; but he knew that the experience he would gain would benefit the work on *Hamlet* when he should at length get back to it. It was in fact the opportunity and challenge to supply himself the 'clean text of the whole canon' he had been crying out for. Pollard, realistic enough to see that a 'standard text' of Shakespeare was not to be expected, yet thought Dover Wilson would 'be able to produce a provisional text . . . better than anything existing'. By the end of July terms were agreed with Cambridge and Dover Wilson, quick as ever off the mark, was already at work on *The Tempest*. During the summer he submitted to Pollard specimens of his rendering of punctuation, discussed with Quiller-Couch the rewriting of stage-directions, and was trying out textual emendations on them both. It was agreed from the beginning that Quiller-Couch would 'have first say' on format and would write the introductions while 'on textual points' deferring to his co-editor, who would supply the 'few textual and bibliographical notes' which the Cambridge Press desired. It was the 'absurd' inequality of this, as Pollard saw, that made the whole thing possible; for it meant that the edition would have the benefit of Quiller-Couch's name without restricting Dover Wilson's freedom with the text. But neither Quiller-Couch nor the Press can have had the least conception of the revolutionary edition that would come; and Dover Wilson himself, looking back ten years later, admitted that 'none of us knew what we were in for, least of all perhaps the textual editor'.

It was one of his favourite jokes in later life to recall that whereas the Press proposed seven plays a year, it was only a scruple on Quiller-Couch's part that changed the seven to six. In the event three plays appeared in 1921, with two in each of the next two years, whereafter progress settled down to about one play per year through the twenties and the comedies. The whole edition, so gaily undertaken as a task for half a dozen years, was to outlast three Cambridge secretaries and extend to over forty years of Dover Wilson's life.

In the middle of 1920, while Waller was having to resign himself to getting no volume at all that year, Quiller-Couch was imploring Dover Wilson to come and stay in Cornwall so that they could have a heart to heart about *The Tempest*, their first, and therefore model, play. They always got on famously with one another, and although each had his own province, they worked out general principles together. Dover Wilson's novel theories were normally submitted to his partner, though not invariably approved. In the very first volume Quiller-Couch insisted that the theory of revision should be put less dogmatically and not invade the notes; and in the next few years, while praising Dover Wilson's 'splendid' work, he repeatedly warned him against too many 'discoveries' and the dangers of a 'freak' edition. But where their very different temperaments united was in the 'sense of high adventure tempered by a consciousness of grave responsibility' with which they entered on their task. The words were Dover Wilson's but eagerly incorporated by Q in his General Introduction along with hints about a line-by-line 'recension of Shakespeare's text' and 'cutting Shakespeare free from the accretions' of previous editors.

Even at a glance the new edition was very different from its standard predecessors. The graceful page which the Press had had designed for it (by Bruce Rogers) was at Quiller-Couch's insistence undisfigured even by line-numbers, and the traditional act and scene divisions appeared very inconspicuously in brackets. With the readers' interests in mind the stage-directions, at the wish of both editors, though not Waller, were rewritten. As they came from Dover Wilson's pen (Quiller-Couch having consented to 'scupper' his own drafts) these 'literary' stage-directions descriptive of action, place, and gesture reflected less his textual scholarship than his enthusiasm for the living theatre; they sought to do for Shakespeare's readers what Shaw and Barrie were doing for theirs by providing them with a substitute for what spectators might have seen on stage. Similarly,

Dover Wilson's novel punctuation sought to give the effect of pauses in delivery; but here theatrical and scholarly interests coincided, for the system of dashes and dots (three for a colon, four for a full-stop) was an attempt to translate into modern terms what in the original texts was held to be a 'playhouse punctuation, directing the actors how to speak their lines'. Where, however, the new scholarship was most evident was in the Note on 'the Copy' with which each volume was provided. For, as Dover Wilson's Textual Introduction forcefully maintained, 'an editor should generally be able to discover from the printed text a good deal about the nature of the "copy" which the compositor had 'before his eyes'. And this of course would determine the editor's attitude to the printed text and hence his efforts to emend it. The importance of the New Cambridge edition was not simply, or primarily, that it became the vehicle for Dover Wilson's own textual experiments and discoveries, but that it was the first to announce a principle which has never since been challenged and the first to include, in its bibliographical investigation of the 'copy', what no edition of comparable standing would now presume to be without. It is well known that Dover Wilson had afterwards to abandon some of the inferences he made about individual texts; Quiller-Couch was the first to warn him (as early as 1921) against finding evidence of revision in every fresh play he took up. But he never sought to disguise that his conclusions were 'provisional', and the more conservative scholars who were justly sceptical of some of them did not dispute the value of his method. Greg, in a magisterial review of *The Tempest* running to no less than seventeen pages of *The Modern Language Review*, hailed this first instalment as having 'achieved a considerable measure of success in a pioneer task of no ordinary difficulty', and pronounced it 'certainly the most interesting edition of any part of the canon' that had 'appeared for a long while'.

It is true that Greg was afraid of some conflict of aims—'between producing a popular edition . . . and a work of serious scholarship'. And a quarter of a century later in what was possibly the most challenging review the edition was ever to receive Winifred Dodds (now Mrs. Nowotny) complained of 'the general unsatisfactoriness of the edition as a whole for the purposes of any one imaginable type of reader'. Such objections were, however, to some extent discounted in advance: for, as Waller was telling Dover Wilson (on 17 July 1920) months before the edition had started to appear, only 'about one in the

hundred' would buy it for the 'bibliographical learning' which would make it 'of permanent value and sought after by scholars'; yet 'by giving the ninety and nine' what they would 'pay for' it would be possible 'to satisfy the one'. It was certainly no part of Dover Wilson's wish to be esoteric and he did not shun the dangers of two stools. His combination, which Mrs. Nowotny acknowledged, of 'textual scholarship with vivid presentation' ensured that ultimately the ninety and nine themselves could not remain entirely unaware of the new textual theories and the new readings they supported. Hardly any Shakespearean editor has ever had a comparable influence upon the non-specialist public.

