Notes on Skelton

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Source: *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Apr., 1917), pp. 129-139

Published by: [Modern Humanities Research Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3714119>

Accessed: 25/06/2014 07:17

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NOTES ON SKELTON¹.

I. SKELTON'S RELATION TO HUMANISM.

It is generally held that Skelton was deeply influenced by the Humanistic movement. See, *e.g.*, Williams, p. 7, 'Above all, Skelton was one of the Humanists, full of enthusiasm for classical culture, full of reverence for the sovereign importance of learning'; cf. Brie, p. 80, 'Er ist ein merkwürdiger vertreter des humanismus'; Thümmel, p. 19, 'des Humanisten Skelton.'

But the truth seems to be that Skelton was a scholar of the mediaeval type and was very slightly influenced by Humanism. We expect to find in a humanist of Skelton's time most of the following characteristics: a wide knowledge of Latin literature, considerable skill in Latin verse-writing, some knowledge of Greek, a distaste for the old cycle of University studies and a correspondingly low regard for University degrees, a firm belief in the efficacy of a humanistic education as an agency in social reform, a desire to simplify theology

¹ Abbreviations: *B.* = 'The Bowge of Courte'; *P.* = 'Phyllyp Sparowe'; *C.* = 'Colyn Cloute'; *W.* = 'Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?'; *ER.* = 'Elynour Rummyng'; *M.* = 'Magnyfy-cence'; *SP.* = 'Speke, Parrot'; *G. of L.* = 'Garlande of Laurell.'

Other poems are cited by the pages and lines of Dyce's edition.

Williams = *A Selection from the Poetical Works of John Skelton*, by W. H. Williams. Isbister, 1902.

Thümmel = *Studien über John Skelton*, von Arno Thümmel. Leipzig, 1905.

Brie = *Skeltonstudien*, von Friedrich Brie. Englische Studien, xxxvii.

Koelbing = *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. III, ch. 4, by Arthur Koelbing.

Rashdall = *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, by Hastings Rashdall. Clarendon Press, 1895.

Allen = *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, ed. P. S. Allen. Clarendon Press, 1906.

by discarding the complicated systems of the Schoolmen and reviving the study of the Fathers of the Church, small respect for many of the ceremonies and practices of contemporary Christianity, and a strong feeling against the monastic system. Now none of these marks of the humanist are to be found in Skelton.

In the first place, the extent of his scholarship has been greatly exaggerated. For instance Koelbing (p. 67) says: 'Skelton's Latin poems are rather bombastic, but smooth and polished....His knowledge of classical, particularly Latin, literature must have been very extensive. In his *Garlande of Laurell*, he mentions almost all the more important Latin and Greek authors, and, on the whole, shows a fair judgment of them. His knowledge of Greek was perhaps not deep.' Cf. Brie, p. 75: 'Skelton's belesenheit ist eine ausgedehnte, wenn auch keine überraschende. Erstaunlich sind höchstens seine kenntnisse auf humanistischem gebiete. Es giebt keinen einzigen bedeutenderen lateinischen schriftsteller, den er nicht gelegentlich zitiert oder wenigstens am rande erwähnt. Die Griechen dagegen scheint er nur so weit gekannt zu haben, als sie ihm in lateinischen übertragungen zugänglich waren.' The facts are as follows¹. Seventeen Latin authors are quoted, used, or referred to by Skelton, viz. Cicero (2 + 1 + 1), Sallust (1 + 1 + 0), Livy, Book I (2 + 0 + 1), Valerius Maximus (5 ? + 0 + 0), Pliny, *H. N.*

