

THE Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter

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EDITORIAL NOTES

The "Salute to Canon Rendall," in the April, 1944, issue of the *Shakespeare Fellowship Quarterly* (American Branch), will be cordially echoed by all members of the Fellowship on this side of the Atlantic. It affords the Editor of the London News-Letter much pleasure to give first place among the articles in this issue to some penetrating comments by Dr. Rendall, upon that perplexing tragedy, *Timon of Athens*.

Another interesting article in the Quarterly is by Mr. Wisner Barrell on the "*Newly Discovered Oxford-Shakespeare Pictorial Evidence*," with an engraving of Queen Elizabeth opening Parliament in February, 1589. Most significant, in its connection with Oxford as *Shakespeare*, is the close-up illustration, in the same article, of the sword-of-state held in the hand of the "Hampton Court Shakespeare"—a picture particularly interesting to this Editor, who, at Mr. Barrell's request, undertook all the business of obtaining the photograph. Mr. Allen much enjoyed the necessary visits to Hampton Court Palace and to the Armoury at the Tower of London. Very pleasant, too, was the correspondence with Mr. Barrell, from December, 1937 onwards.

Readers will enjoy Admiral Holland's bold interpretation of "Pigrogromitus of the Vapians"—the first, probably, that has ever been attempted. The Admiral has no rival at this kind of detective work; and the Editor is satisfied that the interpretation is substantially correct. If it be conceded, as Mr. Allen

holds, that the historic original of *Fabian* is Oxford himself, the interpretation gains in significance. There exists strong evidence for identifying *Aguecheek* with Sir Philip Sidney, who was among the Captains superseding Oxford in Flanders.

In *The Observer*, April 30, 1944, Mr. Ivor Brown, in his weekly article, "Theatre and Life," wrote:—

"It is an astounding thing as well as an appalling nuisance that, concerning the greatest of the English, possibly of the world's, writers, we should know for certain so very little."

There follows an epitome from Mr. Bernard Newdigate's new "Life of Shakespeare." Then Mr. Brown continues:—

"Does this (life) add up? Does it make sense? Naturally at the end of a short article I am not going to plunge into the Baconian or Oxfordian controversy . . . But . . . the Shakespeare mystery surely offers . . . better fun than most detective stories can afford."

Miss Marjorie Bowen comments, in a letter to me (May 1):—

"Ivor Brown as good as admits that he does not accept the Stratford legend, and the serious reference to the Oxfordian theory is most gratifying." Our members will agree.

While upon the subject of Stratford, the Editor spent two weeks there, during April and May last, where his old friend, Mr. Robert Atkins, directs the Festival Company. Several prominent members of

that company, and their friends, showed keen interest in the Oxford-Shakespeare problem. Mr. Allen much enjoyed some coffee-time and tea-time talks, during which he was well catechized by Shakespearean players of both sexes.

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Our member Mr. J. W. Tierney sends the following apposite quotation from Herbert Spencer:—

"There is a principle which is a bar to all information, which is proof against all arguments, and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance; this principle is contempt prior to investigation."

* * * * *

The Editor has prepared a longish study, running to some 130 typed pages, upon the subject of Francis Bacon's share in the production of the Shakespeare Folio of 1623. There is, at present, only one spare copy, which can be loaned to any member who wishes to read it.

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The Editor is always glad to receive letters, press-cuttings, articles, or other communications which may be useful for future News-Letters. Articles should not exceed 600 words in length, and, when possible, should be type-written.

Timon of Athens

By CANON G. H. RENDALL, Litt.D., LL.D.

"In all the obscurity of Shakespeare's life-story, nowhere do we feel our ignorance of his personal experience more than here."—*Brandes*.

Prior to its appearance in Fol. 1, the play finds no place on the S.R.; no scrap of Quarto (bad or good) exists; nor any note of stage-performance. In Fol. 1 it fills a gap between *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar*, caused by temporary withdrawal of *Troilus and Cressida* from the printer's sheets. All this is set forth, with convincing clearness in E. K. Chambers' concise and admirable summary of evidence.

