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WHO WAS SHAKESPEARE?

WHO WAS SHAKESPEARE?

A NEW ENQUIRY

by

H. AMPHLETT

With an Introduction by

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS

(A Vice-President of the Shakespeare Fellowship)



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Dedicated to my sister, Mollie Amphlett, whose enthusiasm for
this subject led her to accompany me on my first pilgrimage, afoot,
to Hedingham Castle

PREFACE

A CLERGYMAN once jestingly said that but for Cruden's *Concordance* and the Bible he could never have written his Sermons, and in a like manner I say that but for Mr. T. J. Looney's *Shakespeare Identified* and the Shakespeare Works I could not have written this book, for it was Mr. T. J. Looney who first put forward the theory that the person of 'Shakespeare' was to be found in Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.

Thus the so-termed 'Oxfordians' honour the memory of Mr. Looney, and admit their debt of gratitude to his patient research, his insight into Elizabethan literature, and deductive reasoning.

Unfortunately today the publishing rights of his book have passed into American hands, and, the old edition being long since out of date, I have endeavoured herein to set out the theory afresh in the light of the subsequent investigation of his followers.

In 1921, when Mr. Looney gave the world his amazing theory, there existed no authentic life of the Earl, which makes his achievement all the more remarkable. There was only the short notice in the *Dictionary of National Biography* on which he could draw for the details of his 'Shakespeare's' life, and the need for a full biography was not supplied until two years later when Captain B. M. Ward wrote *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*.

John Murray, the publishers of the life, intimated to Captain Ward that they thought the sale of the book would be jeopardized if any controversial matter on the Shakespeare Problem was included. So Ward, a convinced Oxfordian, refrained from embarking on the theory save for a small note at the conclusion of a chapter. Yet so much of interest was unearthed from archives, old letters and state papers that an invaluable biography was added to Tudor History, and it is from this work, with grateful acknowledgement, that I have drawn most of the information concerning de Vere's life. Other works on 'Stratfordian', 'Baconian' or 'Oxfordian' theories used in this volume are given in the Bibliography at the end.

I also include Admiral H. H. Holland's list showing how, from contemporary references and topical allusions, he has dated the Shakespeare plays, together with the orthodox list for comparison. This should be of valuable assistance to those fresh to the theory.

To the Duke of Portland I owe thanks for kind permission to reproduce the portraits of *Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford*,

which figures as the frontispiece, and of *Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton*, both of which are at Welbeck Abbey.

The Duke of Richmond has kindly permitted me to include here the invaluable picture by Marcus Gheerhaedts of *Lord Burleigh presiding over the Court of Wards*, which hangs at Goodwood.

For portraits of *Lady Mildred Burleigh* and *Queen Elizabeth as 'Diana'*, my thanks are tendered to the Marquess of Salisbury, whose valuable collection of pictures and relics of the Elizabethan era are to be seen at Hatfield House.

The British Museum has kindly allowed me to reproduce the engravings of *The Two Noble Henries* and the Van der Passe portrait of the *Countess of Pembroke*; also the colour-wash drawing by Wenceslaus Hollar of the *Garter Procession*, from which I show the last two figures: Queen Elizabeth preceded by her Lord Great Chamberlain, the young Earl of Oxford, bearer of the Sword of State.

From the National Portrait Gallery comes the unusual portrait of *Lord Burleigh*, and the Jansze van Miereveldt painting of *Horace de Vere*.

In collecting together the illustrations I have had the valuable assistance of Mr. Francis L. Nichols of Oxford, who has lent me a number of his fine photographs for publication.

I wish to record my appreciation of the kind assistance of Miss Mary Childs of Egham in rendering MS. into 'cured and perfect' typescript.

The Shakespeare Fellowship Library has been an invaluable source for many works dealing with the 'Problem', and to the Fellowship I acknowledge my thanks.

Finally, I wish particularly to thank Mr. Christmas Humphreys for his enthusiastic encouragement and help throughout the writing of this book, and for his fine Introduction.

H. AMPHLETT

Egham, 1955

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INTRODUCTION

BY CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS

of the Inner Temple, Barrister at Law

WHO wrote Shakespeare? For many years I have put this question to my friends and acquaintances, and the answers are usually one of four. 1. Why not Shakespeare? 2. So you, too, are a Baconian? 3. Does it matter, when we have the plays? 4. Well, who did?

My answers to these counter-questions are as follows: 1. Because there is very little evidence indeed that 'Shakespeare' was Shakspeare of Stratford, and silence where one would expect evidence. *Per contra*, there is very strong evidence that others did write Shakespeare, and that William of Stratford did not. 2. I do not believe that Bacon wrote a line of the poems though he may, with others, have had a minor hand in the plays. 3. Yes, because it is offensive to scholarship, to our national dignity, and to our sense of fair play to worship the memory of a petty-minded tradesman while leaving the actual author of the Shakespeare plays and poems unhonoured and ignored. Moreover, I have found the plays of far more interest when seen again as the work of a great nobleman and one very close to the fountain-head of Elizabethan England. 4. I am satisfied, with a number of scholars of far greater knowledge than I, that although the works attributed to Shakespeare may have come from several hands, the incomparable genius responsible for the greater part of them was Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.

My own approach to the problem is easily described. Though I spend the greater part of my working day in 'detective stories' of real life I have ever an appetite for more, especially when there is a wrong to be righted and an historic mystery to be solved. I find, for example, no reliable evidence that Richard III was responsible for the murder of the Princes in the Tower, and plenty to the effect that he did nothing of the kind. If there is an answer to the late Miss Josephine Tey's *A Daughter of Time*, on the subject, I should like to hear it. In the same way, the murder of Sir Edmund Godfrey, in 1678, is for the first time solved to my satisfaction in a book of that name by Mr. John Dickson Carr.

And who can seriously doubt that there is a Shakespeare mystery? Nearly everything about that remarkable woman, Queen Elizabeth, is fraught with mystery, and remarkably little is known about the

interrelations and motives of the brilliant group of men who graced her Court. Why was the Earl of Oxford paid £1,000 a year from the Privy Purse while virtually exiled from the Court? What was the truth of Bacon's fall from grace, of Marlowe's death, of Leicester's relations with the Queen? On the whole it is quite astonishing how little we know about this long and remarkable reign. And the greatest mystery of all is the identity of William Shakespeare.

To my interest in this final mystery, as to this Introduction, I bring alone the qualifications of thirty years' experience of proof by evidence, whether as prosecuting or defending counsel, or as a magistrate. In every case I am concerned with the weight and value of the evidence without reference to previous assumption or belief. I have to consider what the evidence proves, not what someone would like it to prove. When, therefore, I chanced on a copy of the late Mr. Thomas Looney's *Shakespeare Identified* I made to myself the inevitable comment on his name (which happens to be a variation of the Manx 'Loney') and then began to read. At the conclusion I sought, as a lawyer does, for the 'answer' to what seemed to me a closely-reasoned and well-documented case for a twofold proposition, each part of which had to be given separate thought; that Shakspeare of Stratford had no hand in the writing of Shakespeare, and that the highly sensitive and cultured genius responsible for most of this colossal output was that experienced poet and playwright, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. I still await that answer.

Questions, of course, poured into my mind. What, for example, of the strength of the Stratford tradition? Bui what fun, I thought, if it turned out to be quite untrue! For there is ample precedent for a totally false tradition carefully built up by interested parties. One of the best is within living memory.

'If you go to South Wales you will hear that, in 1910, the Government used troops to shoot down Welsh miners who were striking for their rights.' What was the truth? It would seem that 'the rougher section of the Rhondda valley crowds had got quite out of hand. Shops were being looted and property destroyed. The Chief Constable of Glamorgan sent a request to the Home Office for troops.' The then Home Secretary, Mr. Winston Churchill,

was so horrified at the possibility of the troops coming face to face with a crowd of rioters and having to fire on them, that he stopped the movement of the troops and sent instead a body of plain, solid Metropolitan Police, armed with nothing but their rolled-up mackintoshes. ... That is the shooting-down by troops that Wales will never forget.

The Daughter of Time, Josephine Tey, p. 110.

But if this tremendous lie has grown within fifty years, what of the Stratford myth which has had three hundred and fifty years in which to reach maturity? The answer, of course, is vested interests, emotional or financial as the case may be. And in the case of Shakespeare we know in detail the main source of the Stratford tradition', the organizing ability of David Garrick, as proved, *inter alia* in the *Amazing Monument*, by Ivor Brown and George Fearon.

