



## An addition to the Harvard Collection of Francis Barlow

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## An Addition to the Harvard Collection of Francis Barlow

THOSE who read the article on Francis Barlow's Aesop in the Autumn 1948 issue of this BULLETIN,<sup>1</sup> and are still curious about this little known and highly talented English seventeenth-century painter and book illustrator, may be interested to know that a rare work of Barlow's, Sir William Denny's *Pelecanicidium: Or the Christian Adviser against Self-Murder*, London, 1653, has recently been placed on deposit in the Department of Printing and Graphic Arts of the Harvard College Library. Compared with the sumptuous Aesops of 1666 and 1687, and the handsome *Theophila* of Edward Benlowes, 1652, Denny's modest octavo is as discreet as a work on suicide should be for a 'god-fearing' society. But its frontispiece and two full-page plates (one repeated), all signed by Barlow, are of distinct artistic merit. The frontispiece, depicting a pelican piercing her breast to feed her young, perhaps explains the choice of Barlow as illustrator of this work, since his talent in drawing animals and birds was already well known. On the other hand, the two text illustrations are completely in the style of the imaginative, mystical drawings for Benlowes' *Theophila*, published only the year before. So more probably the latter consideration

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, No. 3, pp. 279-295.

was the deciding one, particularly since both books seem to have been semi-private publishing ventures.

The *Pelecanicidium*, however, is much the rarer work. Whereas the *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England . . . 1641-1700* lists twelve copies of the Benlowes, it records only five copies of the Denny,<sup>2</sup> and even this proportion may prove to be high.

By happy chance, the *Theophila* in the Department of Graphic Arts is an exceptional copy, with all the illustrations (some of which are frequently lacking) and is in a contemporary full morocco presentation binding, with Benlowes' arms on the covers in gilt. The *Pelecanicidium* is no less notable a copy: in contemporary green morocco gold tooled, the Britwell Court copy, sold at Sotheby's 13 March 1923, lot 218.

Thus these books form fitting adjuncts to the great Aesops described in the BULLETIN article, and with them provide a comprehensive basis for the study of Barlow's art.<sup>3</sup>

PHILIP HOFER

<sup>2</sup> B 1879 and D 1051.

<sup>3</sup> A detailed account of Sir William Denny and his *Pelecanicidium* appears in Corser's *Collectanea*, Pt. V, pp. 188-194. A collation of the book agreeing exactly with the Harvard copy is given in the Sotheby catalogue of the Huth sale, second portion, June 1912, lot 2331.

## List of Contributors

KEYES D. METCALF, Professor of Bibliography, Director of the Harvard University Library, and Librarian of Harvard College

RICHARD S. KENNEDY, Instructor in English, University of Rochester

VINTON A. DEARING, Instructor in English, University of California at Los Angeles

E. LOUISE LUCAS, Librarian of the William Hayes Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University

CARL R. WOODRING, Instructor in English, University of Wisconsin

MARSHALL W. S. SWAN, Chief, Northern European Area, Public Affairs Staff, United States Department of State

HYDER E. ROLLINS, Gurney Professor of English Literature, Harvard University

WILLIAM H. BOND, Curator of Manuscripts in the Houghton Library, Harvard University

WILLIAM STEVENSON SMITH, Assistant Curator, Department of Egyptian Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Lecturer on Fine Arts, Harvard University, and Director of the American Research Center in Egypt

HERBERT BLOCH, Associate Professor of Greek and Latin, Harvard University

PHILIP HOFER, Lecturer on Fine Arts and Curator of Printing and Graphic Arts in the College Library, Harvard University

WILLIAM VAN LENNEP, Curator of the Theatre Collection in the Harvard College Library

FREDSON BOWERS, Professor of English Literature, University of Virginia

PHILIP J. MCNIFF, Assistant Librarian of the College Library in charge of the Lamont Library, Harvard University