

# THE Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter

APRIL, 1941

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Members will please note changes of Officers' addresses.

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

With the concurrence of our President, who is now living at Tunbridge Wells, the Committee of the Fellowship has approved of the publication of a short News-Letter, issued for the interest of members, and with the object of showing that our organization is still very much alive, despite the stern and testing days through which we are living, and must yet live.

Our London members are, of course, much scattered, over various parts of England; but, in the main, they seem to have come through the ordeals of to-day fairly well. Our member Mr. E. Morgan has, we regret to say, been bombed out of his house at Bromley; and others, no doubt, have been through almost equally difficult experiences.

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Members will have heard with regret of the death, in the summer of 1940, of that prominent Baconian, Mr. Bertram G. Theobald, who, for many years

past, had been a mainstay of the Bacon Society. He was, at the time of his death, one of the editors of "Baconiana," and was a competent lecturer, and writer, on behalf of that cause. The Editor of the News-Letter was in correspondence with him during May and June, 1940, concerning his attitude towards the Oxford case in general, and, in particular, concerning the Ashbourne portrait discoveries, which Mr. Theobald dismissed airily, with a wave of the hand. To him the Oxford case was, in his own words, a "will o' the wisp," without logic in it, or virtue, because, to his mind, "Shakespeare" began and ended with Bacon. Mr. Theobald, let me add, was always friendly and courteous in his relations with the Oxfordians, and was a most even-tempered debater and correspondent. He will be much missed.

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Lecture-work is still being done by members of the Fellowship. During May last, Mr. F. D. Bone,



at the Southend Business Luncheon Club, delivered two lectures on "Oxford as Shakespeare," and was answered, at a third meeting, by Mr. W. G. Beecroft, on behalf of the Stratfordians. These talks were well reported in the "Southend Standard."

The Editor of the News-Letter, who wintered at Bath, gave three lectures, on *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*, and *Winter's Tale*, to the local branch of the British Empire Shakespeare Society; and took part in several of their Shakespearean readings. His advocacy of Oxford's claims to be the genuine "Shakespeare," and his historic identifications of some of the leading characters in the play, took his audiences completely by surprise—the B.E.S.S. being, in general, a rigidly orthodox organization. There were some keen discussions but no hostile opposition. The talks were well reported in the "Bath Chronicle" and "Herald."

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Some of our members are aware that, not long before his death, Mr. R. M. Lucas—who, in common with our Vice-President, Prof. Abel Lefranc, advocated the claim of Oxford's son-in-law, Lord Derby, to be "Shakespeare"—published, in support of that theory, a book, "*Shakespeare's Vital Secret*." Following upon some correspondence with the Editor of the News-Letter, Messrs. Faithfull, Gardner and Stanier, of 7 Thomas Street, Winchester, inform him officially that copies of the above book can be obtained from the publishers, the Rydal Press, Keighley, at 2s. 6d. each plus postage. Some of our members may like to possess a copy of "*Shakespeare's Vital Secret*."

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Mr. H. Cutner, who, though not a member of the Fellowship, is a keen Oxfordian, and regularly attends our meetings, has pointed out the remarkable fact that the names of many of the characters in the plays, which seem to stand for Lord Oxford, contain the vowel-letters O E O, or E O, thus initialing the words *Oxenford*, or *Edward Oxford*. The names are, *Fenton*, *Romeo*, *Othello*, *Prospero*, *Leontes*, *Leonatus*, and *Oberon*.

The most significant of all these is Posthumous Leonatus in *Cymbeline*, which seems to stand for "The deceased Lord, born Edward Oxford." Further we can add that, in Chapman's two comedies, *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* and *A Humorous Day's Mirth*, the three characters who stand for Oxford are named *Leon*, *Lemot*, and *Verone*. Here the vowel-sequence is the same; *Verone* has *Ver* for its first syllable, and *Lemot* (the word) at once recalls the line from the sonnet:—

Every word doth almost tell my name.

These cannot be mere coincidences. They are typical of Shakespearean methods. Cf. also MCAI

which Admiral Holland rightly interpreted as *MOnt Aigne*.

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Our member, Prof. Pierre Porohovshikov, of Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A., published last year, in America, a book which I have not seen advocating the claim of Lord Rutland to be "Shakespeare." Though convinced of the soundness of his case, Prof. Porohovshikov freely admits the presence of clues to both Oxford and Bacon, in the quartos and Folio; and may, therefore, be regarded, to some extent, as a "group-theory" advocate. In one of his many charming, and most interesting, letters to me, he writes:—

Why allow many obvious and unquestionable indications of the name Francis Bacon in plays written by Oxford? It is, to me, absolutely certain that Bacon controlled the printing of the Folio. Why is page 155 of the Comedies misprinted 153? Because 100 is "Francis Bacon," and 53 is "poet."