What is the evidence for this twofold thesis, I demanded of my new-found co-discoverers in the Shakespeare Fellowship? They gave me books, an armful of books; many of them, I noticed, written by lawyers. I read them all, and a dozen more, while keeping a look-out for the Stratfordian reply. When I did meet Shakespearian 'authority', and innocently put my questions, I got the impression that the said authorities, who earned a living as the exponents of the current theory, were prepared to admit 'off the record' what they dare not concede in the class-room or in public print.

The Shakespeare Fellowship provided me with chapter and verse for each of their assertions, and after a few months' reading I was more than ready to accept the famous dictum of Henry James: 'I am a sort of haunted by the conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practised on a patient world.'

The hunt was up. I never found it easy to believe that the world's most glorious poetry poured like fireworks clothed in flaming gold from the painfully dull and money-minded Stratford esquire. Here was evidence to reinforce my doubt. I felt as I often feel when the defence produces evidence of an elaborate alibi, that the whole erection is false, and that it only needs a pin in the right place to pop the balloon. Had history, on the largest scale yet known, put the wrong man on the pedestal? The answer could not depend on a frivolous rejection of the doubt. Here was a genuine problem, the solution of which must turn on tested evidence, of which the existence of a strong tradition was but an inconclusive part.

So I set to work to collect and test the existing evidence, and soon found that the most embarrassing feature of the enquiry was that one did not know where to stop. It has more than once been observed that the whole of the known facts about William Shakspeare of Stratford can be written on a postcard. No line of his writing survives save six signatures, which competent experts have described as those of an illiterate or else very old, sick man. There would seem to be no evidence that William Shakspeare, as distinct from another or others using a different spelling of his name, wrote any of the works of William Shakespeare; there would seem to be, I was

startled to discover, very little *evidence* that he could write. ... It was all rather embarrassing.

Insert the edge of the chisel of doubt in the plaster of this legend, and it is frightening to watch the wishful-thought assumption tumble to the ground. True, difficulties rise from the dust of the destruction like a cloud of mosquito-fanged enquiries. Why did the true Shakespeare use a pseudonym; to whom was Ben Jonson referring when he wrote that he loved him 'this side idolatry'; why was the secret not revealed when all point of it had gone? And so on and so on, but these can wait. It is not nearly so difficult to solve them as it is to accept the thousand groundless assumptions inherent in the Stratford story. For the evidence supporting William of Warwickshire is almost non-existent, and what a silence is there where the enquirer would expect such evidence to speak!

One argument alone killed Shakspeare for me, and it is to be found in Looney's *Shakespeare Identified* on pages 35-9.

In brief, there are three periods in William Shakspeare's life. In the first he is at Stratford, of illiterate stock, apparently of no attainment and with no thoughts above his humble standing. In the middle period he comes to London and at once begins to produce with enormous speed and apparently no pause for learning the world's greatest literature. Without the least sign of immaturity he writes two long poems, a hundred and fifty Sonnets and thirty-five plays, all on the top of a day's work earning his living. Between them these works display an enormous range of knowledge and a vocabulary unused by any man before or since, but not a single manuscript line of this vast output survives. He then retired (just after Oxford's death, be it noted) to Stratford, and at once reverts to his previous status. There is here no flicker of mental grandeur; no one comes to honour him in his retirement, nor does he take the slightest interest in the publication of his works in London, though it would seem that many of them were finished or worked over by other hands than his. He ignores the Queen's death, and his own is equally ignored, though all the poets of the day assembled in Westminster Abbey to do reverence to Ben Jonson as he was lowered to his grave. In his will he left no book nor mention of manuscript, and the only monument erected to his memory was that attributable to a self-made local worthy, with the hands of the figure resting on what looks, from an old engraving, like a sack of malt. (The present monument seems to date from the eighteenth century.) All this being so I entirely agree with Looney when he says:

It is *difficult* to believe that with such a beginning he could have attained to such heights as he is supposed to have done. It is *more*

difficult to believe that with such glorious achievements in his middle period he could have fallen to the level of his closing period; and in time it will be fully recognized that it is *impossible* to believe that the same man could have accomplished two such stupendous and mutually nullifying feats. . . . The perfect unity of the two extremes justifies the conclusion that the middle period is an illusion.

What is the explanation? Is it to be found in that much-abused escape from many problems, genius? I agree that the deeps of the human mind are still unplumbed, and that some men in their development o'ertop the rest as Everest o'er Brighton pier. But genius, whatever else, is a faculty of mind, and cannot of itself produce objective knowledge which has not yet entered the brain. True, Keats wrought, with his mother tongue and knowledge precociously acquired, immortal poetry; and Kipling could absorb the atmosphere and jargon of a strange employment and write as though he had spent his life in it. But how can the 'genius' of a village yokel write, within a short time of his reaching London, poems and plays which display considerable knowledge of Latin, Greek, French, Italian; law and medicine; war, the sea, fencing, heraldry and hawking; travel, and foreign cities in great detail; diplomacy and the niceties of Court etiquette; the working of a mind o'erwrought with autocratic power; and the intimate lives of the great, even of the greatest, of the innermost thoughts of kings and queens? Surely this needs years of training, preferably in a mind that was born to it—not scraps from borrowed books and key-hole listening. Genius won't do. And why should it be assumed, in the lack of evidence, that Shakspeare of Stratford had a spark of it? I do not believe it, and my lack of belief is based on lack of evidence.

Who, then, was the author of the poems and plays? Freed from the dead-weight of a carefully contrived tradition, to which the author contributed by his use of a pseudonym, and which he may have lived to regret, we are free to enquire. It may be that the truth is great and will (in time) prevail, but we might as well give the lady a little assistance. If we knew nothing of the author, and no tradition existed as to his identity, we should never look for him in Stratford nor expect to find him in the provincial tradesman who is worshipped today as the God of English literature. There are far more likely candidates in the field for this great honour, most of them members of that travelled, cultured and highly accomplished group of brilliant minds that, linked by the ties of marriage, wealth and common interest, clustered, planet-like, about their enigmatic and most brilliant Queen. Here, surely, one would look for the face of 'Shakespeare'. Or had he a single face to find? The modern pundits take

the view that several writers had a hand in the vast array of works which today appear under the name of Shakespeare. The influence of this and that contemporary writer is freely admitted; whole acts are given to Fletcher and Chapman, and even whole plays, like *Timon* and *Pericles*, are now abstracted by some authorities from the corpus of the great man's work. How many names, then, made up 'Shakespeare'? If several, may not the Earl of Oxford, 'the best for comedy' of his day, a recognized poet withal, and one who had his own company of players, be reasonably included? And if added at all, may not his true place be at the heart, as the mass of available evidence would lead one to suppose? *Per contra*, where is the true place of William of Stratford, the indifferent actor from the provinces whom Ben Jonson alone, in equivocal words, describes as the author of the plays?

Yet even if more than one hand wrote the works of Shakespeare as they stand today, the fire and splendour of them are the product of a widely cultured, sensitive and aristocratic mind. While many an accomplished courtier might have written or suggested material for a speech or even a scene, one mind shines dominant in a dozen plays the like of which we have not seen from that day to our own. This one man in a thousand years of English history is in truth incomparable. How shall we find him?

I like Looney's approach, and have used it myself in more than one big trial. It is scientific, unbiassed by theory, and depends on no assumptions. Circumstantial evidence can be stronger than direct evidence, and when a dozen fingers point in the same direction, one may approach very near to that desirable ideal, proof. Consider the corpus of the works, says Looney, and write down what may safely be said about the author, whoever he may be. Then look for a man who satisfies those characteristics. If you find one man who supplies them all, one final question remains and the search is ended. Could there be two men living at the same time who embodied the attributes demanded, and about whom there is nothing to destroy the apparent identity? If not, there is your man. As applied to a murder trial this method is most convincing. Is it less so when the search is for an author and not a murderer? When in addition there are other factors of proof, and the most searching enquiry fails to discover a single factor to destroy the identity of evidence and man, does even a Shakespeare pundit want much more? Looney gave eighteen points, and elaborated each of them. Miss Amphlett has condensed these into fourteen points, not all the same. Each is examined independently, without assumptions, and it is for the reader to decide their validity. Even if fifty per cent are rejected as far-fetched or in any

way unproved there remains an abundance of uncommon attributes which must appear in the author, and although one or two or three prove very little the proof mounts rapidly, with geometric progression, as the number grows to twelve and, as I suggest, fourteen.

