

THE Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter

MAY, 1943

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EDITORIAL NOTES

Please note change of the Hon. Editor's address.

The Editor is always glad to receive information, press-cuttings, letters or short articles which may be used for the next News-Letter. Articles should not usually exceed 400 words.

On February 26 last the following notice appeared in the Obituary column of *The Times*.

"On Feb. 23, 1943, at Tunbridge Wells, Helen Mary Isabelle Douglas, O.B.E., wife of Lieut.-Colonel Montagu Douglas, C.S.I., C.I.E., Punjaub Commission (retired). No flowers by request."

Our members, on both sides of the Atlantic will join in extending their warm sympathy to our President in his loss. Mrs. Douglas was an Oxfordian, interested though critical. Col. Douglas tells the Editor that his wife always remembered with interest a committee meeting held some years ago at his flat. This was, for some of those present, the last occasion on which we had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Douglas.

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The Editor much regrets, and apologizes for, the delay in issuing this spring number of our News-Letter. Immediately upon his return from Welwyn he became ill with an attack of sciatica, with minor complications—the pain at times being very acute and persistent. Fatigue, and other circumstances, have much hindered his work. He is now better, but has been unable to leave the house for five weeks.

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Our members on both sides of the Atlantic will much regret to hear that, during the summer, Mr. J. T. Looney was seriously ill. I have no up-to-date information concerning him: but, through the kind-

ness of our member, Mr. J. W. Tierney, I got into touch with Mr. Looney's daughter, Mrs. Evelyn Bodell, who wrote to me, on October 14 last, a letter of which a part appears below.

I am glad to be able to report considerable progress, and my father is now almost where he was before the relapse. He is having the best medical attention (suffers very little and is quite cheerful), and there is every hope of an adequate recovery. He hopes that your efforts in the Oxford cause are meeting with the best success.

(signed) EVELYN BODELL.

All members will join in hoping that the author of "*Shakespeare Identified*" has already made a complete recovery.

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It is pleasant to number another Greenwood among our members. One of our latest recruits is Lieut.-Col. R. C. Greenwood, son of the late Sir George Greenwood. Our President was, I think, mainly instrumental in bringing him into the Shakespeare Fellowship.

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Mr. Wisner Barrell's article on Bilton Manor, in the December issue of the American Branch News-Letter, provides some interesting details concerning Lord Oxford's Warwickshire House, which will be new to most of our members, as they were to myself. I have known, for many years, that the Earls of Oxford, through the Trussells, had acquired several manors in that part of England, "including those of Bilton in Warwickshire . . . and Elmsthorpe in Leicestershire," as I wrote on page 258 of my "*Life-Story of Edward de Vere as William Shakespeare*"; but I did not know that the old manor-house was still

standing, nor that it is quite so adjacent to the Avon river. These details with the accompanying illustrations, are valuable in helping us to complete our picture of how and where, in all probability, *As You Like It* came to be written. Mr. Barrell has further increased our debt to him.

The Editor has permanently left Welwyn Garden City, where he has done much Shakespearean lecturing, and has returned to his home and family, at 99 Corringham Road, N.W.11. On April 27 he goes to Stratford-on-Avon, for one week, to attend the Shakespeare Festival performances there, played by a company now under the direction of Mr. Milton Rosmer, who replaces Mr. Iden Payne. The Editor will probably go to Somerset for the summer, where correspondence addressed to him, at 99 Corringham Road, will be forwarded.

The Treasurer will be glad to receive voluntary subscriptions to the funds of the Fellowship, for the current year, from any members who have not yet contributed.

"Shakespeare's Own Secret Drama"

(CHARLES WISNER BARRELL)

BY COL. W. M. DOUGLAS, C.S.I., C.I.E. (President).

Mr. Barrell has completed in the American News-Letter the story of his discoveries connected with the Sonnets, and has revealed much impressive evidence.

There are mainly two theories regarding Shakespeare's Sonnets. The one, that they unfold a romantic attachment to one youthful friend, Southampton; and, that transposition in any form would wreck the sequence and retrospective value of the whole series. The other, that they are auto-biographical reminiscences; are not restricted in scope to one friend; there is evidence of the inclusion of another youth, as also of other persons intimately connected with the Poet.

Dr. Rendall is the advocate of the former hypothesis: and, whether or not, we agree with him, the erudition and scholarly analysis contained in his "Sonnets" and "Personal Clues," as Mr. Barrell says, entitle these works to permanent recognition.