This was in the future. The initial impact was greatest upon the textual scholars, and through them upon the universities. Within the first decade there were undergraduate Shakespeare classes in which the name most often heard, apart from Shakespeare's own, was that of Dover Wilson. Yet in the earliest years the disappointing sales along with the slow rate of progress were a cause of some alarm at Cambridge. In June 1923 S. C. Roberts, the new secretary to the Syndics, was having to complain that *Love's Labour's Lost* had been in hand for nearly a year. But the tussle with this seventh play, the most difficult so far, is illuminating. Dover Wilson undertook, what no one previously had, the 'assembling, classification and analysis of all the relevant textual facts' without which the relation of the Folio and the Quarto could not be 'exactly and satisfactorily defined'. But not content with this—which Quiller-Couch adjudged his 'best performance', though it 'must have been the deuce of a toil'—he was holding up his partner's introduction while he attacked the topical allusions. Pollard feared he had let this play become 'an old man of the sea' and warned him that he 'must be content sometimes to leave problems unsolved'. Yet the textual editor could not resist the additional challenge to interpret. As he went on he was astonished to find how much previous editors had left to do 'merely by way of exegesis': in *All's Well that Ends Well* he believed that he had shed new light on over thirty passages, some never before annotated at all. This is a side of his work still insufficiently appreciated. That he was giving Cambridge far more than they had bargained for, as Pollard kept reminding him, was true but ambivalent, since they would have preferred a speedier productivity. He was always under pressure for the delivery of copy and his heavy alterations in proof caused perpetual concern. But as the edition established itself and Dover

Wilson's reputation grew, notwithstanding periodic franknesses as to both time and costs the Press, through the wisdom of its secretaries—Roberts and later Kingsford—gracefully accommodated itself to the editorial course.

One of the practical uses Pollard saw in the New Cambridge Shakespeare was that it would enhance Dover Wilson's qualifications for a university chair: 'I hope the New Shakespeare may bring you back to Literature and twenty weeks vacation in the year and no travelling.' This had always been Pollard's hope for him—years before in congratulating him on his inspector's appointment he had added 'on the whole'—and perhaps Dover Wilson's own hope too. While he was still in Finland he had consulted Ward about applying for a vacant chair in England, and with Pollard to keep insisting that he was 'cut out to be a great success as a Professor of Literature' the idea can never have been lost sight of. Though he enjoyed his years of 'knocking about' as an inspector, there came a time when he longed for a more settled home and social life and, as he became immersed in Shakespeare work, for more leisure to get on with it. These advantages would equally belong to a chair of Education, which was in other respects a second best. When there seemed a chance of his being offered the one at Leeds in 1918, he confided to Pollard, 'It is not what I want'; but things he had not wanted had 'always turned out well so far' and he was always one to accept what offered. With his frustration over the Continuation Schools came disillusion with the Board of Education, and he began actively to look for a chance of leaving it. In the next few years he made a number of applications and, once the New Cambridge edition was under way, for chairs of English Literature, including in 1922 the Merton chair at Oxford, for which he had the strong support of Quiller-Couch. Yet the opportunity that came was in Education after all when the chair at King's College, London fell vacant in 1924. Dover Wilson had once remarked that professors of Education were 'humbugs' and he confessed to the Principal of King's, Sir Ernest Barker, that he was not sure what they were supposed to do; but though a huge joke could be made of this and was, Barker had the good sense to see and say that he was 'eminently qualified' and most warmly encouraged him to apply. Newbolt joyfully consented to be a referee, and a few weeks later Israel Gollancz, then Professor of English at King's, was welcoming his future colleague.

One of the things he now enjoyed, apart from a less interrupted family life, was the university environment—and that in

spite of the atrociously cramped quarters, which caused him to share the room of the History professor, Hearnshaw. For a man of his temperament there was the easy fellowship of the common room, the exhilarating contact with men of diverse learning, the sense of participating in a corporate intellectual life. He readily contributed to collaborate undertakings—as when, for example, he gave a public lecture on his favourite Matthew Arnold in a series arranged by Hearnshaw on Victorian thinkers. He was glad to send his students for their necessary psychology and the principles of education to the acknowledged experts Cyril Burt and Percy Nunn at the London Day Training College, while he himself took over the history of education and instituted an original course, based on his own experience, on the working of the English educational system. Of the secondary schools, in which his students were to teach, he had, to begin with, small first-hand experience; and he confessed to feeling—as who does not?—some vagueness as to ‘principles’. But three years in a training college for elementary school teachers, a dozen as a roving inspector, and a very wide range of contact with students, teachers, and the educational pundits, had given him a great insight into the problems and processes of teaching, to which he added a passionate concern with educational ends. Whatever he may have thought about professors of education, he was the last man to undervalue teachers or their function in society. He liked to put before his students the ideal of Plato’s ‘guardians’, but he always knew and made them know that lofty aspirations need to be accompanied by a regard for practicalities. The prime essentials were the ability to handle a class and to think and communicate clearly. No part of the teaching routine was beneath his notice, but too much talk *about* teaching would end up in aridity. It was their sense of his human interest in both the teachers and the taught that created in his students an affection which was not the less for what some of them saw as the incongruity between an awesome Shakespearean reputation and a genial classroom presence.