What, then, do the orthodox Stratfordians say, assuming, which is not to be too lightly admitted, that their minds are truly open to evidence, when it is found that of Looney's eighteen points or Miss Amphlett's fourteen points, *not one* applies to the man of Stratford, and *every single one* applies to Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford?

In this analysis the chronology of the plays is examined as never before. Hitherto all matters of dating began with the assumption that Shakspeare of Stratford was the playwright, and that he could not have come to London before a certain date. But what if the author be a man born not in 1564 but in 1550? The field is again wide open, and several scholars, among them Rear-Admiral Holland, President of the Shakespeare Fellowship, have revised the whole chronology in the light of de Vere as author, and thereby resolved a hundred problems solely created by the assumptions of the orthodox. For the first time a thousand—and I do not exaggerate—contemporary allusions, parallels of character and wording, and identical mannerisms of self-expression sweetly fall into place. Some of the plays are found to be pure biography, and many a character reflects, in speech or incident, in vice or virtue, the friends and enemies of the man who was most truly Shakespeare.

I repeat, I write as a lawyer, accustomed to rejecting anything which is not verified fact or something near to it, and accustomed to eschew all argument that is not reasonably based on the evidence. Moreover I am accustomed, whether I prosecute or defend in a particular case, or try it, to look, having heard the case for one side, at the case, if any, for the other. I therefore find the silence of the orthodox fraternity of the greatest interest. To regard the attack on Stratford as the vapouring of fools and cranks is now unworthy of the Shakespeare scholar. If men like Emerson and Bismarck, Palmerston, John Bright, Galsworthy and Henry James, 'Mark Twain', Whittier, and in more recent times Sir George Greenwood, Captain B. M. Ward, and the late Miss Marjorie Bowen were all convinced that the claims of Stratford were at least unproved, and that the claims of other candidates were worthy to be examined, why do these living scholars not examine afresh the available evidence, and look for new?

For there is plenty more evidence to be found, and fresh research is constantly adding to the proofs available. If the most intensive effort has failed to produce a single line in the hand of William

Shakspeare, more and more evidence comes to light as to the real author of the Sonnets and the poems and plays. But I have written enough, for it is Miss Amphlett who is writing this book, the experienced scholar and not the new enthusiast. For many years she has patiently accumulated fact after fact in support of her thesis, and here presents an original attempt to prove, with tested fact and argument, her twofold firm belief, that William Shakspeare had no hand in the works of Shakespeare, and that the actual author was de Vere. The date is 1954. De Vere died just three hundred and fifty years ago, and even his burial place is today unknown. Is it not time to do him honour, even as they pull down Brooke House, Hackney, the house wherein he died? Be patient, my masters, and at least give audience to fact and close-knit reasoning. Hereafter we shall abide your judgment, so that it be, as a worthy juror's verdict should be, 'in accordance with the evidence'.

CHAPTER 1

THE SHAKESPEARE LEGEND

EVERYONE interested in the literature of our country must have heard of the Shakespeare Authorship Question. It is a perennial one; more than that, it is almost diurnal, for hardly can one open a literary paper or magazine without seeing some reference to it, if only oblique, casual or maybe flippant.

As the years pass the avalanche of Shakespearian criticism is gaining momentum. It cannot be ignored.

At least since 1769, and perhaps earlier, the fabric of Stratfordian orthodoxy (that is: the belief that William Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon, the malt and corn merchant, was the author of the 'Shakespeare' plays and poems) has been increasingly undermined, until it has now assumed the angle of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and before long no underpinning will keep it erect. Even the least astute, as they study the new 'angle', can see that it is out of alignment.

Many writers have arisen to attack or defend the edifice, and indeed, there has 'been much throwing about of brains'. Moreover, it is a question so buried in antiquity's obscurities, and regarded by the many with so much prejudice, that investigations have been retarded; here I shall present a working hypothesis which I am convinced will ultimately unravel the mystery. What is needed is literary sleuth-hounds to seek into all manuscript hide-outs, to turn over every poetic pile that has accumulated through the ages, and to sift and weigh the evidence obtained. Unfortunately the Elizabethans can never be accused of calling a spade a spade; they loved ambiguities, innuendos, anagrams, cryptograms and puns, and their true meaning has to be sought out, their ambiguities clarified by the correlation of their history, date, style, probability and possibility.

In this book I propose to set out the problem, re-state the difficulties, suggest the deductions arrived at by the light of recent research, and leave the reader to decide which thesis is the most tenable. Thus may he form his own conclusions, for I will state *facts* as such, and the rest as probabilities, hypothesis, tradition or mere conjecture.

Immediately a voice is raised: 'We have the plays; what does it matter who wrote them?'

If you are really a Shakespeare lover, it matters greatly. First, because we are a nation which likes to give honour where honour is due, and more particularly because, when you have the personality of

the author in your mind, the plays, and to a greater degree the Sonnets, attain new and personal depths. Lines which the Stratfordians dismiss as enigmas or poetical exercises become passionate declarations of a biographical nature. Jokes in the comedies, which were inane from lack of understanding, become personal or topical quips. A perception of the live hand and brain that conceived and wrote the plays adds infinities of enjoyment to the plays themselves.

So let me set forth every point of the case as in a court of law, re-sift the evidence, and let the reader be his own jury of good men and true.

Taking first the posthumous fame of the great playwright (as personified in William Shakspeare, of Stratford-on-Avon), what was it to begin with and how has it grown?

William Shakspeare (whose name was written Shaxpere, Shaksper, Shaxbere, Shagsbere, Shaxberd, but *never* Shakespeare) died at Stratford-on-Avon, at the age of fifty-two, 'unhonoured and unsung'. No poet came forward with a lament or a paeon of praise for England's greatest writer. Yet it has been customary, at least from the time when Moschus lamented the death of Bion, poet-author of the 'Death of Adonis', in such lines as:

Ye nightingales, that perch amongst the sprays,
Tune to melodious elegy your lays
And bid the stream of Arethuse deplore,
Dion's sad fate—loved Bion is no more.

down to Shelley's 'Adonais' with its heartfelt cry for the death of John Keats,

He will a^lake no more, oh! never more.

for one poet to bewail the passing of a previous great singer of songs, but not one line was penned for Shakspeare. His passing at Stratford-on-Avon was entirely unnoticed, yet he had lived possibly nineteen years amongst his friends, the actors, and certainly twelve as a retired country gentleman. There was no blight over his closing years, no disgrace that could have caused men to avoid honouring him. Dr. Boas, an orthodox Stratfordian, avowed it was amazing to recall that there had been discovered fifty allusions to the death of Ben Jonson, but not one to that of Shakspeare. He was frankly puzzled.

Dying, Shakspeare left a will bearing no literary or poetic significance, and so was forgotten, apparently, for seven years; until, in fact, Ben Jonson awoke, and belatedly penned that wretched piece of doggerel placed under the worse engraving which stood as a frontispiece to the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays published in 1632.

This figure, that thou here seest put,
 It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
 Wherein the Graver had a strife
 With Nature, to out-do the life:
 O, could he but have drawn his wit
 As well in brass, as he hath hit
 His face; the print would then surpass
 All, that was ever writ in brass.
 But, since he cannot, Reader, look,
 Not on his Picture, but his book.

Ben Jonson.

Was this the very best for the best of poets? Sixteen hundred years earlier Moschus could lament the death of one who had written the loves of Venus and Adonis, as had Shakespeare, in such lines as:

See, Venus, too, her beauteous bosom beat,
 She loved her Shepherd more than kisses sweet,
 More than those last dear kisses which in death
 She gave Adonis—and imbibed his breath.

Yet Felix Schilling says 'Jonson is unsurpassed, too, in the difficult poetry of compliment'. Somewhat of a backhanded one this, for he seems to think the wretched Droeshout engraving (see Plate I), which barely resembles a human face, is a good likeness. But I shall have more to say about the Droeshout engraving when discussing 'Shakespeare' portraits generally.

Jonson's verse, however, is only a kind of 'motto' under the picture; we also have his dedicatory lines prefixed to the First Folio of the plays:

To the memory of my beloved, the author, Master William Shakespeare, and what he hath left us.

amongst which we find:

Nature herself was proud of his designs,
 And joy'd to wear the dressing of his lines;
 Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
 As since she will vouchsafe no other wit:

Yet this same man, who wrote this for the public eye, had privately told William Drummond of Hawthornden in 1619 that 'Shakespeare wanted arte', and affirmed that that was the censure of the English Poets. Did he change his mind during the intervening four years? Or was there some other reason for this *volte face* and puff to send off the Folio?