The opinion has long been current among supporters of the Oxford theory that there was a second youth, in addition to Southampton; whether a natural son, or Henry de Vere the son and heir of the author, named perhaps after Henry Southampton, or one of Royal descent. The third hypothesis has been considered and rejected by Mr. Barrell.

Mr. Percy Allen stated ("Life-Story") that Oxford and Ann Vavasour were parents of a natural child. Although Dr. Rendall did not identify the "Dark Lady"; Ann Vavasour was regarded as a likely candidate.

Mr. Barrell has now added the further important fact to the story by the discovery that the natural son of Oxford and Ann Vavasour was the distinguished Sir Edward Vere. He thus, in the opinion of the

writer, gives support to the prominent position which Ann Vavasour and her brilliant son occupied in Oxford's life and her probable identity with the "Dark Lady."

The Sonnets are admittedly obscure; and, given an hypothesis, it becomes possible to distribute Sonnets to fit it; as Dr. Rendall, Mr. Allen, Sir D. Bray, and now Mr. Barrell have demonstrated. On his general conclusions we may or may not be in agreement with Mr. Barrell; and the same may be said as to the interpretations, of some of the Sonnets. The well-known Sonnet 107 is a case in point, the interpretations of which, as Mr. Barrell admits, are many. The issue turns on the meaning of "The Mortal Moon's Eclipse"; whether applicable to the death of the Queen, or to some passing incident. Mr. Barrell dates the Sonnet 1599 and finds the solution in the temporary eclipse of the Queen's power by the popularity of the Essex-Southampton Party. Dr. Rendall prefers 1603, and gives quotations to show that "Eclipse" was accepted Elizabethan for 'Death' and that the passage refers to the death of the Queen, and subsequent release of Southampton. G. B. Harrison (orthodox) supports Dr. Rendall; but, subject to doubt as to the analogy of *Death* and *Eclipse*. His (doubtful) alternative is 1596, the date of the Queen's grand climacteric and of the victory at Cadiz. Dr. Rendall's opinion as to the meaning of "Eclipse" is impressive; but the date is less important than the agreement that this is a Southampton Sonnet.

Considering the influence in Oxford's life of Elizabeth Trentham and his son and heir by her, Henry, it is reasonable to conjecture that there are Sonnets addressed to them.

Elizabeth Trentham appeared at a critical stage, the parting of the ways in Oxford's life; as Dr. Rendall writes: "marking the surrender of public ambitions, permanent withdrawal into the seclusion of private life and pre-occupation with literary activities." These latter were strenuous. By 1603 twenty-five Plays were in existence, of which fifteen and the two Poems had been published since the year 1593. He married Elizabeth Trentham in 1591 and the son, Henry, was born in 1593. Her companionship and solicitude must have meant much to the Earl of Oxford during thirteen critical years until his death in 1604.

Some of the later Sonnets might well have been addressed to Elizabeth Trentham: and Sonnet 59, as an instance, could apply to the future Earl. The Poet looks back 500 years and compares his son with his forebears.

"Whether we are mended or whether better they." Mr. Percy Allen traces the reference to the year 1098, when Aubrey de Vere was before Antioch in the Crusades; and the de Veres adopted the Star, which then appeared, as their emblem.

This reference to their ancestral past was more probably associated with Henry, the future Earl, than with his natural son, Edward Vere.

The order may be regarded as insoluble. Sir D. Bray prefers rhyme-linked couplets, a solution

adopted in the "Temple Edition." Dr. Rendall accepts the existing order. Mr. Barrell conjectures that the "unscrupulous Thorpe" evolved an arbitrary order. This much is possible that, as the Sonnets were not for publication, the Poet did not frame any special order. They may have been kept more or less in order of composition, or haphazard. Thorpe may have published them as received, or amended the order. He may have supplied the numbers; but it is doubtful whether he had the knowledge or dexterity to evolve an order of his own. Let us however give Thorpe his due. He and Hall, with the MS. before them, knew that the author of the Sonnets was the Earl of Oxford. He used the pseudonym "Shake-speare," well aware that this was not the Stratford man's name. His reference to "our Ever Living Poet," one no longer alive, was applicable to the Earl of Oxford.

This unusual dedication seems to have been written to convey this information; and the Sonnets were so compromising that they were excluded from the Folio.