Like others of the later plays—e.g. *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Coriolanus*—it dramatises a selected corner of psychology, in this instance Misanthropy. The opening and closing acts are enriched with passages of fine Shakespearean calibre, but the centre consists of disjointed fragments of prose and verse, probably pieced together, under editorial supervision, by some later hand. To my own mind, I. M. Robertson's *Shakespeare and Chapman* (p. 123-181) provides convincing evidence of Chapman's contributory participation in the composition of acts III and IV.

Associated with William Shakspeare of Stratford, theme, scheme, and setting present a series of insoluble conundrums regarding which no two commentators see eye to eye, except perhaps in agreeing that internal evidence implies some background of untraced personal experience. Handling, treatment and diction associate it with the later plays, particularly

King Lear, *Coriolanus* and the Folio I *Hamlet*; but all alike are incongruous with anything known of their reputed author, especially if referred to his later years of bourgeois ease and retirement from the stage.

On the other hand, ascribed to Edward de Vere it corresponds in a remarkable way to contacts within his own experience, and may be read as the most directly autobiographical of all the plays. Planned under a mask of anonymous disguise, it turned out a dramatic fiasco, and was eventually consigned to limbo, with other miscarriages of his insatiate urge for productive self-expression. Staged nominally at Athens, *Timon* is destitute of any trace of historic realism, in place, time or *dramatis personæ*. Typical character names—Timon, Alcibiades, Apemantus and Timandra—are lifted from Plutarch's lives of Antonius LXX, and Alcibiades XXXIX, with supplementary touches from Lucian's *Timon the Misanthrope*, but without attempt at historic co-ordination.

The appended titles, *Lord Timon*, *Lord Lucullus* and *Captain Alcibiades*, the ill-assorted groups of Latin Senators and Retainers, and even the *hetairai* who accompany Alcibiades, are grotesque misfits, and the same may be said of the *Walls of Athens* (IV.1) and of the sea-shore cave (IV.3) in which Timon nurses his bitter solitude, presumably beside the Saronic Gulf, facing towards Salamis. The protagonist impersonates the aristocratic magnate of the Elizabethan age, among whom Lord Oxford himself is the most notable example.

Timon, the spendthrift nobleman, through a mixture of good nature, love of display, and lavish prodigality, becomes the easy prey of needy, designing parasites and creditors, and pursues the *Rake's Progress*, which led to the final and complete debacle. But even in his ruined and embittered seclusion, the brooding misanthrope regains sufficient command of ready cash, and official status, to make him the target of literary charlatans (like Apemantus), of domestic Thieves,† and of aspirants to various forms of political or civic eminence, who add nothing whatever to dramatic development of plot. It is a true picture of Edward de Vere in his decline—too true and intimate for dramatic handling—and culminates in the wild buffonery of the Mock-banquet, which pronounced the death sentence on the whole design.

In Act I the foremost place among his clients is given to the Poet, the Painter, the Jeweller, and the Merchant, while in the Epilogue, Poet and Painter re-appear, but Jeweller and Merchant are omitted; this is all true to life, and in not a few instances it would be easy to affix identifications to the various fair-weather dependents—Senators, creditors, or soldiers; but (beyond Lyly and Munday) there is little to gain from discussing disputable names and conjectures.

† "Thieves" seem to reflect the "Bandetti" of the Italian version of *Lucian*, which was not yet translated into English, though Plutarch had a place on Lord Oxford's shelves from the latter days of his tutelage in 1569.

The play is corroded with sick and morbid railings that verge on hysterical derangement; but in despite of forbidding flaws and disfigurements, *Timon* contains not a few lines, phrases, and even passages, of lasting worth; among them the forlorn epitaph (or rather epitaphs) from Callimachus "insculptured on the grave-stone by the very horn of the sea," with which the play concludes:

"Here lie I, Timon; who, alive, all living men did hate:

Pass by, and curse thy fill; but pass and stay not here thy gait"

* * * * *

"Here lies a wretched corse, of wretched soul bereft:

Seek not my name: a plague consume you wicked caitiffs left!"

"O! but they say the tongues of dying men Enforce attention."

Gerald H. Rendall.

The Folger Shakespeare Memorial Library

By PHYLLIS CARRINGTON

The Folger Shakespeare Memorial Library, of whose important and unique place in Shakespearian research and scholarship no serious student of Shakespeare can be unaware, was the munificent gift of the late Mr. Henry Clay Folger to the American people.