It has been asked—would 'Honest Ben' lie? Certainly, if he got a

laugh out of it, for Ben was a humorist, as those who have rocked with laughter through a production of *The Alchemist*, or chuckled to tears when reading *The Poetaster*, will know and understand. The reason why Ben may have 'lied' will appear later.

Surely such lines as:

Sweet Swan of Avon, what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That did so take Eliza and our James!

were not intended seriously either as poetry or sense. Shakspeare had been dead seven years—it would certainly be a 'sight' should he appear upon the banks of Thames as the Ghost of a Swan!

Let us proceed to the lines by Leonard Digges 'which also precede the works in the First Folio. These are as unreadable in their extraordinary 'stops', as the verse recited by the 'Prologue' to the play of Pyramus and Thisbe in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—for 'this fellow does not stand upon points'.

Shakespeare, at length thy pious fellows give
The world thy works; thy works, by which outlive
Thy tomb thy name must: when that stone is rent
And time dissolves thy Stratford monument

There were more lines than those published, but evidently they were too much for Ben Jonson's sense of humour, and they were deleted, not appearing in print until the 1640 *'Book of Poems*, by Will: Shakespeare. Gent.'

The reference to the Stratford 'moniment' proves its existence in the church of Stratford-on-Avon before the publication of the Folio, and to its probable erection earlier that year.

William Shakspeare apparently had the right to be buried in the chancel, not as a great dramatist but as a payer of tithes, and the monument was erected on the north wall. Under the bust, which elicited from Gainsborough, the painter, and observer of hundreds of countenances, the exclamation: 'I think a stupider face I never beheld!', there is the four-lined verse which one is ashamed to repeat:

Good friend for Jesus sake forbear,
To digg the dust enclosed heare:
Blest be ye man yt spares thes stones,
And curst be he yt moves my bones.

This undoubtedly must have been one of a stock of verses in the monumental mason's book, chosen perhaps, as we choose Christmas

cards bearing inane lines, by Shakspeare's illiterate daughter, Susanna, who would have had them read to her by the mason or his apprentice. They jingle, and would, I surmise, sound well to an uneducated ear.

But surely, surely they were not penned by the man who wrote:

Not marble nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme.²

He knew that he did not need an ill-carved bust in a church to keep his place for ever in men's hearts.

William Hall, writing in 1694 after visiting Stratford-on-Avon, said that Shakspeare wrote the lines himself, ordering them to be cut upon his gravestone, as he foresaw a day when his bones might be moved to the charnel house in the rear of the church (which charnel house was only demolished in 1800); but he concludes amusingly, 'W. S. was laid full 17 foot deep, deep enough to secure him—So much for Stratford!'

More amusingly Mr. S. M. Campbell in 1888 wrote:³

What do these pathetic lines mean but that he foresaw a time when his imposture would be discovered and tried to guard against the probability of his dust being taken up and scattered to the four winds by an outraged people of England!

Byron, witty but sardonic, comments:

To leave, when the original is dust;
A name, a wretched picture and worse bust.

This three-quarter length portrait bust (see Plate II) was made by a Flemish mason named Janssen resident on Bankside, but whether in its present form or not is a debatable point, for William Dugdale,⁴ the antiquarian, when collecting interesting items for his book on Warwickshire, in 1656, drew a monument which differs very considerably from the present erection (see Plate II). This was engraved by Wenceslaus Hollar and shows a lean-faced man, with a small beard and only slightly bald forehead, whose hands rest upon a sack stuffed with some commodity which conceivably might be wool or corn, whilst the *putti* that decorate the architrave are perched on the very edge with their legs dangling, in the manner of those on the tomb of Henry VII in Westminster Abbey, rather than the little figurines which now squat on the Stratford monument. The left-hand *putto*, in the old engraving, holds an hour-glass as a symbol that 'time marches on', and in the present monument he has his hand upon (I'm not sure he's not actually sitting on) a skull; the symbol having the same meaning.

Our present bust shows a fat-faced man who holds, not a sack, for that would not be a symbol for a writer, but a pen, and has a paper lying before him on a thin cushion.

When did the transformation from the merchant to the author take place? Who perpetrated the deceit, and why?

In 1746 the monument was much decayed, and the proceeds of a performance of *Othello* was devoted to its restoration and 'beautifying'. A guess was made that the change from what Dugdale saw to what we now see was then accomplished, but there has more recently come to light a volume of Shakespeare's plays of 1725, which shows a drawing of the monument more or less as it is at present. This narrows down the period during which the alteration may have been made, but there still remains over a hundred years (1623-1725) for some interested person to have tampered with it.

Mr. Spielmann, in his monograph on the Stratford monument, has tried to convince his readers that Dugdale's drawing or Hollar's engraving was inaccurate, as sometimes artists prepared such work without having seen the original. I think this most unlikely. There is no reason to doubt that Dugdale made his sketch in Stratford church, and Hollar copied it carefully. If Hollar had deviated from the drawing Dugdale would have corrected the proof, for we have Dr. Wittaker's testimony that 'Scrupulous accuracy united with stubborn integrity' makes Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* take the 'rank of legal evidence'.

Speaking as an artist, I should not draw a man with a woolsack when I had seen a man with a pen, because a pen is an adjunct of a writer, as a woolsack is that of a stapler or a corn-sack that of a merchant; nor should I draw a *putto* with an hour-glass when I had seen one with a skull.

In confirmation of the symbolism of the woolsack as shown on Shakspeare's original monument there may be seen in All Saints' Church, Stamford, Lincolnshire, a brass to the memory of William Browne and his wife, Margret. Browne was a wool merchant of some substance, and had the brass laid down during his lifetime. Here he is shown with his feet slightly apart—each planted on a woolsack to denote his trade.

Mrs. Carmichael Stopes,⁵ the author of a life of the Earl of Southampton, whose career she pursued avidly to find a contact between the Earl and Shakespeare, the poet and playwright, only to be disappointed and disillusioned in the end, wrote of the monument:

Everyone who approaches the Stratford bust is more disappointed in it as a revelation of the poet than even the crude lines of Droeshout. There is an entire lack of the faintest suggestion of poetical or spiritual

inspiration in its plump earthiness... . The pen strives to write 'this is a literary man', but there is nothing to support the attribution.

More recently Professor Dover Wilson, when writing of the monument in *The Essential Shakespeare*, says, 'The proportions of it are admirable,' but referring to the face of the bust he exclaims 'it might suit well enough with an affluent and retired butcher, but it does a gross wrong to a dead poet. . . . "Some men there are love not a gaping pig", and for half the unlearned world this Shakespeare simply will not do.' Nor, I surmise, for the learned either.

In 1769 Horace Walpole ' wrote: 'I did not stop until I came to Stratford-on-Avon, the wretchedest old town I ever saw, which I intended for Shakespeare's sake to find snug, pretty and antique—not old. . . . The bountiful corporation have exceedingly bepainted Shakespeare,' meaning, of course, the bust.

I feel confident there have been many of these onslaughts of 'beautifying' the monument, during one of which the pen was added to make the man fit his works.

The 1623 Folio is dedicated in a wordy preamble 'to the most noble and incomparable pair of brethren, William, Earl of Pembroke . . . and Philip, Earl of Montgomery', by two actor-producers, John Heminge and Henry Condell. The dedication to nobility is followed by another preamble 'to the Great Variety of Readers' which is little more than an advertisement in which they cry up their wares, inducing the public to buy and read; whilst in their former dedication they humbly offer their 'trifles' to their 'singular good lords', 'consecrating to your H. H. these remains of your servant SHAKESPEARE that what delight is in them may be ever your L. L. the reputation his and the faults ours, if any be committed by a pair so careful to show gratitude both to the living and the dead'.

Yet twelve years later, when relatives of the actor Richard Burbage made a petition to this same Earl of Pembroke (who, as they say in the dedication, had 'prosecuted both them [the plays] and the author [Shakespeare] with so much favour') the utmost they can advance as a recommendation is—'to ourselves, we joined those deserving men, Shakspeare, Hemming, Condell, Philips and others'.

If they referred to the great dramatist as merely a *deserving man*, one among many others, is this not carrying humility to the point of absurdity? Would not the petitioners have reminded the Earl that one of their number, Shakspeare to wit, was he whose incomparable works had been dedicated to him and his brother? Then surely he would have remembered his *deserts* and have lent a kindly ear to their petition.