He had looked to a professorship to give more time for his Shakespeare, but it was equally characteristic that he did not shirk his responsibilities to his professorial ‘subject’. It was partly his sense of duty, though also his loyalty to old friends and colleagues, that enabled Harold Laski to persuade him to edit *The Journal of Adult Education* for its first three years. He began it in 1927, and in the same year he organized a course of public lectures in which various people with practical experience

combined to give an account of *The Schools of England* ranging from nursery schools to the ancient universities and taking in the Army and Borstal on the way. The aim was to show the contribution which each made to the national life and how it could be improved. Not everyone could share his optimistic view—and Zimmern in a review of the published book emphatically did not—that a unified national system was beginning to be achieved; but Dover Wilson was still looking forward to ‘the next great step’, the provision of schooling for young people destined for commercial and industrial life, and this meant that he had still not abandoned faith in a ‘common culture and common aspiration’ in which all classes could participate. Still at the same time he was reviving the series of ‘Cambridge Anthologies’ he had planned with his Goldsmiths’ colleague W. T. Young fifteen years before; he himself did for it *The Poetry of the Age of Wordsworth* (to ‘supply a need’ for ‘a handy and cheap book for class use’). He also got up a series which came to be called ‘Landmarks in the History of Education’, the aim of which was not only to reprint texts not easily available but to provide expert introductions to them to bring out their significance. He quickly enlisted the enthusiasm of his friend F. A. Cavenagh, Professor of Education at Swansea, who was fertile of suggestions as well as eager to do a volume or two himself. From the middle of 1929 there was great activity of meetings and correspondence (with Cavenagh, with potential publishers and editors) and the beginning of 1931 produced the first two volumes (Newman’s *Idea of a University* by May Yardley, a member of Dover Wilson’s department, and the two *Mills On Education* by Cavenagh). Dover Wilson’s own edition of Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*, which he had begun on in October 1929 but did not find ‘at all an easy task’, eventually got to press in May 1931. He thought Arnold’s book ‘the finest apology for education in the English language’ and his edition of it, quite excellently introduced and annotated, would in itself have justified the series. Among other volumes he had in mind were one of Wordsworth, to include passages of *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* among ‘Poems on Education’, Morris’s *Hopes and Fears for Art*, and a volume devoted to Mrs. Trimmer, Mrs. Barbauld and one or two other such ‘extraordinary old women’ whom he confessed to being ‘intrigued’ by, though he was really ‘much too busy’. In fact, after five volumes had been published within two years, the series lost momentum, though I suspect that this was as much because the works that might have followed

were both less significant and less marketable as because the editor-in-chief had 'rather a number of irons in the fire just now'.

When S. C. Roberts read these words in January 1930 he is not likely to have disputed them. The biggest iron of course was the Shakespeare edition. From the first Quiller-Couch, though fully consulted and occasionally applying a brake, had actually contributed no more than the introductions (and frontispieces), and even these, as time went on, had sometimes to be pressed for. In 1925, past sixty and with failing sight, he took a hint from the Press that he might withdraw when the comedies were done. But this raised the problem of a successor and when Dover Wilson got wind of an uncongenial arrangement, he promptly intervened in defence of his interest. For five years he had—in his own words—'given all my leisure and the best of my mind' to an editorial enterprise 'which I had come to regard as my life's work'. He was prepared either to join with a literary critic of Quiller-Couch's standing or else to carry on single-handed. At his suggestion approaches were made first to Walter de la Mare and then to Lytton Strachey, who was eager to write the introductions but not to relinquish republication rights. In the upshot the Syndics adopted Dover Wilson's alternative suggestion that he should 'take over the whole thing'. This was what by now he had come to want. To be allowed to write his own introductions seemed no more than a fair reward for the work he had put in upon the text. But more than this, the edition had become for him the one big contribution he could make to literary scholarship. He saw and seized his opportunity. When a suggestion came that Quiller-Couch might after all continue, he was firm, though having to be firm could not but give him pain. Quiller-Couch, however, told him to make his mind 'quite easy': the collaboration now over had been 'great fun' and it had made them friends. It was a collaboration in which by the nature of the men and the task they had each worked on separate shares more than closely with one another; but, along with frankness and tolerance, no two so different collaborators can ever have shown a more large-hearted mutual generosity. The first play Dover Wilson did alone—and that one *Hamlet*, the centre-piece of all his work—was handsomely dedicated 'to Q' and received as handsome an acknowledgement. The one boast Q allowed himself was that he had had the good sense to recognize from the start that 'this was *your* predestined job, as it has turned out to be'. This, with all that it implied of responsibility and labour, as well as gratification,

was how Dover Wilson saw it too. In now 'taking full control' he lost none of the spirit of adventurousness, the willingness to take risks which had characterized his work from the beginning; but in his 'Retrospect' on the first thirteen volumes he claimed one important development: 'The adventure is no longer haunted by fears of immediate or ultimate disaster.' In short, confidence had increased with experience, for the less assured he became about any particular hypothesis the more certain he became of the soundness of his principle and method. The basic duty of the Shakespearean editor was to try to discover the relation between each printed text and Shakespeare's original manuscript. What Dover Wilson claimed to have done was to have presented unassailable facts about the texts for which explanations, if not *his* explanations, needed to be found.

Irons in the fire, especially when one acquires a reputation for handling them, are likely to attract others. There were few years when he had not at least one Shakespearean review in the learned journals. He gave the British Academy Shakespeare Lecture in 1929. In the same year he brought out in collaboration with Miss Yardley an edition, the first since Elizabethan times, of the English version of Ludwig Lavater's treatise *Of Ghosts and Spirits Walking by Night*. When Faber's projected a series of facsimiles of individual plays in the First Folio, it was Dover Wilson they approached to be editor and adviser; it was equally natural that Count Harry Kessler, seeking an English editor for his Cranach Press *Hamlet*, should be referred to him. About these last two undertakings a few words must be said.

For the Faber Folio Facsimiles Dover Wilson readily agreed to write textual introductions, and at his own suggestion he appended to each a list of readings in which modern editors have departed from the original. Batches of four plays appeared in 1928 and 1929, with two further plays in 1931. They were warmly welcomed by scholars—Pollard pronounced them 'extraordinarily handy' and the lists of accepted emendations 'tophole'—and they are still much used by university students. But the stir of interest in Shakespeare's text had led the publishers to overestimate the market for facsimiles and the series lapsed. When Dover Wilson broached the question of its revival in 1949, he got the inevitable answer that costs had 'risen sky-high'.