It is the only institution in the world solely devoted to "promoting and diffusing knowledge of the writings and history of Shakespeare," and it possesses the most comprehensive collection of Shakespeariana in existence.

The Folger Library is situated in Washington, D.C., next door to the Library of Congress, and in close proximity to the many other National Buildings. Built of white Georgia marble to harmonize with the surrounding buildings, the exterior is modern architecturally, though Greek in spirit.

The interior of the building consists of three main units: an Exhibition Gallery in early English Renaissance style, to which the public have free access; a Reading Room running parallel to it, also Elizabethan in design; and two wings, one an Elizabethan Theatre, and the other housing the Administration Offices.

In the Exhibition Gallery are displayed the Library's collection of early oil portraits of the poet, which include the Janssen, the Felton, the Lumley, the Zuccaro, the Kneller, the Ashbourne, the Cosway, and the Dexter; truly a priceless collection. There are also oil paintings of literary or theatrical interest, statues, busts, miniatures, curios, and relics relating to the poet, his contemporaries, and his age, and of course rare books and manuscripts. The exhibits in the fourteen display cases are frequently changed

and special exhibits are often prepared to celebrate special occasions.

The Theatre, a reconstruction of an Elizabethan playhouse, which adjoins the Gallery and serves the Library as an auditorium, is designed to show the nature of the theatre for which Shakespeare's plays were written; the intention being to give a picture of the playhouses of the time rather than to erect an exact reproduction of any one theatre. Through the canvas ceiling, with its unicorn design, either day or night effects can be obtained. Annually, in celebration of Shakespeare's birthday, the Library invites some American scholar, distinguished for Shakespearian or Elizabethan scholarship, to deliver an address in the Theatre. There have been readings from Shakespeare's Plays.

The Reading Room is Elizabethan except for the Gothic West window, the stone tracery of which is a reproduction of the East window in Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon. The stained glass which it contains is Mr. Nicola D'Ascenzo's conception of the Seven Ages of Man. On the East wall above the door way is a replica of the Stratford Monument, and on either side hang portraits of Mr. Folger and his wife.

The treasures of the Library are so great, the rarities so numerous, that only the barest mention can be made of a very few of them. The Library owns seventy-nine First Folios, fifty-eight copies of the Second Folio, twenty-four of the Third, and twenty-nine of the Fourth. It also houses the largest collection of Quartos in the world. It possesses the only two copies of the so-called "Collected Works" of Shakespeare, 1619, the unique First Edition of *Titus Andronicus*, 1594, and extremely rare copies of *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, the *Sonnets* and the *Poems*.

The Folger Library houses what is probably the most extensive collection of pre 1641 English printed books outside Great Britain. Amongst the sixteen rare Chaucer items are Caxton's First Edition of the *Canterbury Tales*, 1478. The unique first issue of the First Edition of *The Faerie Queene*, 1590, is another rare book in the Library.

Included in the fifty thousand manuscripts in the Folger Library are one hundred and seventy-one from the ancient muniments room of Loseley Park, Surrey, virtually all the extant records of the Office of Revels during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and the early years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Also one hundred and fifty-six manuscripts, from the same muniments room, virtually all the extant documents relating to the two famous theatres, the First and Second Blackfriars.

Amongst the sixty-one early dramatic manuscripts are the original manuscripts of the three earliest and most famous English Moralities—*The Castle of Perseverance*, 1440, *Wisdom, or Mind, Will, and Understanding*, 1460, and *Mankind*, 1475.

The original manuscripts of James I's *Demonologie* and his proclamation against witches, 1594, with his signature as James VI of Scotland, are but two

amongst the historical documents, which include Henry VIII's original proclamation establishing himself as Head of the Church.

Letters by Sir Francis Bacon, the Earl of Essex, Sir Francis Vere, George Chapman, and Ben Jonson, to name but a very few, are amongst the one hundred and thirty-seven personal letters.

Mr. Folger purchased many volumes that were once in the private libraries of Famous Elizabethans men of letters. These so-called associations copies include two volumes from the library of Edmund Spenser, each bearing his pen name of "Immerito" and various marginalia; Ben Jonson's copy of Chaucer with his motto inscribed on the title-page, and holograph notes throughout the text; nine books from the library of Gabriel Harvey containing marginal comments on the University Wits, and a curious reference to *Hamlet*; books from the libraries of Thomas Nashe, Sir William Davenant, John Donne, and many others. The copy of William Lombarde's *Archaronomia*, 1568, which created a stir in the literary world in 1943 when the signature "Wm. Shakespere" was discovered on the title page, is another very interesting volume.