Furthermore, the petitioner adds that when they owned the

Blackfriars Theatre they 'placed men-players which were Hemmings, Condell, Shakspeare etc.' So the proprietors of those play-houses which produced the bulk of the Shakespearian dramas remembered their author as merely a *man-player* and a *deserving man*. Evidently 'the good' was 'interred with his bones'. But if the Shakspeare to whom they referred was merely a man player, one of their numerous company, and not the author Shake-speare, which both Ben Jonson and the Earl knew, then the petition takes on a reasonable aspect.

The dedication of the First Folio is now generally ascribed to Ben Jonson, along with the dedicatory poem, and the two actors seem to have been 'stooges' for Ben's knowing witticisms.

Thus, but for the large volumes decorating the libraries of the nobility, and the limited numbers of copies bought and treasured by those literary devotees amongst the 'Great Variety of Readers', Shakespeare's fame suffered somewhat of an eclipse during the first half of the new century. Certain playwrights echoed some of his lines in their own plays, but the growth of Puritanism and the censure of all plays and players drove the 'Amusement Board' underground. This, together with the fact that Stratford was definitely anti-royalist during the Civil War, and that Shakspeare's son-in-law, Dr. Hall, was a leader of the Puritan faction, may account for the extraordinary phenomenon that when a company of actors, to which, it was reputed, Shakspeare had belonged, came to Stratford in 1622, they were given six shillings *not* to perform! The authorities forbade the acting of a play, even one written by the son of their late alderman!

In 1632 Milton's first published poem was affixed to a Second Folio edition of the plays, in which the 'Monument' seems to be given pre-eminence:

What needs my Shakespeare for his honour'd bones,
The labour of an age in piled stones?
Or that his hallow'd reliques should lie hid
Under a star-y-pointed pyramid?
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a live-long monument.

Milton knew nothing of William of Stratford, and is concerned only with his works and his fame. The same may be said of *In Remembrance of Shakespeare* by William Davenant, though he claimed, according to the gossip John Aubrey, to be Shakspeare's bastard son.

Indeed, the anomalies of Ben Jonson's utterances,⁷ the 'wretched

picture and worse bust', the silence of the poets, and the incoming of Puritan legislation gave the 'Shakespeare Legend' a slow send-off.

Even the vicar of Stratford (1662-1681) when recording in his diary the following passage of local interest: 'Shakespeare, Drayton and Ben Jonson, had a merry meeting and it seems drank too hard for Shakespeare died of a fever then contracted——' confessed that he knew very little of Shakespeare's works and 'must remember to peruse them'.

On which Ivor Brown and his collaborator George Fearon in *The Amazing Monument* comment: 'That the vicar of Stratford could admit such ignorance of the town's immortal son and Avon's matchless Swan shows how little progress had been made locally by the Shakespeare Industry within fifty years after the poet's death.'

Is it not curious, also, that Michael Drayton in his autobiography did not remember, or was not sufficiently interested, to relate the story of this 'merry meeting' with its disastrous effect on his friend? And, furthermore, that Ben Jonson was equally silent about his alleged participation in the divine bard's last convivial drinking bout? The only solution can be that it is an apocryphal story, unless, as seems more likely, the man of Stratford was not of enough interest to anyone for his demise to be recorded.

After the Restoration Thomas Betterton aroused renewed interest in the plays by acting the characters of Lear, Hamlet, etc. He even made a pilgrimage to "Stratford-on-Avon; perhaps following the advice of one Lieutenant Hammond who had, in 1634, visited the town, 'observed the monument', and like Dover Wilson, had approved it, terming it 'neat'.

Pepys was a great admirer of Betterton and saw a number of Shakespeare plays in the 1660's. *Hamlet* he praised, but *A Midsummer Night's Dream* elicited from him the censorious note: 'To the King's Theatre, where we saw *Midsummer Night's Dream* which I had never seen before, nor ever shall again, for it is the most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life.'⁸ Tastes had changed! Of *Macbeth* he recorded 'these old plays disgust in our more refined days'. This was also the opinion of Dryden; and it comes as a shock to us to hear that the coarse days of Hogarth and Titus Gates should have been deemed more refined than the age of 'Gloriana', or that Shakespearian beauties should disgust when Restoration plays such as Otway's *Venice Preserved* should pass the moral-artistic censor.

Nevertheless Betterton's acting, the growing interest in the Shakespeare dramas, even their criticism, brought a tentative desire to know more of their author, and when Rowe published his edition of

the plays in 1709 he prefaced it with a *Life* of William Shakspeare, mostly culled from the *Brief Lives* (1681) of the loquacious and credulous John Aubrey. Of this I shall speak again when reviewing the life of the man of Stratford; at the moment we are only considering his after-fame.

In mid-eighteenth century we find Horace Walpole, when requisitioning portraits of famous men to decorate his pseudo-Gothic house at Strawberry Hill, ordering also one of Shakespeare, but whether he acquired a copy in oils of the Droeshout engraving or a purely imaginative one is not recorded. Perhaps it was this portrait that gave him—and us—*Historic Doubts*.

And here, in the second half of the eighteenth century, Shakspeare's fame rose on the wave of enthusiasm created by the actor David Garrick.

Garrick, the darling of London, at the height of his popularity, straight from portraying Shakespeare's most exacting roles, organized a Jubilee at Stratford-on-Avon to commemorate the birthday of the great dramatist.

Already we have seen that the inhabitants of the little Warwickshire town had become aware that Shakspeare was news. Had they not 'furbished up anew' the monument in 1746? Now they welcomed Garrick with open arms, granting him the freedom of the borough. Gone were the days when the companions of the actor Shakspeare were given six shillings with a 'flea in the ear' and told to go away. Race week was chosen, and a special hall built to seat 1,000 spectators in addition to the 100-strong orchestra which was to be presided over by the famous Dr. Arne.

Thirty cannon were set up on the river-bank, and fairy-lights designed and arranged by an Italian were to be a special feature of the evening's festivities, along with a display of fireworks: a burst of pyrotechnics was thus arranged to honour the bard and Mr. Garrick!

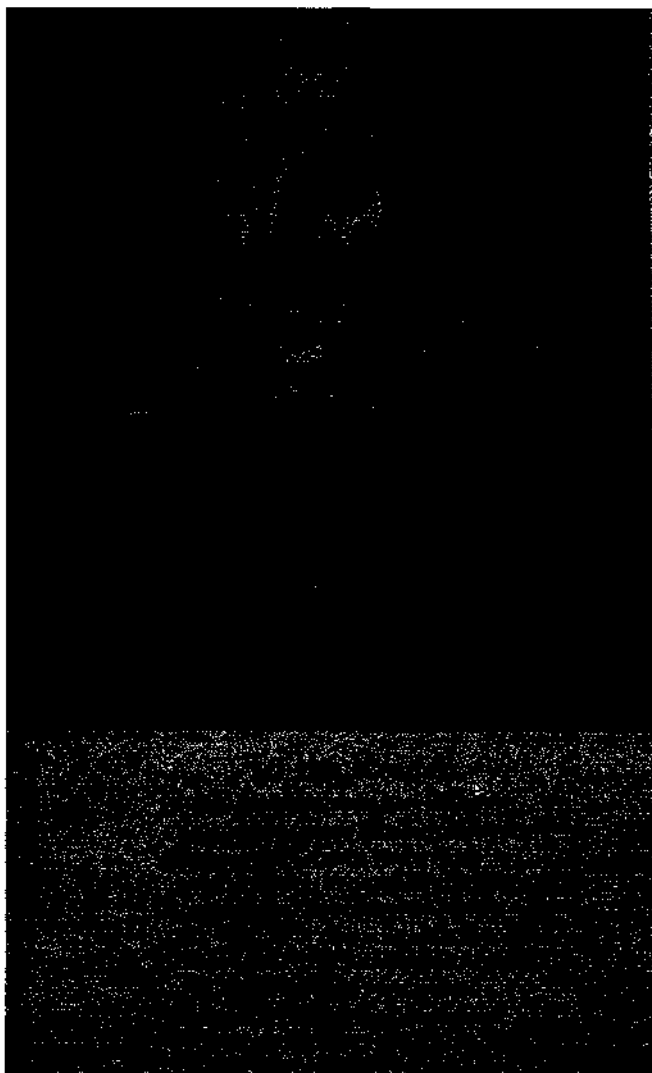
Rain spoilt the illuminations and damped the gunpowder, but not the ardour of Mr. Garrick nor his audience in the Town Hall when he recited his verses, especially written for the occasion, wherein a reiteration of 'Shakespeare, Shakespeare, Shakespeare' if not poetical at least increased the citizens' enthusiasm.

