

# THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP

## NEWS-LETTER

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### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Shakespeare Fellowship was held at the Florence Restaurant on Thursday, October 14th, 1937. About fifteen members were present.

After the minutes of the last meeting had been read, passed, and signed by the President, the honorary secretary presented the Balance Sheet, showing a credit balance of £18 13s. 9d., which was adopted by the meeting. The membership for the year had risen from 78 to 86. The president (Col. Douglas) and the hon. secretary (Capt. Ward) then vacated their offices, and were unanimously re-elected. A vote of thanks was then passed by the meeting to Mr. F. Lingard Ranson for the splendid way in which he has been arousing local interest in the "Oxford country," and for having secured a "Shakespearean page," under his editorship, in the "East Anglian Magazine."

After the meeting a discussion took place, at which about forty members and their friends were present. The subject was: "The present state of the Shakespeare controversy." Mr Percy Allen, who spoke first, gave us the welcome news that his surgeon had given him an optimistic report about his eye, the condition of which, until lately, has caused much anxiety. He went on to say that, for the first time, editors of responsible periodicals both in this country and America were asking us to send them articles. This was quite a new departure, because hitherto the anti-Stratfordian and Oxfordian cases had been almost entirely tabooed by the press. He referred in particular to the friendly letter from Mr E. P. Ray, editor of "The Shakespeare Pictorial," to the honorary secretary, in which he said: "I would like you to assure your members that I value the cordial relationship which existed between you and me during the past six years." It is hoped that arrangements will soon be made to enable us to resume our page in the "Shakespeare Pictorial" at least quarterly, or as our finances permit. Mr Allen also said that the editor of "Reading and Collecting," a literary magazine published in Chicago, which had recently published an article by one of our members, Mr George Frisbee, had expressed

his interest in the Oxfordian case, and had asked for an article which he (Mr Allen) had sent. For this we are indebted to Mr Frisbee for having so successfully aroused the editor's interest. And he spoke in appreciative terms of the work of Mr Ranson, who is now editing the "Shakespearean page" in the "East Anglian Magazine." Incidentally, since the first article by Mr Ranson appeared in this magazine about six months ago its circulation has doubled; and Mr Ranson received no fewer than four hundred letters from East Anglians as a result of his article!

Col. Douglas, who spoke next, rejoiced to hear that Mr Allen had had a satisfactory report about his eye. He emphasized the importance of Mr Ranson's work for the cause in East Anglia, and Mr Frisbee's similar work in America. He suggested that we should, ~~too~~, present copies of some of our books to the Public Library at Ipswich (where the "East Anglian Magazine" is published) in view of the local interest that has now been aroused there. The meeting heartily agreed, and the matter is being taken up by the honorary secretary.

The Rev. R. Flynn, Vicar of Belchamp St Paul's, described the Elizabethan pageant that he had recently organized in his parish. An account of this pageant appears elsewhere in this "News-Letter." Mr Flynn reminded us that in the Parish Register of his church, there is the record of the marriage of John de Vere, sixteenth Earl of Oxford, to Margery Golding in 1548, which resulted in the birth of Edward de Vere in 1550. Margery Golding was the sister of Arthur Golding, the translator of Ovid, a work which is admitted by all authorities to have influenced "Shakespeare."

Mr Ernest Allen also spoke, and he mentioned that, when recently acting the part of Sir Andrew Aguecheek in "Twelfth Night," for the Richmond Amateur Dramatic Society, he was struck by the similarity of style and design between Maria's forged letter in the play, and the "Bedingfield Letter" (printed in full by Mr Looney in "The Poems of Edward de Vere") which Lord Oxford wrote to his friend Thomas Bedingfield in 1573.

After the conclusion of the Discussion members and their friends were entertained to tea by Messrs Percy and Ernest Allen, and a most enjoyable reunion took place.