The Sonnets are the cornerstone of the Oxford Shakespeare fabric; and the author knew that he had written something immortal. The solution of the riddle was commenced by Mr. J. T. Looney, and has been continued by the late Colonel Ward, Dr. Rendall and Mr. Percy Allen.

Mr. Barrell has contributed much important evidence which goes far to establish the identity of the prominent characters.

A balanced and concise Summary of the Sonnets case would surely appeal to the literary world of America; and Mrs. Arthur Long's prediction be fulfilled, that the recognition of Shakespeare as Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, will eventually come from America.

Shakespeare's Sonnet 134

A correspondent writes:—

"The interpretations which Mr. Barrell puts on some of the sonnets do not carry conviction. To take an example which, as a lawyer, I very naturally noticed, he put a very remarkable construction on sonnet 134, as a result of interpreting the word 'statute,' in the line

The statute of thy beauty thou wilt take—
as a reference to the law relating to the mother's responsibility for the care (and right to the custody) of an illegitimate child. In fact, in this sonnet, 'statute' means a bond. In old English law there were, for example, two well known forms of bond, for certain transactions, which were called "Statute Merchant" and "Statute Staple." The whole metaphor of the sonnet is derived from, or based on, the law relating to mortgages, bonds, debts and suretyship. Whatever the sonnet does mean, it is at least clear that Mr. Barrell's interpretation is wide of the mark."

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Mr. Percy Allen is at work upon, and hopes to complete during the summer, a comprehensive study of the difficult problem of the Dark Lady and Fair

Youth of the Sonnets, as he sees it. He has been studying the subject now, at intervals, for some fifteen years; but has never before attempted a detailed review of the whole case. The Essay, or Booklet, which he has now in hand ranges over two centuries of English literature, from ca. 1575 to 1769, when Lawrence published his "*Life and Adventures of Common Sense*."

Brooke House, Hackney, Damaged

Members who may not be already aware of the fact, will be sorry to hear that Lord Oxford's mansion, Brooke House, Hackney, where he died in 1604, has been seriously damaged during a German raid. I am told by a friend who knows Hackney well, that the Elizabethan portion of the house has been almost wholly destroyed.

Our President, and Canon Rendall, have both been in correspondence with the local Authorities, with a view to preventing, if possible, the complete demolition of the historic building. Lieut.-Col. M. W. Douglas, C.S.I., sent me correspondence, two extracts from which appear below.

Town Hall, Hackney.

Sept. 2, 1942.

To Lieut.-Col. M. W. Douglas, C.S.I.,

President of the Shakespeare Fellowship.

I am advised that part of Brooke House was scheduled for demolition by the District Surveyor . . . and that the work of demolition was started, but later stopped at the request of the Architect of the London County Council.

(Signed) DUDLEY SORRELL, (Town Clerk).

To the same. County Hall,

Westminster Bridge, S.E.1.

9th September, 1942.

The building has been seriously damaged in parts, and . . . certain demolition work became necessary. In furtherance, however, of the Council's desire that all possible steps shall be taken to preserve buildings of architectural and historical interest, demolition works have been reduced to a minimum . . . and I am pleased to say that steps are now being taken to obtain the assistance of the War Damage Commission in preservation of certain portions of the building . . . I am hopeful that a substantial portion of this interesting house will thus be preserved.

(Signed) R. P. FORSHAM,

(Architect to the Council).

"Long Melford" Derived from "Mill Ford"

The following interesting letter is from our Hon. Member Mr. F. Lingard Ranson, of Lavenham.

Dear Mr. Allen, October 4, 1942.

A short time ago a friend told me that he had seen a small collection of Suffolk 17th Century Tradesmen's Tokens, which included five of Lavenham and six of Long Melford. I asked him if he would get the inscriptions on the coins for me. This he did, and vouches that they are true copies.

I know that some of the Melford coins will interest you, for they help to confirm the theory we have formed that the name of Long Melford is derived from MILL FORD. On three of the coins Melford is spelt with an E as MELL. On the remaining three the inscriptions were as follows:—

- (1) "William Clarke in *The Barbers Arms*.
(Reverse) in Long Millford—Wc. A."
- (2) "James Gilson AT *The Stag*.
(Reverse) in Long Milford Ig. R."
- (3) "Thomas Hubbart of *The Grocers Arms*
(Reverse) Long Milford Ig. R."

One of the Lavenham coins had Lavenham spelt as LAVINHAM, as below:

"Nicholas Dansie—Candle Dipper
(Reverse) in LAVINHAM."