¹ In the first list are included all specific references to the subject-matter of books, e.g. *G. of L.*, 360-1: 'And Maxymyane, with his madde ditiis, How dotynge age wolde iape with yonge foly.' Of the numbers in brackets the first indicates the number of quotations or specific references; the second the general references to the subject-matter of books, and the third the number of times the author is named without special reference to the contents of his works. If there is a definite quotation or a clear allusion to the subject-matter of an author, references to the titles of his works are also counted under the second head; but if there is no such quotation or allusion, the mention of the title is counted as a mere mention of the author. Thus the references to Sallust are *G. of L.*, 1177 marg.: 'Virtuti omnia parent: Sallust' (= *Sall. Cat.*, 2. § 7), and *G. of L.*, 331-2: 'With Salusty ageinst Lucius Cateleyne, That wrote the history of Iugurta also.' The references to Lucan and Boethius are *SP.*, 4 marg.: 'Lucanus. Tigris et Euphrates uno se fonte resoluunt,' *G. of L.*, 337 ('Lucan, with Stacius...'), *G. of L.*, 359 ('Boyce, recounfortyd with his philosophy'). The line quoted is from Boethius, but the ascription of it to Lucan seems to show that Skelton had read Lucan III, 256-8. It is therefore counted as a reference to both. The Story of Abdalonymus in *W.*, 541-561, may have been taken from Quintus Curtius, 4. 1. §§ 19-26, but since it is also told in Diodorus Siculus, whom Skelton had translated, it is counted as doubtful, and therefore Quintus Curtius is put in the second class in spite of the reference in *G. of L.*, 366-7: 'Quintus Cursius, full craftely that wrate | Of Alexander,' which by itself proves only a knowledge of the title of Quintus Curtius' book. On the other hand *G. of L.*, 326: 'olde Quintiliane with his Declamacyons' (cf. *SP.*, 182), *G. of L.*, 358: 'Senek full soberly with his tragediis,' are placed in the third list, since no more specific reference to the subject-matter of these authors has been found.

A complete list of the references and allusions to classical and post-classical authors and a list of Skelton's false quantities have been sent to the editor for consultation by any who may wish to test the accuracy of the writer's statements.

(3 ? + 0 + 0), St Jerome (2 + 0 + 0), Boethius (1 + 1 + 0), Vergil (15 + 1 + 1), Horace (6 + 1 + 3), Ovid (13 + 0 + 3), Lucan (1 + 0 + 1), Persius (5 + 0 + 3), Martial (3 ? + 0 + 1), Juvenal (9 + 0 + 4), Claudian (1 + 0 + 0), Maximianus (0 + 1 + 0), Cato's *Disticha* (1 + 0 + 0). Three are mentioned and were perhaps used by him, viz. Q. Curtius (1 ? + 1 + 0), Statius (1 ? + 1 + 0), Macrobius (1 ? + 1 + 0). Eight are mentioned but not quoted: Plautus, Terence, Catullus, Propertius, Seneca, Quintilian, Sulpicia, Aulus Gellius. Among those who are neither mentioned nor quoted are Lucretius, Caesar, Tibullus, Valerius Flaccus, Silius Italicus, Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, Suetonius, Ausonius. It is of course highly probable that he had read several of the authors he does not quote, *e.g.* Terence, Seneca, Quintilian. On the other hand we are not justified in assuming that he had read through all the authors he does quote. It is quite possible, for instance, that he had never got beyond the first book of Livy; and many of the quotations may have been borrowed from the *Pharetra doctorum* or some similar work. The fact that there are no quotations from Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius, whose poems were usually printed together, makes it probable that he had not read any one of the three. Most of the authors from whom he quotes were well known to mediaeval scholars. Hence we cannot claim that Skelton's reading was distinctively humanistic. In fact the long list of names in *P.*, 756 ff., and *G. of L.*, 326 ff., remind one rather of Aristotle's 'filosofica famiglia' in the *Inferno* than of humanistic learning. A minor detail bearing on Skelton's intellectual affinities is his use of the term 'poet.' In *P.*, 757, he calls Plutarch a poet, and in *G. of L.*, 326, Quintilian is a poet laureate. This use of the term is repeatedly satirized in the *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*, *e.g.* Ep. 7: 'ex poetis secularibus, sicut est Virgilius, Tullius, Plinius, et alii; Ep. 16: 'Tullius, quamvis est gentilis et poeta.' The list of authors quoted by Skelton may seem extensive to those who are not at home in classical scholarship, but no humanist of Skelton's time would have thought it showed any remarkable learning. In a single letter of seven pages (Allen, I, 290 sqq., the preface to the first edition of the *Adagia*) Erasmus quotes or refers to fourteen Latin authors and three ancient Latin commentators, and that in a manner which puts it beyond doubt that he had not only heard of them but had also read them.