#### NEWS FROM CANADA

A recent issue of the "Toronto Globe and Mail" contained an admirable article by one of Canada's leading journalists and publicists, Mr J. V. McAree. The article, entitled "Another

claimant for Poet's crown," is so good that it is reproduced in full below:

That Bacon wrote the plays ascribed to Shakespeare is common knowledge, but it is perhaps not so well known that several other Elizabethans have had claims put forward on their behalf. The reason is plain. Many a student of Shakespeare has, in the words of Emerson, been unable to "marry the man's vulgar and profane life to his verses," and, concluding that Will of Stratford was not the the author of the immortal plays, has searched among his contemporaries for a more probable source. For it can be said with certainty that Will of Stratford was at one time a butcher's apprentice, and that his father was a butcher, however more important a meaning the title may have had then than now; that in later life he was a maltster, moneylender, and land speculator. There is no record that he had any formal education, though this has been assumed, or that he had any of the broadening advantages of foreign travel, though this, too, has been taken for granted. He left behind him not a book or manuscript, not a single sentence. In his handwriting all that survives are six wretchedly scrawled signatures spelled in four different ways. It is indeed difficult to match what we know of the man with the Shakespeare plays, or the doggerel invoking a curse on any one who moved his bones, with a hundred sublime passages in the plays.

Among those for whom claims have been put forward is Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford. To Charles Wisner Barrell, writing a few months ago in the Saturday Review of Literature, and probably to hundreds of others, the case for Lord Oxford seems complete and irrefutable. It rests almost entirely upon the scholarship of J. Thomas Looney, a retired schoolmaster of Gateshead-on-Tyne. Having taught classes in Shakespeare for many years, Mr Looney became less and less satisfied with the orthodox explanation of the plays, and then at the age of forty-eight set himself the task of finding a rational explanation of the mystery which had puzzled so many. After two years' research he published in 1920 his findings. The fact that he had rather a comical name like Uncle Proddgers or Muddkins did him no good. Flippant reviewers fastened upon his name rather than upon the contents of his book for comment, but there seems to be

little doubt that he had amassed an array of facts not so easily to be laughed off.

In the first place there can be no possible doubt that Oxford had the scholarship, the acquaintance of life at court, the reading and the travel which would seem to have been essential in the man who wrote the plays. He was, moreover, a trained author, and there are many contemporary references which show him to have been regarded as the chief writer, particularly in comedy, of his time. Here is a very significant one delivered in Latin by Dr Gabriel Harvey when he was given an honorary degree at Oxford. Translated, it runs, in part: "For a long time past Phoebus Apollo has cultivated thy mind in the arts. English poetical measures have been sung by thee long enough . . . thou hast drunk deep draughts not only of the Muses of France and Italy, but hast learned the manners of many men, and the arts of foreign countries . . . O thou hero worthy of renown, throw away the insignificant pen, throw away bloodless books and writings that serve no useful purpose; now must the sword be brought into play; now is the time for thee to sharpen the spear and to handle great engines of war . . . Minerva strengthens thy right hand . . . Thine eyes flash fire, thy countenance shakes a spear . . ."

It is worth noting that de Vere's crest was a lion holding or shaking a broken spear, and the reference might be to the coat of arms or to the plays written under an assumed name. There is yet another significant reference to an anonymity imperfectly concealed by John, Lord Lumley, himself an authentic poet, when he said: "A crew of Courtly makers (Poets), Noblemen and Gentlemen who have written excellently well, as it would appear if their doings could be found out and made public with the rest, of which number is first that noble Gentleman, the Earl of Oxford." It is known that de Vere was at one time lessee of a theatre where plays were produced semi-privately for selected audiences, and that here were produced several plays by John Lyly, from whom Shakespeare is generally believed to have borrowed. Now Lyly was for years Oxford's secretary, later dismissed for spying upon him. It is odd that after leaving the service of Oxford Lyly never wrote another play, though

he was hard pressed for funds. The suggestion is that Oxford wrote the Lyly plays, but for his own reasons did not want the fact to be published.

Finally there remains on record specimens of Oxford's early verse which prompted Dr A. B. Grosart, an authority on the literature of the period, to remark after commenting on their beauty, and their apparently unfulfilled promise, "An unlifted shadow lies across his memory." There are also extant letters from abroad which are said in their phraseology to bear startling resemblances to some passages in the Shakespeare plays. Undoubtedly Oxford was a remarkable character. He is supposed to have been a lover of Elizabeth. He was the son-in-law of Lord Burghley, and apparently a bad husband. He had many political enemies, and was the victim of court conspiracies. That is why he found his companions among actors, poets, writers, and other contemporary vagabonds. He is known to have been a prodigious producer of poetry, but only a few scraps of it survive, and no dramatic writings at all, under his own name. The suggestion is that they live under an even nobler name than the lord who held the second oldest title in the Kingdom.