The Cranach Press invitation, for all it had other irons to compete with, was almost more than its recipient could have hoped for. *Hamlet* was still the play that haunted him; as the

comedies were taken up and focused on in turn, its problems were never out of mind. The ghost of Hamlet's father had lured him to Lavater, the work on whom was in progress when Count Harry Kessler came into his life. This German millionaire and patron of the arts had printed at his Cranach Press at Weimar a beautiful edition of *Hamlet*, in a new German translation by Hauptmann with woodcuts by Gordon Craig, and was now planning a companion *Hamlet* in English. The resultant splendid volume which appeared in 1930, adorned with Craig's woodcuts and with Shakespeare's text surrounded by the Hamlet narratives of Saxo and Belleforest, has been described as one of 'the great printing achievements of the twentieth century'. Dover Wilson's own copy with his name in the colophon is now by the terms of his will displayed in the room of his successor in the Edinburgh chair. But it was not its printing only that made Dover Wilson call it 'the finest edition of *Hamlet* in the world'. In basing its text upon the Second Quarto instead of the Folio it was at that time revolutionary, though the pre-eminence of the Quarto has not since been seriously challenged. Showing good reason to believe that it was 'printed directly from Shakespeare's manuscript', Dover Wilson followed it 'with the closest possible fidelity', merely correcting its errors and using the Folio to supply its omissions. Such an extreme procedure was in need of modification before many years were past; but Dover Wilson could in 1930 justifiably claim to have produced an edition which came 'nearer the play as Shakespeare actually wrote it than any edition yet given to the world'.

It was natural that the editor should be impatient to come at length to *Hamlet* in his regular edition. Yet Dover Wilson, never single-minded, had other competing wishes too. His work upon the comedies had made him want to write the literary introductions from which in the New Cambridge scheme he had been barred, and he got as far as signing a contract with Faber for a book. But there was still another book which had long been in his mind; and at the beginning of 1931, with the last of the comedies delivered to the printers and before embarking on the next editorial phase, he got the Cambridge Press to agree to publish a 'short life of Shakespeare'. *The Essential Shakespeare*, which appeared next year, was unashamedly subtitled 'A Biographical Adventure'; in its delineation of 'the kind of man I believe Shakespeare to have been' Dover Wilson's usual skill in drawing inferences from facts is accompanied by a more than usual willingness to let imagination run ahead. As long ago as

1918 he had told Pollard of his 'interest in linking Shakespeare on to Essex', and he was now able to see in Hamlet a dramatization of the Earl's troubled spirit and in Henry V and Achilles a model and a warning for him. This shows Dover Wilson's weaker side. Yet hardly any biographer had given a stronger sense of Shakespeare as a living artist breathing the Elizabethan air, and his enthusiasm was infectious. 'Delightful', 'stimulating', 'wonderful' were the characteristic epithets of the many congratulations, and one professorial colleague said he felt 'drenched and thrilled'. The Press had at once to be busy with a reprint and six thousand copies were sold in five months. It was Dover Wilson's first big popular success, though the one of his books which soberer admirers might perhaps most wish away.

With the copy for this book once delivered, he was ready to turn to *Hamlet*. The completion of the comedies and the withdrawal of Quiller-Couch gave the opportunity of a break from the Folio order, and after all his preparatory work on it, he wished now to reap the reward, for both himself and his public, before the edition settled down to the 'long trudge' through the histories. An invitation to give the Sanders Bibliography Lectures at Cambridge in 1932 made an occasion to go on from his Cranach edition to a more detailed survey of the textual problem; and the reprint of Lavater on Ghosts was followed by George Silver's *Paradoxes of Defence* (1933) contributed to the series of Shakespeare Association Facsimiles of his colleague G. B. Harrison. This Elizabethan pamphlet on fencing had a particular interest for him just then: the duel between Hamlet and Laertes formed the main topic of his sixteen-page introduction. In the summer of 1933 he was awarded one of the new Leverhulme Fellowships, which enabled him to take a year's leave from King's and for the first time in his life give to Shakespeare his uninterrupted attention. Working steadily seven hours a day but with a game of golf most afternoons, he found this regular life, free from academic pressures, 'a very great rest to body and mind'; and in the autumn of 1934 he could report to the Leverhulme Trustees with mutual satisfaction on his three *Hamlet* books: the New Cambridge edition of the play was in the press; *The Manuscript of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet'* was already out; and *What Happens in 'Hamlet'* was finished and ready for the printer. Thus the 'campaign'—to use his own word—which began sixteen years before 'with simultaneous attacks upon the textual and dramatic problems' was now brought, with equal simultaneity, to conclusion. *The Manuscript of Shakespeare's*

'*Hamlet*' offered an 'unusually detailed' expansion of the analysis of the 'copy' which had made his edition notable; it was a remarkable example of his conjunction of minute precision in description with boldness of hypothesis. The picturesque account of the printing of the Second Quarto by a single blundering compositor, after holding the field for twenty years, has since had to be abandoned in face of a demonstration that there were two compositors; and it is no longer possible to maintain the independence of the Folio. But the brilliant classification of the textual phenomena, the most detailed there had ever been for any Elizabethan play, is still acknowledged to be the necessary foundation for work upon the most complex textual problem in Shakespeare. In *What Happens in 'Hamlet'* a similar combination of qualities was applied to different ends: a minute scrutiny of the dialogue led to novel explanations of puzzles in the plot. Vivaciously written, the book had some of the excitement of a detective story, and it is perhaps no coincidence that it belongs to the period of the detective story's vogue. Its defect, I think, is to expect of a poetic drama a too rational plot-coherence, so that some of its explanations—as of Hamlet's treatment of Ophelia or the King's behaviour at the dumb-show—though widely accepted at the time both in the classroom and the theatre are not now easy to endorse. Yet I suppose no book on Shakespeare has been more widely read since Bradley's, has conveyed more of *Hamlet's* dramatic spell, or had a more direct influence on stage practice. And some things in its interpretation—from the dramatic effect of conflicting beliefs about ghosts to the implications of the play-murderer's being called 'nephew' to the King—have become part of permanent criticism.