Nor was his scholarship of a high order. Dr Koelbing (*l. c.*) praises his versification, and Dr Thümmel (p. 66) says the verses on the death

¹ See also Rashdall, II, 241, n. 2.

of Henry VII (Dyce, I, 178–9) offer evidence of diligent and successful study of the classical models, and show a noticeable elegance and smoothness. But Professor Williams is nearer the truth when he says that Skelton's Latin verses are 'full of false quantities, bad Latin, inept alliteration, and artificial conceits' (p. 22). As a matter of fact Skelton's false quantities are not very numerous. There are not above twenty-five in all his works, and some of these are in words which do not occur in classical Latin poetry and whose quantities, ignorant as he was of Greek, he could not be expected to know. On the other hand, they are words which would not be used by a verse-writer with any pretensions to elegance. A curious blunder makes the false quantities appear more numerous than they really are. Skelton like many mediaeval writers supposed that the last syllable of the first half of a pentameter was common, *e.g.* he misquotes Martial, I. 4. 8, as 'est mihi lasciuā pagina, vita proba' (*SP.*, 268). Of this there are 22 instances, two of them in the verses whose elegance and smoothness Dr Thümmel commends¹. He is frequently guilty of the schoolboy blunder of misplacing '-que,' *e.g.* he writes 'frondetque uiret' (*G. of L.*, 1468) for 'frondet uiretque.' His less studied compositions are disfigured by such errors in accidence as 'odiens' (I, p. 175, l. 6), and even his more careful verses exhibit such mistakes in syntax as 'licet concinis' (I, p. 17). His shortcomings in the less tangible qualities of style will be equally obvious to any classical scholar who takes the trouble to read a page or two. His verses may have passed muster with pre-Renaissance Oxonians or with the Germans who went to lectures in Leipzig on 'Sulpitius *de quantitatibus syllabarum*' (*Epp. Obsc. Vir.*, Ep. 5), but Sannazaro, Bembo, or Erasmus would have laughed at his presumption in publishing such barbarous stuff.

One reason why Skelton has been ranked as a humanist and his scholarship so greatly exaggerated is that mediaeval scholarship has been correspondingly underrated. Such a knowledge of Latin as Skelton possessed was probably not uncommon in the 14th and 15th centuries. Mediaeval Latin was much better than is commonly supposed (see Rashdall, II, Part II, pp. 595–7). The leonine elegiacs in *Carmina Burana*, pp. 60–4, are not much worse than Skelton's best verses. It may be doubted whether, in spite of the facilities which the invention of printing afforded for procuring books, Skelton was a much better Latin scholar than Chaucer.

¹ This error is common in the leonine elegiacs in the *Carmina Burana* (ed. iii, Breslau, 1894, pp. 60–64).

It is practically certain that Skelton knew no Greek. It is true that he mentions a large number of Greek authors, but the manner in which he mentions them gives no indication that he had read them. They seem to be introduced on the principle indicated by Philaminte's praise of the poet in *Les Femmes Savantes*—'Ah! *ma Laïs!* voilà de l'érudition.' For the most part they are mere names to him, and he could have got them all from Cicero, Vergil, Horace, Valerius Maximus, Aulus Gellius, Macrobius, and St Jerome. For instance in *P.*, 763–5, we find 'Anacreon and Arion, Sophocles and Philemon, Pyndarus and Symonides.' Sophocles is mentioned by Valerius Maximus, 9. 12. § 5, Philemon, *ibid.* § 6, Pindar, *ibid.* § 7, Anacreon, *ibid.* § 8. It seems probable that he had his Valerius Maximus open before him when he wrote these lines, though he had doubtless read of Pindar in Horace, Aulus Gellius, St Jerome (see Dyce, I, p. 220), and elsewhere. Moreover he jumbles together real poets, mythical persons like Linus (*P.*, 761), and poets whose works are lost, *e.g.* Euphorion (*P.*, 762), Philistion (*P.*, 766), Pisandros (*G. of L.*, 382). The only Greek authors of whom he knows more than the names are Aristotle, long familiar in Latin translations, Diodorus Siculus, whom he translated into English from a Latin translation (*G. of L.*, 1498–9), Josephus, whose *De Antiquitatibus Iudaeorum* is mentioned in *P.*, 738, and Philostratus, whose 'life' of Apollonius of Tyana is also mentioned (Dyce, I, 134). A Latin translation of Philostratus' *Apollonius* had been published in 1501 a year before the Greek text (Phillimore's translation, I, p. cxxvii). Latin translations of Josephus had long been in circulation. In fact as late as 1524 'doubts were expressed by scholars as to whether the Greek originals of his writings were still in existence' (M. R. James in *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, I, p. 613). Nor do the few Greek words and phrases in *SP.* and elsewhere prove any knowledge of the language. The following is a complete list of them:

SP., 54. 'myden agan' = *μηδὲν ἄγαν*.

SP., 143. 'Monon calon agaton' = *μόνον καλὸν ἀγαθόν*. (A Greek scholar would have said *τὸ ἀγαθὸν μόνον καλόν* or *τὸ καλὸν μόνον ἀγαθόν*.)

SP., 272. 'Zoe kai psyche' = *ζωὴ καὶ ψυχὴ* (quoted from Juvenal, 6. 195).

I, p. 196. 'Calon, agaton, cum areta' = *καλὸν ἀγαθὸν cum ἀρετῇ*.

ibid. 'epitōma' (treated as a neuter noun). *Epitoma* occurs in Cicero.

ibid. 'in phagoloedoros' = in *φαγολοιδόρους* (apparently a mediaeval

coinage). Cf. *Journal of Philology* xiv, 37 (Épinal Glossary): 'fagolidori manducantes.'

I, 212 marg. 'o coaxantes ranae.' (But *coaxo* occurs in several Latin authors. See Lewis and Short *s.v.*)

I, 425, l. 7. 'botrigeria...uitis.' Cf. *βοτρίϋς*.

SP., p. 3 marg. 'Katerina universalis vitii ruina, Graecum est.' (It is impossible to guess what was in the mind of the author of this remarkable statement. Perhaps he thought Katharine was a portmanteau-word, compounded of *Cath-olicus*, *καθαρός*, and *ruina*. At any rate it is decisive against Skelton's claim to be called a Greek scholar.)

SP., 82. 'In Affryc tongue *byrsa* is a thonge of lether.' (A Greek scholar would have known that *βύρσα* is Greek for a hide.)

SP., 165. 'Sophia.' This occurs in Latin authors he had read.

I, p. 209 marg. 'Perihermenias, Latine interpretatio, etc.' (But every mediaeval undergraduate knew that Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* was called *περὶ ἑρμηνείας* in Greek. See Rashdall, I, p. 435, n. 1: 'librum *periarmenias*.')

The few phrases in *SP.* no more prove a knowledge of Greek than the Welsh, Italian, and Spanish phrases prove a knowledge of these languages. Skelton's spelling (*myden*, *agaton*, *calon*) in the above phrases and some of his false quantities (*ecclesiā*, *chrōnica*, *epitōma*, *thēologi*, *Sōcrātes*, *Iacōbus*) make it probable that he did not even know the Greek alphabet.

Again there is no evidence that he ever came under the influence of any English or foreign humanist. When he was at Cambridge, that University was still untouched by the Renaissance. Similarly when he was made 'poeta laureatus' at Oxford, Grocyn and Linacre were still in Italy and Humanism had not begun to affect the old system of instruction. It does not appear that Louvain was much influenced by Humanism before 1490. At a later period Erasmus could get no teaching in Greek there (Allen, I, p. 4: 'Sed annis aliquot ante quam adirem Italiam, exercendae Graecitatis causa quando non erat praeceptorum copia, verteram Hecubam Euripidis, tum agens Louanii'). There is no evidence that he ever visited Paris or Italy¹. Thus there is every reason for believing that Skelton's education was of the old pre-Renaissance type.