#### NEWS FROM EAST ANGLIA

One of our most enthusiastic members, the Rev. R. Flynn, Vicar of Belchamp St Paul's, organized last month a Children's Pageant in the grounds of his Vicarage. It was entitled "A Little Piece of Living History." The following account of it is taken from a local newspaper:

. . . There were five principal episodes, depicting the life of Queen Elizabeth in Tudor days: first, in her privy chamber surrounded by her Maids of Honour; and, secondly, her life among her people.

The first was well represented by the children as Maids of Honour seated on gay cushions (a) having their fortunes told by Mistress Blanch Parry, the chief gentlewoman of the chamber; (b) the Queen on a visit to Dr Dee at his house in Mortlake; (c) the Queen dines. The second, a dramatic situation, showed the Queen addressing her assembled troops at Tilbury, described as "one of the greatest scenes in all history."

The Vicar (the Rev. R. F. Flynn) introducing Mr Percy Allen, said the Elizabethan chronicles were engaging, and more or less complete, in the account given of the Privy Chamber. There were intrigues. These intrigues did not escape Shakespeare's watchful eye. Though how to account for this puzzled, and still puzzles, a great many, seeing from the records that Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon never himself witnessed them. So had it not been for the Shakespeare Fellowship's investigations they might continue to be in the dark. Continuing, the Vicar said they were greatly privileged to have with them Mr Percy Allen. Mr Allen was the author of half-a-score of standard books on this much debated subject, "Who was Shakespeare?" They had in Mr Allen's writings a conclusive proof that the author of the plays was not Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon. Furthermore, Mr Allen had given and could say chapter and verse (so to speak) with reasons from his unique knowledge of the plays, the man who was the author; and that, no less a person than Edward de Vere, Margaret Golding's son by the sixteenth Earl of Oxford. The detail of the life in the privy chamber when Elizabeth was Queen was chronicled in the plays under the commonplace name of Shakespeare. Thus Edward de Vere, the author, could write freely of the happenings in the court of Elizabeth, and no one would for a moment suspect it was him. It sufficed to say "Shakespeare."

Mr Percy Allen replied in a short survey showing the growing effect of his opinions and that of others of the Shakespeare Fellowship, much to the dismay of orthodox Stratfordians, and at the same time furthering the solution of the Shakespeare problem centred in the Oxford Shakespeare controversy. Mr Allen concluded: The plays were written by an aristocrat who lived in a castle and was accustomed to his surroundings. No one has so far discovered a like overwhelming evidence in favour of the Stratfordian, either in the sonnets or the plays.

#### IS LORD OXFORD BURIED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY?

In a recent issue of the "News-Letter" there was an article giving evidence from a MS. in the Herald's College which suggests that Lord Oxford's body was transferred from Hackney (where he was buried in 1604) to Westminster Abbey. If so, this would presumably have taken place some time between 1613 (when

his widow was buried at Hackney "as near unto my dear lord and husband as may be"), and 1623 when Basse's poem in the prefatory matter to the First Folio appeared, which quite definitely suggests that "Shakespeare" was buried in the Abbey.

Following up this clue from the Herald's College, Mr Percy Allen wrote to the Dean of Westminster (x) and asked him if he could throw any light upon the matter. He received the following courteous reply from Mr Lawrence E. Tanner, M.V.O., M.A., F.S.A., Keeper of the Muniments and Library:

The Muniment Room and Library,  
Westminster Abbey. Sept. 22, 1937

Dear Sir,

The Dean has sent me over your letter of the 17th inst with reference to Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford. As far as I know there is no record among the Muniments or in the Register of his re-interment at Westminster. It is not improbable, for his only son and some of his daughters are buried in the Abbey, but even if no note was made in the Register of his re-burial I should have expected to have found some note of expenses for opening the ground for his grave, etc. - but of this there is no trace.

I am afraid, therefore, that we can't get much further from this end, but I should be interested to hear if any further evidence comes to hand apart from the interesting reference in the Herald's College MS.

Yours faithfully,  
LAWRENCE E. TANNER.

There, for the moment, the matter rests. Mr Tanner's statement that some of Oxford's daughters are buried in the Abbey, is presumably a reference to the Burghley Tomb, where Lady Burghley (Oxford's mother-in-law) and Anne Cecil (his first wife) were buried. This tomb also has effigies of his three daughters by Anne Cecil - Elizabeth (afterwards Countess of Derby), Bridget (afterwards Lady Norris), and Anne (afterwards Countess of Pembroke and Montgomery). Henry de Vere, eighteenth Earl of Oxford, his only son by Elizabeth Trentham, was buried in the Vere Tomb in the Abbey beside his uncles Francis and

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(x) We record with deep regret that Dr Foxley Norris, the Dean of Westminster, has died since this correspondence.