Already in 1931 Dover Wilson had been made a trustee of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and a Fellow of the British Academy. With the publication of the three *Hamlet* books his Shakespearean reputation, in his own phrase, 'reached a peak'. *What Happens in 'Hamlet'*, along with *The Essential Shakespeare*, had spread his name well beyond the usual literary and academic coteries, and word of the interest the book aroused, whether it reached him in a letter from Neville Chamberlain or a conversational account of some anonymous reader, gave undisguised delight. Formal recognition came with his appointment in 1935 to the Regius Chair of Rhetoric and English Literature at Edinburgh and his becoming a Companion of Honour in 1936. His Cambridge college, Caius, made him an honorary fellow.

Now that he had at length attained to a professorship of

English Literature—and that the most ancient in the kingdom, and one in which he followed Masson, Saintsbury, and Grierson—this fulfilment of an early dream brought an innocent pride in achievement. Where others before and after him had been invited it pleased him to think he had actually applied. Yet he did not apply without considerable hesitation. Reluctance, especially on his wife's account, to leave their southern house and garden gave way to a still undiminished 'love of adventure'. Yet both fulfilment and fresh adventure were allied to something deeper. In the departure from King's he confessed to a sense of deserting the cause of education; but the official switch to Literature, by recognizing what his primary allegiance had become, set the seal on his commitment to Shakespeare.

Presently after much search his wife and he, with a little daughter of eight years old, were settled in a house on the outskirts of the village of Balerno some seven miles out of Edinburgh, and in this house, subsequently enlarged by the addition of a library, he lived for the remaining thirty years of his life. As at Purley he was what is now called a commuter, his home with its lawn and garden affording a retreat from the city and workaday life. At Balerno he became a part of the community: he was in its Home Guard during the War; on Sundays he read the lessons in the little Episcopalian church; and he made friends with many of the village people.

The much-prized tradition of the Scottish universities by which the professor himself lectured—usually three times a week—to the large first-year class was greatly to his liking. 'I look forward to participation in the Ordinary Course', he said in his inaugural lecture, 'as one of the greatest of my privileges.' It is true that he had some trepidation in having to succeed Grierson in a course ranging 'from *Beowulf* to Virginia Woolf' with very little time for preparation; he was relieved to have among his papers, from his Goldsmiths' College days, an outline history of English Literature which could supply the basic structure. It was not yet the fashion to decry the survey course nor to eschew accounts of books the student had not already read. On the contrary he saw it as a privilege to introduce a great writer to his students and would do it with that reading aloud which, from the days of his inspectorship, he had always recommended. He believed that 'a good reader may be worth a dozen critics', since the supreme aim of the teacher of literature must be to win the students to it. He would usually begin with *The Battle of Maldon*, reading passages of the Old English to convey its heroic

rhythm. As copious illustrations of the poets succeeded week by week he suspected, and indeed hoped, that the excerpts read were what the students most remembered. Two incidents will illuminate his attitude: appointing a lecturer for Anglo-Saxon, he unhesitatingly chose one of whom he was assured that though he might not publish a great deal he would excite interest in the subject; and he obtained sanction of the Principal for an innovation of assistants whose function it was to supplement the professorial lectures with the weekly discussion and the supervision of writing which he regarded as essential. Through the different phases of his career his educational philosophy did not fundamentally change. The need for clear thinking and correctness of expression, and the dependence of the second upon the first, was an untiring theme. 'I never forget the Rhetoric', he said once in referring to the title of his chair—delighting in the licence it afforded him to insist on 'a training in English composition'. It was not long before he took over that part of the first-year course himself. At Edinburgh, as before at London, he deplored 'the abject penury of the English written by university students'. After nearly twenty years of university experience he asserted that 'a large proportion of the students who knock at the doors of our British universities can neither read well and with understanding, nor express themselves on paper simply and to the point': and the reason that they could not was that the schools did not teach them, and the reason that the schools did not was that English Honours courses, which set the pattern for the schools, were 'almost wholly courses in literary criticism'. In 1943, working with and through the Edinburgh branch of the English Association, of which he was chairman, he caused representations to be made to the Scottish Advisory Council on Education, and he further led a Deputation to the Council pressing for an inquiry into the teaching of English in schools and universities. The examination system, he complained, hardly tested 'the use of the mother tongue' when students 'should be taught to create English as well as to criticize it'. I think he did not feel a conflict between the two parts of his subject; but he was clear that they were not the same, that their different aims and functions required different methods, and that the current emphasis was wrong.

Though Shakespeare necessarily kept a central place, it was not Dover Wilson's way to subordinate his students' interests to his own. Nor did he aim at founding a school of Shakespeare scholars. Yet when he discovered in his Honours class a gift for

textual work he was quick to put it to use. A particularly promising student was readily persuaded to undertake for his Ph.D. a reappraisal of the bad quartos; and it was the happy coming together of this master and this pupil that led to G. I. Duthie's book on *The Bad Quarto of 'Hamlet'* in 1941.