¹ Koelbing (p. 68) writes: 'With the Italian poets of the renaissance he was apparently less familiar.' But as he does not mention Dante and seems to have read only the Latin works of Boccaccio and Petrarch, we are not justified in supposing that he knew Italian at all.

Too much has been made of Erasmus' praise of Skelton. In the autumn of 1499 Skelton was tutor to Prince Henry, a child of eight. Erasmus, then on his first visit to England, found himself obliged to send the prince a set of complimentary verses. In them he thus refers to Skelton: 'monstrante fonteis vate Skeltono sacros' (Dyce, I, p. xxiii). In the letter which accompanied these verses (not, as Koelbing (p. 67) strangely says, in the verses) he wrote 'et domi haberes Skeltonum, unum Britannicarum litterarum lumen ac decus, qui tua studia possit non solum accendere sed etiam consummare' (Allen, I, p. 241)¹. It will be obvious that under these circumstances Erasmus' words must not be taken as the expression of his real opinion. To flatter the prince he was obliged to compliment his tutor. That he really thought Skelton a distinguished scholar is most improbable, and it is significant that he never mentions him elsewhere. When he praises English scholarship in his celebrated letter to Robert Fisher (Allen, I, p. 273), he mentions Colet, Grocyn, Linacre, and More, but not the 'unum Britannicarum litterarum lumen ac decus.' Clearly Skelton, though doubtless a very competent tutor for a little boy of eight, was not a Cheke or an Ascham. With regard to Pico della Mirandola's verses in praise of Skelton (Dyce, II, p. 485) we know nothing of the circumstances under which they were written, nor do we know whether he was in a position to judge of Skelton's attainments. If we wish to see what the humanists really thought of Skelton, we must turn to William Lily. His verse—'doctrinam nec habes, nec es poeta' (Dyce, I, p. xxxviii)—is at least half true, which is good measure for an epigram.

Again we find in Skelton no trace of the characteristic ideas of the humanists; on the contrary he is at issue with them on many points. For instance, he disapproves of their educational reforms and prefers the old system of education. See *SP.*, 146 ff., where he complains that the old Latin grammars are going out of use, that Logic is neglected, and that Greek is ousting the older studies. With his references to Albertus, *de modo significandi*, and Alexander contrast the *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*, Ep. 9: 'Ego mitto vobis hic quaedam scripta pro defensione Alexandri Galli grammatici antiqui et sufficientis: quamvis poetae moderni volunt eum reprehendere'; Ep. 25: 'et dixit quod non sum grammaticus bonus, quia non recte exposui ista vocabula, quando

¹ The occasion of the verses was related by Erasmus twenty-three years later (Allen, I, p. 6). It should be observed that the incident is generally wrongly dated, *e.g.* by Williams, p. 4, Koelbing, p. 67, Brie, p. 7. It happened, not in 1500, but in 1499 (see Allen, I, p. 239), and the prince was not nine (as Erasmus wrote in 1523), but eight (Allen, I, p. 6, *n.*).

practicaui in prima parte Alexandri: et in libro de modis significandi.' See also *C.*, 816–821 (the preacher who does not know his logic). The humanists in their contempt for the old cycle of studies tended to despise the University degrees; see *Epp. Obsc. Vir.*, *passim*, e.g. *Ep.* 17: 'et dixit quod magistri artium non sunt magistri in septem artibus liberalibus, sed potius in septem peccatis mortalibus, et non habent bonum fundamentum, quia non didicerunt poetriam, sed tantum sciunt Petrum Hispanum et parua logicalia.' Skelton however rates them highly, the more so perhaps because he had himself, it would seem, never proceeded as far as the B.A. (cf. Thümmel, p. 29). See *C.*, 791–810, *W.*, 505 ff., and cf. Thümmel, p. 40: 'Skelton does not share that supreme contempt for Scholasticism and University degrees which we find so strongly marked in Petrarch and the leading Italian humanists.'