Fellowship members represent many shades of Shakespearean belief!

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Our Hon. Sec. Mr. T. L. Adamson, who still resides in London, writes that he hopes, in the coming summer, to organise, at the rooms of Poetry Society, a series of lectures, in continuation of the series held there so successfully last spring. Let us hope that, with the co-operation of our members, he will be able to carry out his plans.

The Officers of the Fellowship, including the Editor of the News-Letter, will be glad to receive addresses of any members whose temporary homes are not yet down upon our lists. Our Hon. Treasurer, Mr. J. J. Dwyer, residing temporarily in Winchester, will be glad to receive any subscriptions, or donations, to the Fellowship funds. The Editor will welcome information, paragraphs, or short articles, which may be useful for future issues of the News-Letter.

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The excellent News-Letters issued by the American Branch of the Fellowship, are, we are informed, being sent to all members of the elder Branch—a generous gesture, which will be much appreciated here, as also are the letters which reach us from our friends across the Atlantic, over which, with American sympathy, and more, a crucial battle of the war is now being fought.

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From the "*Shakespeare Pictorial: Occasional Papers*," with acknowledgments to their Editor, and to Mr. Frederick Longmire.

AIR RAID SHELTERS:—

Under your hard construction must I sit.

(*Twelfth Night*).



## Patines of Bright Gold

by J. J. DWYER.

Look how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold.

It is generally agreed that the metaphor here is of a pavement in a sanctuary, the inlaid floor of the chancel of some beautiful church. Patines are gold plates—the name coming from *patena*, a small, flat dish or plate used with the chalice in the Mass. It was made of gold, wherever possible, and, if not, always gilt. The association of ideas—the Eucharistic sacrifice, the altar, the sanctuary—makes this lovely metaphor fit perfectly with the preceding words, “the floor of heaven.”

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Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

*Sonnet LXXIII.*

Is there not here a hint, or concealed allusion, to the same idea? The country was then covered with ruined choirs of abbey and priory churches, where, within living memory, the monks had been wont to sing the Divine Office. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries... (1536-1540) the churches of the religious orders were plundered and dismantled; the lead was stripped from the roofs; and the building was left to the mercy of the weather. Apart from all other considerations, the loss to English music was irreparable, and had already been deplored by Byrd, Tallis, and Taverner.

## Fabian and Sebastian

by J. J. DWYER.

Tiny straws may show how the wind blows; and there is such a one in the list of the characters in *Twelfth Night*. Sebastian is brother to Viola; and one of Olivia's servants is named Fabian. Why Fabian? Because, evidently, of the strong association of ideas that connects these two names—Saints Fabian and Sebastian being inseparably associated in the Roman liturgy, like S. S. Peter and Paul, S. S. Cornelius and Cyprian, S. S. Felicitas and Perpetua, and so on. Those who know Rome will, at once, recall the many churches with double dedications—Cosmas and Damian, Gervase and Protase, Nereus and Achilleus—martyr saints who suffered together, or whose feasts fall on the same day. Lord Oxford knew Italy well; and therefore he could not use the name of Sebastian without feeling obliged to bring in that of Fabian also.

## Another Name for the Dog

by CHARLES WISNER BARRELL.

Admiral H. H. Holland's intriguing little article, “*That's The Dog's Name*,” in the April News-Letter (1940), suggests to me another canine cognomen, besides the two he uses.

In reading the passage quoted between Romeo and the Nurse, I have always instinctively filled in the Nurse's uncompleted sentence as follows:—

Ah mocker! that's the dog's name. R is for the (rover) . . . But the woman catches herself before she utters this odious name. For rover—then frequently spelt “rovere”—meant not only the faithful watchdog, but robber, freebooter, a *fickle or unconstant person*—types of mankind with whom the Nurse would not want her “bird” to become entangled. She has taken a fancy to Romeo herself, and does not want to offend him with any unfortunate slips of the tongue.

The Nurse is not really illiterate. She is, in fact, keen as mustard, and has just held her own in repartee with Mercutio. Her use of the Gaelic phrase, “I am none of his skains-mates,” suggests an Irish background.

There may be a hint of something else in the fact that the Elizabethan spelling of “rovere” gives us not only the dog's name, but the name Vere as well.

## Who Was Cheveril?

by REAR ADMIRAL H. H. HOLLAND, C.B.

This point having cropped up again, may I be allowed to make a fuller explanation of my original suggestion.

When this possible solution first occurred to me, twenty years ago, I felt very chary of making any suggestion which involved tampering with the text of Shakespeare. I did, however, think, and still do so, that Shakespeare originally wrote:—

“a wit in cheverell that stretches from an inche narrow to an ell broad.”