Indeed, poetry seems to have been at a discount if the couplet, quoted by Mr. Ivor Brown, be a sample of the rest.

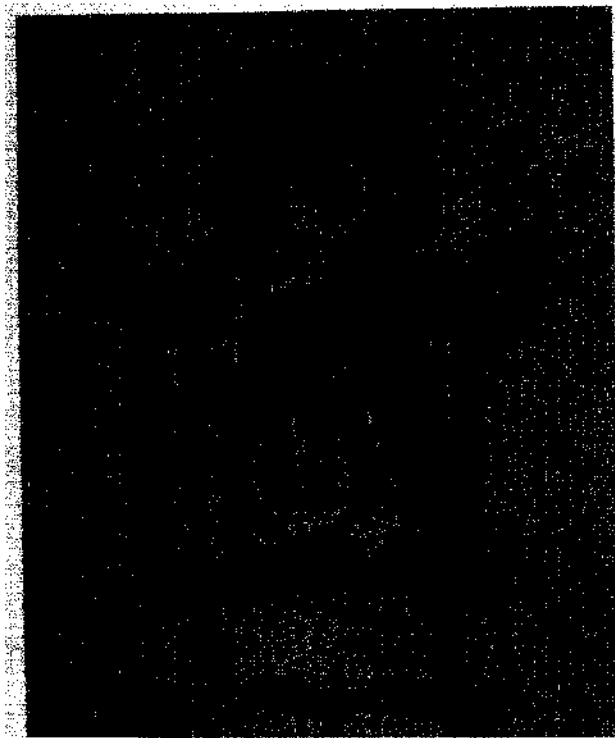
Untouched and sacred be thy shrine
Avonian Willy, bard divine.

Whether or no the Jubilee enhanced Garrick's reputation, seeing

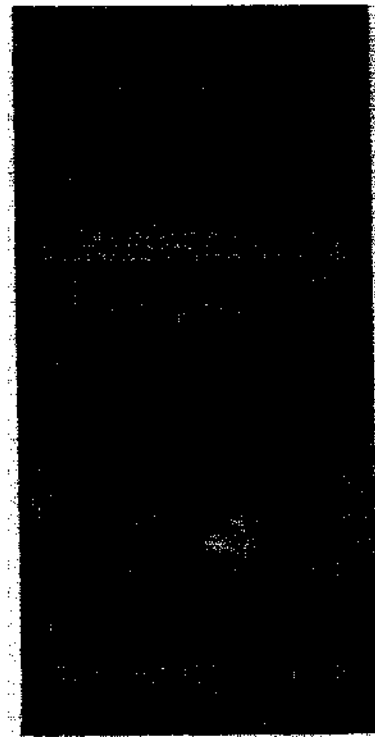
PLATE I



THE "DROESHOUT" PORTRAIT OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
with Ben Jonson's mysterious foreword



DRAWING IN DUGDALE'S " WARWICKSHIRE "
showing the *true* Stratford monument



WILLIAM SHAKSPFARF'S MONUMENT
in Stratford-on-Avon church

that it brought at least one reproof upon his head, as in *Shakespeare's Garland*:

Garrick, no more Jubilees and stuff,
Your acting gives your Shakespeare praise enough.¹⁰

it definitely increased that of the maltster of Stratford-on-Avon, which town now began to assume the status of a holy shrine.

Certainly Garrick was proud of his achievement, though Walpole could scathingly remark: 'I did not know the preface to the new Shakespeare was Garrick's. He is as fit to write it as a country curate an excellent sermon from having preached one of Tillotson's.'

Garrick saw no incongruity in the actors presenting the dramas in 'modern clothes' (powdered wigs and hooped skirts) but he genuinely admired the plays themselves, and, of course, realized that the chief parts were perfect vehicles to carry his own genius.

It was his showmanship that made him produce the Jubilee, and have himself painted by Gainsborough, leaning upon a bust of Shakspeare (not represented as in the Stratford bust—the 'stupid face' from which Gainsborough had recoiled in Stratford church—but one of his own fancy).¹¹

To quote Ivor Brown and George Fearon once more:

He stands in the Town Hall of Stratford leaning against 'Avonian Willy'. He has every right to be there, on Shakespeare's shoulder, among the names of Bailiffs and Mayors and Worshipful Persons. For, more than any of his age, he put Stratford on the English map, and served the Shakespeare Industry.

Before leaving Garrick we must see him once more in the guise of bardolator, this time from the pen of Horace Walpole:

John and I are going to Garrick's [Twickenham] with a grove of cypresses in our hands, like the Kentish men at the Conquest. He has built a Temple to his master Shakespeare, and I am going to decorate it outside, since he modestly would not let me decorate it within, with these mottos:

That I spirit have and nature
That sense breathes in every feature
That I please, if please I do
Shakespeare all I owe to you.¹²

But I will spare the reader any more of these delightful pranks of our ancestors, and proceed with our history and discussion.

New Place, the house at Stratford-on-Avon bought by William Shakspeare for £60 in 1597, passed on his death to his daughter

Susanna, the wife of Dr. Hall, and thence to her daughter Elizabeth, who became firstly the wife of Thomas Nashe, and secondly of John Barnard, who, at the Restoration, was created a baronet, so that Shakspeare's grand-daughter became Lady Barnard.

When this second husband died in 1670 Lady Barnard put New Place up for sale, and by 1680 it had passed into the hands of Barbara Clopton, whose husband proceeded to 'modernize' it, so that its original Tudor characteristics disappeared. This, to those who revered tradition connected with the poet, was bad enough, but worse was to come. Another sale brought as owner of New Place the Rev. Francis Gastrill, sometime vicar of Frodsham, who, in 1759, after a residence of only eight years, completely demolished the house, having previously made an onslaught upon the mulberry tree which, according to legend, had been planted in the garden by Will. Shakspeare himself. These acts of vandalism the reverend gentleman perpetrated to spite the Shakespeare 'fans' who, wishing to see and touch something which they believed had belonged to the great dramatist, made his life a nightmare. Having hacked down the tree, and pulled down the house, Francis Gastrill departed from Stratford an embittered man.

Meanwhile a certain Thomas Sharp, living up to his name, had acquired the mulberry tree, and proceeded to convert its wood into trinkets for sale to souvenir hunters. Forty-six years later such trinkets, ranging from paper-weights to pipe stoppers, were still issuing from his workshop, and when there was a raising of eyebrows and sarcastic smiles by those who thought that a mulberry tree, like 'une peau de chagrin', could not be stretched, Thomas Sharp, then nearing his end, signed an affidavit to the effect that he had never used any other wood than that of the original tree.

It was not, until 1850-60 that the so-called birthplace, now the chief shrine of the Shakespeare 'fans', was restored (from a small dilapidated house, one portion of which had been used as a butcher's shop in tradition with its origin) to that neat, pseudo-Tudor place we see today.

In 1741 a bust of 'Shakespeare', not a copy of the Stratford one, but a fanciful, more handsome version by Peter Scheemakers from a design by William Kent, was erected in Westminster Abbey,¹⁸ though, in accordance with the wish of the Stratford player, his bones were left undisturbed in their original grave.

In 1879 Baron Albert Grant gave the statue which now decorates Leicester Square, and nine years later there was unveiled at Stratford-on-Avon the famous memorial where the poet sits on a high pedestal, at the base of which are four statues representing Prince Hal,

PLATE III



[Photo: Malcolm McNeill.]