Again Skelton has no sympathy with new movements in theology, see *C.*, 513 ff., and Dyce, I, p. 206 ff. Colet had read Wyclif's books (Erasmus, *Colloquia*: 'Peregrinatio Religionis Ergo,' and *Epp.*, Lond. 1642, col. 707: 'nullus erat liber tam haereticus, quem ille non attente euolueret'), but Skelton has only abhorrence for Lollardry (*C.*, 548–552, Dyce, I, p. 214, l. 166). Whereas Erasmus (*Colloquia*: 'Peregrinatio Religionis Ergo') and Rabelais (Livre I, ch. 45), scoffed at pilgrimages, Skelton defends them (Dyce, I, p. 209). While Skelton censures bishops for dissolving monasteries (*C.*, 365–430), most contemporary humanists unhesitatingly condemned the monastic system as it existed in their time (see e.g. *Colloquia*: 'Virgo Μισόγαμος,' 'Abbas et Erudita'). More advocated toleration for Utopia at least, but Skelton never even dreamed of it. Professor Williams' view that 'Colyn Cloute' and 'Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?' show the influence of Colet and More respectively (Williams, p. 28) rests on no foundation. Attacks on the abuses of the Church were no novelty, see e.g. *Carmina Burana*, p. 14: 'ubique sunt uenalia | dona spiritalia' (cf. *C.*, 291–302); *ibid.*, p. 15: 'episcopi cornuti | conticuere muti, | (cf. *C.*, 132 sqq.) ad praedam sunt parati' (cf. *C.*, 75–81). What differentiates Colet's teaching from the satire of Skelton and the *Carmina Burana* is that it was based on a general principle—the removal of superfluous accretions and the restoration of Apostolic simplicity alike in theory and in practice (cf. Allen, I, 247: 'ut veterem illam ac veram theologiam istorum spinis obsitam implexamque in pristinum nitorem ac dignitatem pro tua virili restituas'). Similarly More does not merely discuss particular defects of the English social system, but criticizes the whole fabric of society. Of such general ideas there is no trace in Skelton. He deals,

not with ideas, but with persons. 'Colyn Clouté' is an attack on bishops (probably with special reference to the bishop of Norwich), doctors by papal bull, friars, and Wolsey. 'Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?' is from beginning to end an attack on Wolsey. Dr Thümmel (p. 19) rightly observes that the English humanists did not share the scepticism of their Italian contemporaries. This is true. Most of the earlier English humanists and friends of humanism—Tilly, Grocyn, Linacre, William Latimer, Charnock, Warham, Fox, Fisher, Wolsey—appear to have been perfectly orthodox. But though one does not expect to find in an English humanist the scepticism of a Mutianus Rufus—to take a glaring instance—still there is a great difference between the friendly interest which Charnock and Warham took in the theological studies of Colet and Erasmus and the uncompromising conservatism of Skelton. And any one who compares the account of Colet's opinions in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. III, pp. 8–13, with Skelton's 'Replycacion' and 'Colyn Cloute' will see that Skelton and Colet were poles apart.

To sum up, we have seen that Skelton's undergraduate life fell at a period when the Universities at which he is believed to have studied were still practically untouched by Humanism, that he is not known to have been on intimate terms with any humanist, and that his writings show no clear trace of humanistic influence, but that on the contrary he is definitely opposed to the humanists on several cardinal points. It is clear, therefore, that he must be reckoned, not as a humanist, but as a belated representative of mediaeval scholarship¹.

II. SKELTON'S BIRTHPLACE.

One consideration of importance has been overlooked by all who have discussed this question. The name Skelton belongs to the numerous class of English surnames derived from names of places. Now these will be found to follow a simple rule. Strangers were named after places which were familiar to their new neighbours. If a man migrated from his native village to another village in the same county, he would be named after his native village, but if he removed to another county, where this village was not known, he would be named after his county, and so on. For instance, if John left Great

¹ Cf. *Magnyfycence*, E. E. T. S., p. xiv: 'He was one of the learned men of the time, but his learning was of the preceding generation; in his *Speak Parrot* he attacks the New Learning, and he cannot be classed, as has sometimes been done, among the Humanists.'