The hope that the Edinburgh chair would hasten on Dover Wilson's own edition proved, not perhaps surprisingly, illusory. *King John*, the first of the histories, had been finished before he left London, and *Richard II* was published in 1939. The writing of his own introductions was now matching the textual investigations with a critical scrutiny of a kind hardly attempted for the comedies, and though this inevitably slowed production, it was otherwise well justified by results. When he went on to the *Henry IV* plays he found, as with *Hamlet*, more to say than the edition could accommodate; but a renewed invitation to give the Clark Lectures at Cambridge in 1943 offered a convenient occasion and led on to *The Fortunes of Falstaff* the same year. This book, for its reappraisal of the characters of Falstaff and Prince Hal and their place in the moral structure of the drama, is one of Dover Wilson's finest critical achievements. Yet taking stock next year with *Henry IV* still unfinished, he reflected that with seventeen volumes out there were twenty still to come and that in nine years at Edinburgh he had published only one. Concluding that he must resign either his professorship or his editorship, he began casting about for possible research fellowships and a hint was dropped at Cambridge that he might be willing to retire. An unexpected letter from Lord Leverhulme (who had been reading *What Happens in 'Hamlet'* to see what the Leverhulme sponsorship had produced) brought the opportunity for correspondence with Sir Hector Hetherington, now as before chairman of the Leverhulme Trustees. With a speed and good grace on all sides not altogether typical of business negotiations it was presently arranged that Dover Wilson would have first a sabbatical term from the University of Edinburgh, next a year's Leverhulme Fellowship, and then a 'suitable endowment' of £600 a year from the Cambridge University Press for the years covering his premature retirement. It was generosity to be grateful for, but generosity that confidence in him inspired; and though it gave him what he wanted, it meant some financial sacrifice and a programme of hard work. While negotiations were in progress he suffered one of the great griefs of his life in the death of his much-loved son on the threshold of a brilliant career. But moved by a fellow-feeling with other war-stricken

fathers and the example of Pollard thirty years before, he did not regard grief as something to give way to; it stiffened resolution. Within two months, as plans for retirement went ahead, on 7 July 1944 he wrote to Greg, 'To lose one's own son immensely quickens one's sense of what matters in life, and as he was not permitted to do more than just begin his job, I intend to finish mine . . .'

So he left the University in 1945 to give his undivided energies to completing 'his life's work'. The three volumes a year which the Press reckoned on he thought 'a feasible proposition'. He never matched their hopes nor his; but in the first year he did *Henry V* and *Macbeth*, and though now in his middle sixties, he was able to reflect (in a report to the Leverhulme Trustees), 'I am now well in my stride; I have nothing to distract me; and if health is given me I ought to be able to complete the remaining seventeen volumes.'

A diary in the Edinburgh University Library, assisted by correspondence, permits a sample illustration, all that can be given here, of the editor's working life, in which plays at different stages overlapped with one another. The year 1946 began with three plays at the press and the editor busy on *Macbeth*. The text of this with a draft of the notes and glossary went off on 5 February, to be received back ten days later with an estimate of length, having crossed with the corrected proofs of *Henry V*. Apart from the *Henry V* frontispiece, *Macbeth* then had sole attention through the spring and summer: the introduction and the note on 'the Copy' were despatched on 4 July and the revised text, notes, and glossary were ready by 11 August. This allowed for a summer holiday, but on Monday 9 September work began on *Titus Andronicus*. It was interrupted in November by the galleys of *Macbeth* and in February 1947 by the revises, but on 20 March the copy went off complete, a week after *Henry V* had come out. The last proofs of *Macbeth* were corrected by 20 May and on 26 May (another Monday) *Julius Caesar* was begun.

He was keeping to his policy of enlivening history with tragedy. But for all his initial fear of their monotony, he responded to the histories with enthusiasm. His long interest in government, in the history of peoples and the Elizabethan mind, together with his native English patriotism, enabled him to appreciate Shakespeare's depiction of the corruptions of power while still sharing his sense of the heroic. His work on these plays fell in with and greatly influenced, though it hardly

caused, the revival of interest in them during and after the Second War; and it had its impact on the notable Stratford season of 1951. The *Henry VI* plays were an exception: though he attacked their many problems with his usual vigour—and made them indeed the subject of the Chichele Lectures at Oxford in 1949—it was a relief when they were done. Though he sometimes created a vogue, he could also resist one. He felt driven to reassert the older view of Shakespeare—in *Henry VI* and *Titus*—as a reviser of others' work; and in *Richard III* his critical honesty found, in what was admittedly a 'consummate' drama of its own melodramatic kind, only a faint expression of the fashionable Tudor myth.

The thoroughness of his attack was always straining against the permitted bulk of the edition. Whereas in 1945 Roberts hoped that future volumes would be kept within 224 pages, three years and four plays later the maximum had risen to 256. An arrangement seems to have grown up whereby Dover Wilson would send off a draft for an estimate of length before doing final revision. There were sometimes requests for cutting but also congratulations on abridgements made. As there had been from the twenties, there were regular protests at excessive proof-correction. A printer's comment, 'Bloody copy', may possibly elicit sympathy from some of Dover Wilson's correspondents. Above all of course the Press had to keep adjusting to a continually lengthening time-span.

With *Richard III* in 1954 the histories were completed, apart from *Henry VIII*; and the substantial raids already made on the tragedies left nine plays now outstanding. But editorial optimism was tinged with sober realism. The idea of taking a collaborator was not new. It had been in his mind at the time of his retirement and he had at hand in Duthie the obvious man to relieve him of the most textually complex plays. In 1948 Duthie had been formally appointed associate editor and in 1950 had got started on *Romeo and Juliet*; but he had by now left Edinburgh for a professorship at McGill and with the cares of a department on his head was unable to make much speed. So at the end of 1951, in his seventieth year, Dover Wilson looked round for other helpers. Overtures were made to J. C. Maxwell, who was soon at work on *Pericles* and went on to edit three other plays, receiving from Dover Wilson increasing confidence and friendship along with grateful tributes in a succession of Prefatory Notes. In the summer of 1953 Alice Walker began on *Othello*. There was also C. B. Young, who, after taking over the