Mr. Folger's collection of printed and manuscript Elizabethan music was remarkable and the acquisitions since his death have enriched it enormously. Amongst the rarer items are Thomas Morley's *Madrigales*, 1596, the *Triumphes of Oriana*, 1601 a unique variant, and William Byrd's *Mass for Three Voices*, c. 1588.

Since the formal opening of the Library in 1931, many new acquisitions have been made, which are set out in A REPORT OF PROGRESS, 1931-1941, by the Director, Mr. Joseph Quincy Adams.

The activities of the Folger Library which are very wide in scope, include a photographic laboratory equipped with a photostat machine and facilities for the use of ultra-violet and infra-red ray, while photo-reproductions of its rare books, manuscripts, prints and other material are supplied to workers throughout America and other countries.

Hundreds of research workers apply annually to the Library for aid through correspondence, as well as those who visit the Library in person, and every help and encouragement is accorded them in their work.

The Folger Library awards two annual Fellowships to young scholars of unusual promise in the field of Elizabethan research to enable them early in their careers to complete and bring to publication the results of their research.

"In 1935 the Trustees authorised the Director to initiate a series of publications designed to make available to the world some of the unique treasures in the Library." Six volumes have now been published. (1941.)

The first Director was Mr. William A. Slade, of the Library of Congress, under whose able administration the Folger Library was organized and established. The present Director, Mr. Joseph Quincy Adams, and his able staff, have continued the splendid work.

Pigrogromitus of the Vapians

(Twelfth Night II.3)

A Tentative Solution

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

Near the beginning of the kitchen-scene, soon after the entrance of *Feste* to *Sir Toby* and *Sir Andrew*, the latter addresses *Feste* in the following enigmatic phrase:—

"In sooth thou wast in very gracious fooling last night, when thou spokest of *Pigrogromitus* of the *Vapians* passing the equinoctial of *Queubus*: 'twas very good i' faith."

This is one of the most difficult passages in all Shakespeare; but, quite certainly, it meant something. This is my tentative interpretation.

We have here a lampoon by Tariton which probably actually took place at his lodgings in Gracious (Gracechurch) Street, on the homecoming of the Earl of Leicester from the Low Countries, on Decr. 12, 1587.

PIGROGROMITUS is a printer's error for PIGRO COMITUS.*

PIGRITIA is Latin for "laziness."

COMES, COMITIS is Latin for "Earl, of the Earl."

PIGRO COMITUS, therefore, equals, "The lazy Earl," or "The Earl of less stir."

I think that for "Vapians" we should substitute "Fabian"; the change being best briefly explicable as a kind of Anglo-Cambrian phonetic spoonerism: but, in this connection, it should also be borne in mind that the writer probably glanced also at the Latin word, "*vapidus*," which means, among other things, "devoid of briskness," or again, "less stir."

QUEUBUS is the Clown's corruption of Phoebus, or *Belpheobe*, which was one of Spenser's names for Queen Elizabeth: and *Queubus* sounds like "Queen Bess." The name, therefore, stands for Queen Elizabeth, and "the Equinoctial of *Queubus*" means "the celestial equator, or the court of Queen Elizabeth," with an additional reference, by antithesis, to the solstice of the sun, which, in Elizabethan days—before the change of calender—took place on Dec. 12.

The expression, "PIGROCOMITUS OF THE VAPIANS PASSING THE EQUINOCTIAL OF PHOEBUS," therefore means:—

THE FABIAN-MINDED GENERAL, THE EARL OF LEICESTER, RETURNING TO THE COURT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH ON DECEMBER 12TH.

It should be remembered that Lord Oxford himself had held a command in Flanders, for a short time; but was recalled by the Queen's order, and superseded by Leicester, who sailed from Harwich on December 8, 1585.

* Or possibly it is Sir Andrew's drunken attempt at two rather difficult Latin words?—Ed. Yes, a very possible explanation.—H.H.