This Nicholas Dansie lived next door to the Swan Hotel.

Anyway the above is proof that Melford was called (or spelt) "Milford" in those days....

F. LINGARD RANSON.

It will be remembered that, following Admiral Holland, several members, the Editor included, have argued that "Milford Haven," in *Cymbeline*, is undubitably, Long Melford.

Peele's Verses in *Polyhymnus* (II)

Equally striking links with Oxford-Shakespeare, in Peele's poem, are those with *As You Like It*. When Oxford left Elizabeth's court in 1589, he *did* pass from Court to cottage—the theme of the play—almost certainly to Warwickshire, where, probably, he wrote the comedy of Arden, in which Oliver and Jacques, both of whom stand for Oxford, are in turn converted, and decide to follow other "convertites" down paths of righteousness. The "cottage" in which Oxford wrote *As You Like It* may well have been Bilton Manor, which, as I stated in my "*Life-Story of Edward de Vere*," had come to the Earl through the Trussell family. By a happy coincidence, Mr. Wisner Barrell, in the latest News-Letter that has reached us from our American Branch, provides some interesting details of Bilton Manor which, happily, still stands.

The first line of stanza 2 of Peele's verses:—

And when he saddest sits in homely cell—
recalls Spensers's well-known lines in "*The Tears of the Muses*" (1591) aimed probably at Oxford as *Shakespeare*:—

But that same gentle spirit from whose pen
Large streams of honnie and sweet nectar flow . . .

Doth rather choose to sit in idle cell—
and introduces again the honey-motive already noted in stanza 2. Sir Henry Lee, as a second lover of Anne Vavasour, is indirectly linked with Oxford, in love, as well as in jousting, but I have never heard that Lee was converted in later life, nor that streams of beautiful words flowed from his pen, nor that he

could be connected, in any other way, with *As You Like It*. Peele's penultimate line:—

Goddess allow this aged man his right—
was to be echoed in *The Phœnix and the Turtle* (1601), wherein the two birds are Elizabeth and Oxford, as pictured in the head-piece of the Sonnets (1609). Those lines from *The Phœnix* are:—

So between them love did shine
That the Turtle saw his right
Flaming in the Phenix sight.

What precisely was Oxford's "right" is a question which cannot be entered upon here.

Bacon and "The Group"

Those, who support Professor Slater's inclusion of Bacon in the Shakespearean Group will welcome the Editor's reference in the last number. And the reasons may as well be stated. First, there is the fifteenth stanza in "*Lucrece*," with the capitals BaCoN, W.Sh.NaMe, and the allusion to Bacon's habit of marginal noting, in the third line. One member suggests that this sequence of capitals is "a mathematical probability." We know from Huxley that Ten monkeys, typing incessantly, would produce "the works of Shakespeare." There is, however, that Oxford Don, who explained that he had not the low cunning needed to qualify as a wrangler. What between "the monkeys" and the "Don," an impartial jury would hold this stanza to be Baconian; and the *onus* would be on the defendants to explain its position in the poem. There is also the support of Bishop Hall who told Bacon (as *Labeo*), with regard to *Venus and Adonis*, "to better write or write alone." He, and Marston, a Scholar, believed that Bacon was using "Shakespeare" as a pseudonym and was part author of *Venus and Adonis*.

Next we have the envelope in the Northumberland M.S. on which the plays *Richard II* and *III* are entered with words, "Bacon is Shakespeare" written in various places. The Plays were not in the envelope, for the reason that the period was that of the publication, anonymously in 1597, and by "Shakespeare" in 1598. These plays, according to Robertson, and other experts, show traces of Marlowe's composition. There is no direct evidence that Bacon was the author: but it is possible that he collaborated with the Earl of Oxford, and Marlowe.

Then again there are the Extracts in *Winter's Tale* referring to Perdita's Garden; and, as Greenwood points out, taken directly from Bacon's "*Essay on Gardens*," not published until 1625. The suggestion is that *Winter's Tale* was an unfinished Oxford Play, written originally in 1584, and finished by Bacon. The Play was acted in 1611, but was first printed in the Folio of 1623.

Henry VIII, according to Greenwood and Spedding, was not a Shakespearean Play; but, all agree. Chambers included, that Fletcher's co-operation is evident. It is possible that he collaborated with Bacon. Professor Slater's inclusion of Bacon in the Group would seem to be justified..

LABEO.