Horatio, who are well known in history as the "Fighting Veres."  
As Mr Tanner says, the fact that there is no record of the transfer of Lord Oxford's body from Hackney to Westminster Abbey does not mean that such a transfer did not take place. There is so much mystery about his life, especially in his later years, that it is quite conceivable that he may have been transferred to either the Burghley or Vere tombs without any official record. Perhaps the greatest mystery of all is that no Will of Lord Oxford has survived. He must surely have made one, because the Inquisitions Post Mortem taken after his death shows that he possessed considerable property both in London and Essex. There are, in Somerset House, complete records of all sixteenth and seventeenth century Wills. What happened to Lord Oxford's Will? If we could answer that question, or find the Will, we could assuredly answer many other questions about Lord Oxford and "Shakespeare" that are puzzling us to-day.

#### DEATH OF MR J. MARTIN HAYDON

We have received the following communication from Mr Percy Allen:

The Shakespeare Fellowship has suffered a severe loss by the death of a valued American member, Mr J. Martin Haydon of New York, who succumbed recently to heart failure following an operation. He was a very keen Oxfordian, and frequently corresponded with our honorary secretary and myself; and he attended my lecture on "Hamlet" at the Colony Club, New York, last autumn, when Mrs Clark was hostess. For some years past he had been eagerly awaiting an opportunity to visit England for the purpose of making the acquaintance of members over here, and of attending the annual dinner.

Our late member was very well read in Elizabethan literature, and was thoroughly familiar with the text of the Shakespeare plays and many of the Oxford-Shakespeare books. His mind was most alert in spotting topical allusions, and many pages of the "News-Letter" could be filled with his ingenious discoveries. Here are a few. "Romeo and Juliet" (I,5):

First Servingman: "Away with the joint-stools, remove the COURT-CUPBOARD, look to the PLATE . . . You are looked for, and called for, asked for, and sought for, in the GREAT CHAMBER."

Mr Haydon was surely right in seeing here an allusion



to the incident recorded in Ward's "Life" of Lord Oxford (pp. 161-163) when Queen Elizabeth, who was then at Long Melford on her Progress to Cambridge in the summer of 1578, soundly rated Lord Sussex (the Lord Steward) for not providing enough plate upon the side-board. Lord Oxford, a close friend of Sussex, was so much annoyed by the Queen's outburst, that he declined her reiterated request to him to dance before the French envoys. And it should be remembered that Oxford (Romeo) was Lord GREAT CHAMBERlain of England.

Here is another idea for which Mr Haydon wished to get his share of the credit. Admiral Holland pointed out some years ago that Hamlet's remark: "I am but mad north-north-west; when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw" - is surely an allusion to Lord Oxford's very heavy losses in Martin Frobisher's expedition in 1578 to discover a north-west passage to Cathay (China). Mr Haydon followed this up by surmising that the work "handsaw" is a reference not to the Cathay expedition, but to the southern cruise undertaken by Drake and Frobisher in the mid-nineties. In a letter to me he wrote: "I find that Drake had a sawed-off hand, which gives a very significant meaning.": "I am but mad north-north-west; when the wind is southerly I know a hawk (Hawkins) from a handsaw (Drake)."

Another clever identification is that of Juliana Penn as the historic original, in part, of Mistress Quickly in "2 Henry IV." Mistress Quickly is hostess of a tavern in EASTCHEAP: Mrs Penn was a widow living in CHEAPSIDE, close to Ludgate Hill leading up to St Paul's. The Penn mansion stood on St Peter's Hill. Hence Mistress Quickly (II,1): "By this heavenly ground I tread on," meaning the hill of St Peter and St Paul. A study of Mrs William Hicks's (Hicks-Beach) book "A Cotswold Family" strongly supports this identification.

At the time of his death Mr Haydon continued to be an eager researcher into the topicalities of the Shakespeare plays. He has left his "Shakespeare Concordia" as a farewell gift to me; and I was informed of his death by his niece, Mrs Antoinette Valliod, of New York. All members of the Fellowship will wish to extend to Mrs Valliod their deep sympathy and sense of loss which she and the Fellowship have sustained.