stage-histories in 1945 on the death of Harold Child, had become a devoted assistant with sources, glossaries, and checking. So the single-handed editor had become captain of a team. When he took up *Coriolanus* in 1956, he saw this as the last play he would ever edit and the end of the whole project coming into sight. But it was not quite plain sailing. While roughing out notes on his own play he was receiving drafts from all three fellow-editors: once, in February 1957, the notes of Alice Walker's *Troilus and Cressida* and Maxwell's *Cymbeline* arrived on the same day. Sometimes, though not always, it would take him many days to go over his partners' work; there were little, and occasionally larger, disagreements needing postal resolution or debate. And presently Duthie fell ill with the immensely difficult *King Lear* still incomplete. So with *Coriolanus* still on his hands Dover Wilson took over the commentary of *King Lear*, worked at it for sixteen months, said it gave him more trouble than anything he had ever done before, but subsequently did not regret this because he thought it one of his best. All this lies behind the reference, in the preface, to the editing of Shakespeare as 'an endless adventure'. The very echo of the phrasing shows the spirit with which he had set out upon *The Tempest* still undaunted; but the adjectives, now that a 'high adventure' has become an 'endless' one, show that a lifetime of experience lies between. *King Lear* and *Coriolanus* both came out in 1960, the same year as Maxwell's *Cymbeline*, in the preface to which he wrote, 'It begins to look . . . as if this edition, hopefully launched as a ten-year project in 1921 . . . may reach its completion some forty years later'. Even this was not quite to be, for the last play, Maxwell's *Henry VIII*, though at press, did not appear till 1962. When at length he looked at this in print, Dover Wilson must have known what Gibbon felt when, having written the last words of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, he walked in the alley of acacias at Lausanne.

In the course of forty years, while keeping to the same principles and format, the edition had unobtrusively, though not unconsciously, changed a little of its character. Even before Quiller-Couch had gone, marginal line-numbering was introduced. The expansive stage-directions, defended in the twenties for the help they were thought to give the reader, had not worn well and grew gradually less exuberant. As time went on the editor felt less confidence in the punctuation of Folio and quartos, and perhaps still less in the system of dots by which he had sought to represent it. To the collaborators of the later years he was

apologetic about such things, in which he could not now break from pattern; to one of them he added that the punctuation was 'not as dotty as it used to be'. With their influence to support his inclination, the edition became less idiosyncratic. In other respects it seemed less idiosyncratic only because things novel in the twenties had through its example become standard editorial practice. The inevitable note on 'the Copy' continued to be important, but if there were fewer startlingly original hypotheses, this was less due to growing conservatism than to the fact that he had now others' researches to build on as well as his own. As Greg observed in a presidential address to the Bibliographical Society in 1959, Dover Wilson had 'introduced a new spirit and a new outlook' into the editing of Shakespeare, which could never be the same again.

One thing the edition never lost was the two-eyed stance disapproved of by reviewers which looked both to textual scholars and to the general public. Always an educationist—to use a term he accepted but disliked—Dover Wilson did not disdain popularization. When, back in 1919, he gave a talk to the York Historical Society on the new approach to Shakespeare's text, he was delighted by a row of high-school girls, whose interest suggested that the technicalities could be acceptable. In his British Academy Shakespeare Lecture of 1929 he said, 'Of all the reader's rights in Shakespeare, the greatest, after that of being provided with a true text, is the right of easy access.' An account for 'lay readers' of 'The New Way with Shakespeare's Texts' describing his own procedures appeared in four instalments in *Shakespeare Survey* in 1954–8. This was, he tells us, prompted by a conversation with an actor, and though himself neither actor nor producer, he enjoyed a peculiarly close relation with the theatre, always ready to instruct, but also to learn from, those who put Shakespeare on the stage. With Granville-Barker, admired from afar in the heyday of the Court theatre, he had the liveliest exchanges when they were both writing their books on *Hamlet*. Many of the succeeding generation he also counted among his friends. Olivier appeals to him for advice about the cutting of *Antony and Cleopatra* and hopes he won't disapprove of their 'architectural reconstruction'; Michael Redgrave, preparing to play Shylock, writes to see if he can help him to a copy of *The Merchant of Venice*: he spends a couple of days going through *Richard III* with Tyrone Guthrie.

At Stratford he was always a familiar figure. He had become a Life Trustee of the Birthday Trust in 1951. At the biennial

conferences of Shakespeare scholars the public which came to the open sessions would look for and get the lecture from him without which the programme would hardly have seemed complete. At discussions he was always in the front row to hear the younger men, and the imp in him which had been amused when his novel theories shocked scholarly susceptibilities could also smile at his later role of Aunt Sally. It was not, after all, one which lacked its own gratification, for as he remarked to Charles Sisson, he had been 'everyone's Aunt Sally' because he was 'the only editor since the textual revolution' who had 'exposed his head'—now that Sisson had published his *New Readings in Shakespeare* his head would 'attract some of the missiles'. And Aunt Sally was not always passive. Once after a lecturer had punctuated his address with more than usually disdainful references to 'John Dover Wilson', the bearer of the offending name rose to point out that the views quoted as his were those of thirty years ago which he did not hold to now. He was always ready to replace one hypothesis with a better and he was the best of men to disagree with because, preferring truth to victory, he did not mind being proved wrong.

For a quarter of a century he had been the world's best-known Shakespearean. To add to his honours of the thirties his later years brought him half a dozen honorary doctorates. Besides giving the Sandars, the Clark, the Chichele Lectures in their turn, he was the obvious choice for a British lecturer at the seventy-fifth anniversary celebrations of the Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft at Weimar in 1939, which led to a lecture-tour of Germany just before the last War. Directly the War was over he lectured at the Sorbonne, and there was another tour of Germany in 1953. But the travels which gave him most joy were those to South Africa, where he first went in 1949 on being chosen to attend the inauguration of the University of Natal. It was a land that had an irresistible hold upon his heart; for there his son was dead and buried, there his son's wife was carrying on the anthropological work they had begun together, there two grandsons were growing up, while to complete the African ties that circumstance had made for him, his younger daughter went to marry a missionary in Nyasaland and bring up more grandsons there. In his last twenty years he made four visits to South Africa; he came to love the austere beauty of its vast landscapes, and a country hardly less strange than the Finland of his young days became equally a part of his life.