Milton to settle in Wheatley or Garsington, he would be called John Milton, but if Thomas migrated from Polperro to Oxfordshire, he would become Thomas Cornwall or Cornish. Similarly if John left Oxfordshire for Scotland, he would be named John Inglis or England. Hence surnames derived from names of villages usually originated and remained commonest in the counties where these villages are situated.

Now in Bardsley's *Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames* we find these entries:

'Shelton: "of Shelton," a parish in Norfolk near Long Stratton, also a parish in Notts., also a parish in Bedfordshire.'

'Skelton: "of Skelton," (i) a village near Ripon in Yorkshire, (ii) a parish in Cumberland.' The name still exists, he says, in Cumberland and Yorkshire.

From this it follows that the names Skelton and Shelton are quite distinct and originated in different parts of England. Shelton was a Norfolk name, Skelton a Cumberland and Yorkshire name. The first point, therefore, to determine is the correct spelling of Skelton's name. If Dyce can be trusted, it was invariably spelt Sk- in the early editions, in the Cambridge University Register (Dyce, I, p. xiii), in the registers of the diocese of London (*ibid.*, pp. xx-xxi), and in most of the early references to the poet. It was so spelt by Skelton himself (see Brie, p. 47, where *c* should be corrected to *k*, since 10 stands for *k*). The Cambridge entry 'Schekilton' (Dyce, I, p. vi, n. 3) cannot refer to Skelton. Thümmel's arguments on this point (pp. 26-9) are conclusive. It is probably a perversion of the now familiar name of Shackleton. On the other hand the name was sometimes spelt Sh- or Sch- by his contemporaries, viz. Sch- by Whittington (Dyce, I, pp. xvi-xix—proved by the acrostich) and Lily (*ibid.*, xxxviii), and Sh- in the entry cited by Dyce (I, p. v, n. 1). In Erasmus' letter to Prince Henry the name was spelt Sh- in the *Adagia* (1500) and Sk- in the *Epigrammata* (1507) (see Allen, I, p. 241). On the whole it would seem that *Skelton* is the correct spelling and that *Shelton* and *Schelton* are blunders due to the fact that the name Shelton was much commoner in the south of England¹. Hence it must not be assumed that 'Skelton' and 'Shelton' are mere orthographic variants like 'Shakespeare' and 'Shakspeare,' and it would be worth while to examine the records to ascertain whether the various Skeltons mentioned by Dyce and Brie (pp. 3-4) as residents

¹ Cf. *Collectanea*, I, pp. 24-25 (Clarendon Press, 1885), where the same person is called W. de Skelton and W. de Schelton in two letters from the University of Oxford written in 1339 and 1340.

of Norfolk were not really Sheltons. If the entries have been correctly transcribed, it would appear that there was at least one family of Skeltons in Norfolk at the end of the fifteenth century, though it would still be possible that this family had lately migrated from Cumberland or Yorkshire. If the entries have been inaccurately transcribed, the principal piece of evidence for Skelton's Norfolk origin has disappeared, and we are thrown back on probabilities. The fact that he was beneficed at Diss obviously proves nothing.

In favour of his Northern origin we have then (1) his Northern name, (2) his fierce hatred of the Scots—more natural in a Borderer or Yorkshire man than in a Norfolk man, (3) his elegy on the Earl of Northumberland, (4) the northern forms and words which occur here and there throughout his works, (5) his references to Northern topography¹.

On the whole it would seem that Anthony à Wood's statement that he 'was originally, if not nearly, descended from the Skeltons of Cumberland' (*Athenae Oxonienses*, 1691, vol. I, col. 21) deserves more consideration than it has received. It is possible that Skelton came to Cambridge with one of the exhibitions from Sedbergh School in Yorkshire mentioned by Lever, *Sermons*, p. 81 (Arber's Reprint).

(*To be concluded.*)

R. L. DUNBABIN.

HOBART, TASMANIA.

¹ *M.* 994: 'Frome Tyne to Trent,' *M.* 1074: 'Cokermowthe,' *M.* 1136: 'Anwyke,' *G. of L.*, 196: 'Carlyll,' *B.*, 359: 'Of Kyrkeby Kendall was his shorte demye.'