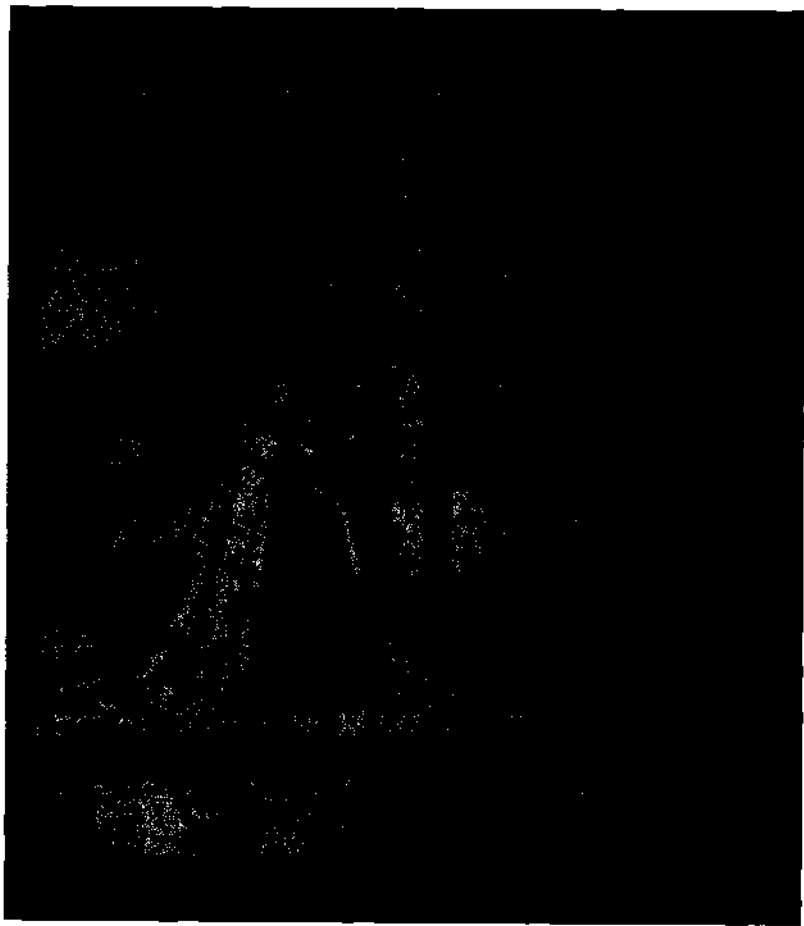
LORD BURLEIGH PRESIDING OVER THE COURT OF WARDS
(From a painting by Marcus Gheereads)



[Photo: F. L. Nichols.]

HEDINGHAM CASTLE KEEP

PLATE IV



THE EARL OF OXFORD BEARING THE SWORD OF STATE BEFORE
QUEEN ELIZABETH AT WINDSOR CASTLE, 18TH JUNE, 1572
(By Wenceslaus Hollar after Marcus Gheereads, British Museum)

Falstaff, Lady Macbeth and Hamlet. The theatre was already in existence, having been opened in 1879. A fire destroyed this building in 1926, but it was re-built and again opened in 1932.

In 1912 a monument was built against the wall of Southwark Cathedral and unveiled by Sir Sidney Lee, in which 'Shakespeare' in alabaster, looking for all the world like a sucked jelly-baby, leans on one elbow; whilst more recent still is the plaque erected on the side of a dreary wall on Bankside to commemorate the building of the Globe Theatre on or near that site. Here W. S. is more idealized and the 'gaping pig' of Stratford is forgotten.

Americans have taken the Bard to their hearts, and the Folger Library in Washington has the largest collection of Shaksperiana in the world, including 79 First Folios.

The Cowden Clarkes did a stupendous work in preparing for the Shakespeare plays that which Alexander Cruden had done for the Bible, and gave us the invaluable *Concordance*.

It was in 1856 that John Shakespeare, a direct descendant of the Stratford player, bequeathed to the Trustees of the Shakespeare Birthplace and Museum the sum of £2,500 towards the repair and upkeep of the 'Shakespeare' Memorials, and particularly to help restore them to a semblance of their original Tudor aspect.

Presumed relics of the poet, after many amusing vicissitudes, were taken into safe custody, and more were presented from time to time by interested and generous donors. Today Stratford has become a shrine comparable with Canterbury in the middle ages, and thither the devotees wend their way, particularly on April 23rd, the presumed date of Shakespeare's birth, to walk in procession to the church, each carrying a floral tribute.

Stratford is a delightful town and no better setting could be desired; whilst just outside its precincts, in the more rural atmosphere of Shottery, stands 'Anne Hathaway's Cottage', also bought by the Trustees, under Act of Parliament. Finally, in 1930 Mary Arden's house in Wilmcote was acquired and the Shakespeare Memorial Showmanship received yet another fillip. Nothing has been omitted that could enhance the interest and attractiveness of the town, for, as the local literary organ, *The Stratford-upon-Avon Scene*, blatantly puts it, 'Stratford-on-Avon is a tourist centre; we need visitors for our economic stability.'

No objection can be raised to this outward and visible adoration of our greatest playwright by (for the most part) quite ignorant sightseers; but should we not make sure we are laying our tributes on the right altar?

Some there have been who think we are not: Henry James, for one, exclaiming:

I am a sort of haunted by the conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practised on a patient world.¹⁴

NOTES

1. Leonard Digges and the poet who signed himself I.M. (John Marston) were both close friends of Ben Jonson, the latter collaborating with him and George Chapman in *Eastward Ho!*
2. Sonnet No. 55.
3. Re-printed in *Dethroning Shakespeare*, a collection of letters edited by R. M. Theobald, M.A.
4. The original drawing is preserved at Merivale, home of the present Dugdales.
5. In *The Monthly Review*, April 1904.
6. *Walpolfs Letters*.
7. As instanced in the following: Ben Jonson said to Willam Drummond of Hawthornden that Shakespeare 'wanted arte', yet in his preface to the first Folio we find him saying:

Yet must I not give Nature all; thy art
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part:
For though the poet's matter nature be,
His art doth give the fashion.

8. *Pepys's Diary*.
- 9 & 10. Quoted by Ivor Brown and George Fearon in *The Amazing Monument*.
11. This portrait was destroyed by fire at Stratford-on-Avon but there is an excellent lithograph of it.
12. *Walpole's Letters*.
13. This statue represents Shakspeare in an absurd eighteenth-century version of sixteenth-century costume, and misquotes Shakespeare's *Tempest* on the scroll held in the hand of the poet. See *London for the Literary Pilgrim*, by William Kent, F.S.A., 1949.
14. Henry James, in a letter to Miss Violet Hunt, August 26th, 1902.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORIC DOUBTS

SIDE by side with the growth of the 'Shakespeare' Legend there grew insidious doubts that this parvenu of Stratford could have written the stupendous works published under his or a similar name, owing to his lack of education, his environment, his personality, and the fact that there is not extant a single piece of evidence to show that he did so.

Immediately I hear opposition raised—'but he was a genius'. Certainly genius can give amazing results from introspection and from the possession of a photographic and retentive memory, but a man cannot suddenly speak a foreign language by 'genius'; he has to be taught it—by books or word of mouth—or he has to live in the country where it is spoken. No genius can describe to me a 'euastrium' or a 'cosmarium' unless he has *studied* biology and looked at them under a microscope. Knocking around in a city will not teach a man French, Italian, law, dancing, hawking, strategy, court etiquette or the lay-out of foreign cities, and Shakspeare left no books from which he could have studied these things; at least he did not mention any in his will, though such possessions would have ranked higher in the estimation of a literary mind than a basin and ewer, which he did mention. Nor would it have been any use leaving a library (had he possessed one) to a daughter who could not read!

D. F. Losey, M.A., in his prefatory life to the *Kingsway* edition of *Shakespeare's Works* (1932) says: 'He [Shakspeare] left no explanation of himself or his books.'

Thinking in these terms, weighing up the incongruities that arise whenever the man of Stratford is approached, has caused men to doubt,

As early as 1694 William Hall, visiting Stratford-on-Avon and reading the verse beneath the bust of Shakspeare, wrote home to his son: 'The little learning these verses contain would be a very strong argument of ye wont of it in the author, did they not carry something in them which stands in need of comment.'

Horace Walpole in his *Historic Doubts*¹ says: 'It demands a great industry and patience to wade into such abstruse stores as records and charters: and they being jejune and narrow in themselves, very acute criticism is necessary to strike light from their assistance'; and further—'Partiality man cannot entirely divest himself of: it is so

natural that the bent of the writer to one side or the other of a question is almost always discoverable. But there is a wide difference between favouring—and lying——'

A little later we find Pope, the father of epigrams, writing, that Shakespeare:

For gain, not glory, winged his roving flight
And grew immortal in his own despite.²

In the year of the absurd Stratford Jubilee (1769) there appeared a publication entitled *The Adventures of Common Sense* by Hubert Lawrence, of which there is a later edition in French, published at Avignon 1777, from which Miss Katharine Eggar, A.R.A.M., has translated the following passage: [I must mention that it is told in the first person by Common Sense, who has a mother, Truth, a father, Wit, a step-father, Wisdom, a nurse, Prudence, a cousin, Genius, and a sister, Gaiety.]