His arrival at the age of eighty was celebrated by a dinner in

his honour while the last of Shakespeare's plays was in the press. It was also accompanied by the sorrows of old age. His wife after a long period of illness died in that year of 1961. His sight began to fail and an operation for cataract in 1963 was unsuccessful. But he was blessed with a happy second marriage—to his widowed cousin, Dr. Elizabeth Wintringham, whose care and companionship enabled him to continue in his Balerno home. These were not years of inactivity, for he still had work to finish. For one thing he had not forgotten the book on Shakespeare's comedies he had promised to Faber thirty years before: what he then had in mind for it formed the substance of lectures given at Liverpool and at Edinburgh in the thirties and these were now revised and supplemented to appear as *Shakespeare's Happy Comedies* in 1962. For another thing, though Shakespeare's plays had all been done, a complete edition had still to include his non-dramatic poems. So he settled down to the Sonnets while Maxwell took on the other Poems. Both volumes came out in 1966 after some delay in proof because Dover Wilson was by now quite blind: the copy, he said, had been delivered 'only just in time'.

There was still much he wanted to do. For no one knew better than he did that the work of the Shakespearean editor can never be perfected. As volumes of the New Cambridge came up for reprinting he might incorporate corrections or additions, but he felt the need for a thorough revision of some of the early volumes, and the perpetuation of exploded theories in paperback occasioned some dismay. Two long-cherished plans were for a one-volume Shakespeare for which his text would be revised and a comprehensive glossary. Though he had long seen that he could not now accomplish these himself, he had set other hands to work on them; but they were projects that had now to be let lapse. The chief writing of his last few years was his reminiscences, begun while the Sonnets were still in the press. These he never designed as a formal autobiography; indeed the initial title, 'A Truant Disposition', suggests better the frankly discursive recollections which suited both his relaxed mood and a blind man's reliance on dictation. The book, when it ultimately appeared as *Milestones on the Dover Road*, had been drastically reshaped for one publisher and then abridged for another, so that this most personal of all his books was in another sense the least his. What it gives, instead of the intellectual apologia some readers hoped for, is his pleasure in recalling past events with a genial humour and an unflinching sense of the dramatic. He saw

life full of little ironies as well as big adventures, unexpected twists of circumstance as well as deep-laid plans.

Its adventures were not exhausted as long as breath remained. He once told me he felt blindness a great deprivation and a cause of loneliness. But this was a record of experienced fact rather than complaint; and another day he said, 'I wonder how long I shall have; I should like to see ninety.'

What those who knew him well remember, apart from his achievement, is his warmth of personality; and if I were asked to characterize this further, I would refer to his magnanimity and zest. The first showed itself in a generosity of time and temper. Requests for advice from unknown correspondents, so often unanswered by the famous, could be sure of an interested reply. To a controversialist who was making an affront out of a difference in print he said he did not wish to quarrel because quarrelling took time—and then proceeded to take time to smooth the ruffled feelings. A critic who attacked him vigorously in print succumbed to his charm and candour when they met. When a scholar he knew well was hurt by a robustly phrased review of his, he was first surprised, then troubled—because it meant initiating an explanatory meeting to restore peace, which he did without recanting a word of the review. He would concede to a sense of grievance more than justice, but not truth, could demand. His zest was in all he did and it created an echo in others. He never seemed weary in spirit.

Some personal reminiscences may perhaps be permitted in conclusion. They are of little things, but things he would have seen a point in, which indeed is why they occurred. I first met him when an undergraduate at a scholarship interview. He quickly took charge with some unusually personal questions which, because of his obviously genuine interest, even timidity could not resent. But what I most vividly remember is his final 'You will hear from us', which, instead of the courteous dismissal which consigns one to oblivion, gave assurance that one mattered. I next met him twenty years later when I arrived for my first Shakespeare Conference and at the Stratford railway station we found ourselves sharing a porter. Since we were after all fellow-members, it seemed absurd to give no greeting; so I diffidently ventured his name. At once he was all eager attention and on hearing mine, instead of the blank look I half-expected, he gave a most welcoming smile and mentioned something I had written. From that moment we were friends. I could not guess that within another twenty years I should succeed to his chair at

Edinburgh. When I did he sent congratulations in his wife's hand and the Dover Wilsons were the first to ask us to dinner. In the summer of 1968 I broke my knee in a fall and was laid up at home forgotten and disgruntled, when one day I glanced out of the window to see Dover with his white stick tottering in at the gate being guided by his wife. 'What are you doing here?' I called out before he was in the room. 'No', he rejoined, 'what are *you* doing? We heard at the Club of your accident, so of course we came straight along.' Almost to the end his wife would drive him in to the University Club once a week for lunch. One Friday I bumped into him there, and introduced to him one of the young lecturers in the department that once had been his. All the old eagerness was in his face and voice as he said, 'If you see me in the Club, you come and speak to me. I shan't see you, but if you say your name, I shall remember you.' But this was an invitation that could never be taken up. Only a week or two later—on 15 January 1969—after a short illness, Dover was dead.

HAROLD JENKINS

I am grateful to Dover Wilson's literary executors for having lent me the typescript of an earlier and longer version of *Milestones on the Dover Road*. The principal source for this memoir, apart from his published works and my own recollections, is the collection of his papers and correspondence which he presented to the National Library of Scotland, to the staff of which I record my thanks.