This gives the whole of the words “inche” and “ell,” with “ver” in between. “In” may have been changed to “of” by either an actor, editor, or printer.

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Since my notes on “MOAI” in *Twelfth Night*, I have noticed that Malvolio's remark, “Daylight and champaign discover not more . . . I will read politic authors,” is a revelation, by antithesis, of Montaigne, whose Essays are entitled, “*The Essays on Moral, Politic and Military Discourses*,” while the plain is the antithesis of the mountain (Montaigne). Cf. Hamlet: “Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed, and batten on this moor?”



## The Ashbourne Portrait

Our member, Mr. T. M. Aitken, kindly allows me to print the following extract from a letter received by him, last year, from Mr. W. Stechow, of Oberlin, Ohio, U.S.A., who, I understand, is an expert on the work of Cornelius Ketel, who is generally supposed to be the painter of the Ashbourne portrait of Shakespeare.

Since I have not seen the Ashbourne portrait, it is rather hard for me to form an opinion about it, particularly as its state of preservation seems to be poor. However, I think I can say this much, that it is hard to believe that it was painted by Ketel himself. First the picture lacks the peculiar tension which is the hall mark of Ketel's work, even during his British period—witness his "Frobisher" in Oxford; second, the signature is not his. The variants given in the American periodical do not occur on genuine pictures of his, and the one appearing on the Ashbourne portrait is quite strange, and, in addition, is connected with the coat-of-arms itself in a way which is not only unusual but nearly impossible to accept. My guess is that the Ashbourne portrait might be a copy from the original portrait by Ketel . . . and that the copyist did not understand the meaning of the signature, which, doubtless, was closely connected with the destroyed inscription referring to the age of the sitter and the date; and that, consequently, he added this piece of information to the coat-of-arms instead. It is quite possible, from the point of view of style, that the Ashbourne portrait is a copy after Ketel in which several of the artist's characteristics, such as the "tension" mentioned above got lost. The way in which the table has been placed on the left occurs in other Ketel portraits. I do not think it is justifiable to take the death's head on the table as an allusion to Hamlet, as Dr. Rendall did, since the appearance of it was quite customary on portraits of that period . . . It is one of the most frequent "Vanitas" indications, and is shown on countless Netherlandish portraits of the sixteenth century.

It is, of course, very interesting to see that a portrait of the Earl of Oxford has been transformed into one of Shakespeare. On the other hand . . . similar transformations of portraits of noblemen into those of other famous persons are extremely frequent, and I think that it is necessary to use the greatest precaution in drawing conclusions from such facts. . . . Shakespeare being a mere "bourgeois" (or less than that) can hardly

have had a chance of having his portrait painted. Thus, the mere fact of that transformation can hardly carry much conviction regarding the problems of identification . . . even though the transformation might have been effected in the family of the Earl.

(signed) W. STECHOW.

## Comment by The Editor

The question whether the "Ashbourne" portrait is an original by Ketel or a copy from him, as Mr. Stechow suggests, is one for the iconographic experts. Mr. Barrell will, no doubt, give us his views, in due course; but there is one point upon which—since it touches Elizabethan psychology, rather than iconography—the Editor ventures to comment. Mr. Stechow

does not think it justifiable to take the death's head on the table as an allusion to Hamlet, as Dr. Rendall did, since the appearance of it was quite customary . . . and is shown on countless Netherlandish portraits of the 16th century.

On this point I am wholly with Dr. Rendall; and I think that Mr. Stechow's mistake—if it be one—is due to a misunderstanding of Elizabethan psychology. The western Europeans of the late 16th century—being more addicted to dark ways, and double meanings, than were any before or since—liked, whenever possible, to provide opportunity for easy repudiation of dangerous charges of topicality. The individuals who instructed Ketel, or another, to produce, or reproduce, the "Ashbourne," knew, no doubt, that the story of Hamlet went back to the days of primeval nature-myth; and knew also that the skull-motive had been, since the middle-ages, a frequent "Vanitas" indication. If and when, therefore, some challenge was made, or some awkward question asked, concerning an alleged Hamlet topicality in the Ashbourne painting, those responsible could, and would, at once plead traditional practice:—"No topicality nor personal allusion here, my Lord, only the usual 'Vanity of Vanities'." In the case of literary topicalities, the same method was used. Many a time, this Editor has been challenged, concerning some passage from Shakespeare or Chapman, in some such phrase as, "There can be here no topicality such as you suggest, because the passage in question is taken from Tacitus"—or Boccaccio, or some other:—to which the answer always is, and must be: "A borrowing from some other author does not preclude the topicality, though it may help to conceal it." 'Tis the same, I think, with the skull-motive in the "Ashbourne" portrait; and that is why, upon that point, I side confidently with Dr. Rendall.