My father [Wit], Genius and Gaiety had taken a trip to London, and there made acquaintance with a man of the Theatre. This man had been an unbridled libertine in his youth, and even a poacher, if one believed some people, there were others who denied this. However it was, there was no doubt that he had been a thief from his earliest days, no matter what he stole. My father [Wit] and his friends became suddenly very friendly with this man, who took his chance of extracting everything he could from them, and the better to hide his thefts he told them that enquiries were being made about them as accomplices in the plot concocted by the Queen of Scots to assassinate Queen Elizabeth.

In a panic, Wit, Genius and Gaiety fled to Holland and the Theatre man lost no time in examining their baggage.

He just cast his eyes on a commonplace book containing a variety of ways and forms in which to express different emotions.

He also found in a small dressing-case a mirror belonging to Genius, with which he was able to perceive not only the surface of objects, but to penetrate into the most secret crannies of the soul.

In a hat box, containing all the belongings and trinkets of Gaiety he found a mask of curious workmanship; it had the power to impart savour and infinite grace to everything which issued from the mouth of the wearer.

Just *how* he acquired these treasures was something that not a soul knew, but my mother [Truth] and myself [Common Sense]. That mask of Gaiety's was a thing we had long been acquainted with, but we both vowed to keep complete silence about the robbery, being afraid to put the man in the clutches of the law, as this we could never have done without depriving his country of its chiefest ornament.

The result was that with these materials he took to composing plays. I won't speak of his success. Suffices to mention the name SHAKESPEARE!

It will be seen that the author does not mince his words—he calls Shakspeare a libertine and a thief.

Possibly the Garrick Jubilee inspired this broadside—'Avonian Willy' had, in modern parlance, got under his skin—but the impression it made was slight. Garrick's thirty cannon and hundred-strong orchestra were guaranteed to drown such an amusing little fantasy, its import being so deeply hidden in its allegory.

The refrain of a song, published in the *London Magazine* for 1769,³ runs:

For the thief of all thieves was a Warwickshire thief.

It was written by a certain 'Mr. G.' which may mean that Garrick, at length, had endorsed Hubert Lawrence's opinion of Stratford 'Willy'.

Doubt continued to grow. In 1785 we are confronted by the first 'Baconian' (i.e. the thesis that the author of the plays was Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, Viscount St. Alban). This was a Dr. James Wilmot, Rector of Barton-on-the-Heath, near Stratford. A certain Mr. James Gorton Cowell, coming from Suffolk to Stratford to lecture on Shakespeare, met Dr. Wilmot who expounded to him *his* views, with the result that Mr. Cowell returned to his native town without giving his lecture.

A harmless-looking book called *The Romance of Yachting*, by J. C. Hart (1848), made the next assault on the Stratfordian stronghold, the author pertinently asking, 'Who were the able literary men who wrote the dramas imputed to Shakspeare?' In this work the following paragraph also appears: 'It is a fraud upon the world to thrust his surreptitious fame upon us. He had none that was worthy of being transmitted.'

Mr. Spalding (author of a life of Francis Bacon) in 1852 wrote an article—*Who wrote Shakespeare's Henry VIII?*, as he thought that two hands were perceptible in it, and he was followed by an anonymous writer who discussed the question, *Who wrote Shakespeare?*, in which he argued that W. S. must have 'kept a poet'.

Four years later Delia Bacon, an American, wrote a large work entitled *The Philosophy of Shakespeare's Plays Unfolded*, for which Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote an introduction, and in which the authoress, after refuting the orthodox case, set out one for the Elizabethan essayist.

Others who weighed up all the evidence, became puzzled, and openly doubted, include Mark Twain, in his book *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, and Whittier who said: 'Whether Bacon wrote the wonderful plays or not, I am quite sure the man Shakspeare neither did or

could.' To these must be added Oliver Wendell Holmes, Lowell, Lord Penzance,⁴ Judge Webb, Henry James and Emerson, who could not 'marry the man to his work'. But it was Walt Whitman who, writing more than half a century ago, came closest to plucking out the heart of the mystery. In *November Boughs* he wrote:

The English historical plays are to me not only most eminent as dramatic performances . . . but form, as we get it all, the chief in a complexity of puzzles. Conceiv'd out of the fullest heat and pulse of European feudalism—personifying in unparallel'd ways the mediaeval aristocracy, its towering spirit of ruthless and gigantic caste, its own peculiar air and arrogance (no mere imitation), only one of the 'wolfish earls' so plenteous in the plays themselves or some born descendant or knower, might seem to be the true author of those amazing works.

In 1881 Mr. Appleton-Morgan (a lawyer) published in America *The Shakespeare Myth*, in which he set out evidence against the accepted authorship of the plays, and in 1888 a correspondence was carried on through the *Daily Telegraph* which R. M. Theobald collected together, publishing all the arguments for and against in a book called *Dethroning Shakspeare*.

Although I deprecate the term used I cannot help agreeing with John Bright who pronounced his opinion thus: 'Any man who believes that William Shakspeare of Stratford wrote *Hamlet* or *Lear* is a fool.'

It was Sir George Greenwood who, in publishing his large volume *Is there a Shakespeare Problem?* and its successor, *The Shakespeare Problem Re-stated*, in 1908, has so tilted the stronghold of Shakespearian Orthodoxy that its final collapse cannot be indefinitely postponed. Indeed the writer who reviewed the book in the *Daily News* said, 'Let the biographers begin by answering Sir George Greenwood—I cannot!'

So far, only the 'Baconians' had attempted to replace the man of Stratford with a more likely claimant for Shakespearian honours, and that suggestion, befogged by the cryptograms of Ignatius Donnelly, met with loud denunciations.

Then in 1921 Mr. Thomas Looney, in his book *Shakespeare Identified*, advanced the theory that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, an acknowledged poet and playwright in his own era, was the true Shakespeare, and so far no serious opposition to this hypothesis has been forthcoming.

During the thirty-odd years that have elapsed since the publication of this Stratford-shattering thesis, a number of new theories have been worked out in print, many of them showing learning, thought and reasoning, but they remain unconvincing. Thus we have Pro-

fessor Abel Lefranc's⁵ protégé, the Earl of Derby; Mr. Claud Sykes's⁶ well-argued book for the Earl of Rutland; and even a tentative suggestion that the plays were written by a woman, Ann Whatley, the young person to whom Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon may have been contracted in marriage before he espoused Anne Hathaway. These will be dealt with separately in a later chapter.

A more realistic method of solving the problem was attempted in 1938, by Mr. Roderic Eagle, a Baconian. Working on the clue that early in the sixteenth century, William Camden had reported that 'mournful elegies and poems, with the pens that wrote them' had been thrown into the tomb of Edmund Spenser, he gained permission to excavate beneath the paving of Westminster Abbey in search of the poet's coffin, hoping to find amongst the elegies one in the handwriting of Shakspeare—or Bacon—and thus settle the question for all time. Unfortunately the wrong spot was chosen for the delving, and Spenser's tomb was never located.

No 'mournful elegies' were written on Shakspeare's death, so it was no use looking at Stratford, even if one was disposed to ignore his petty-minded curse and disturb his bones.

But before going further into the mystery it is necessary to examine the records of the life of William Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon, in order to discover what is really known about him.

NOTES

1. In the section devoted to Richard III.
2. Pope. *Imitations of Horace. To Augustus*, Line 71.
3. Vol. 38, page 456.
4. The Rt. Hon. Sir James Plaisted Wilde, Baron Penzance. *The Bacon-Shakespeare Controversy: A Judicial Summing-up*, 1902. Lord Penzance (who is described by Mr. Inderwick, K.C., as remarkable for his faculty of marshalling facts, and for clear expression of his views) says: 'Shakespeare's perfect familiarity with not only the principles, axioms and maxims but the technicalities of the English law, shows a knowledge so perfect and intimate that he is never incorrect and never at fault.'
5. In *Sous le masque de William Shakespeare*, William Stanley 6me Comte de Derby.
6. In *Alias William Shakespeare*, 1947.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT IS REALLY KNOWN ABOUT SHAKSPERE

EVERY 'life' of William Shakspeare is built up from a few facts which were entered in registers or documents, and some doubtful traditions enlarged to any dimensions by the imagination of the compiler.

The *facts*, which, it has been declared, could all be written on a postcard, are set here in a bold type for clarity's sake, and the rest of the chapter devoted to a discussion of the hearsay evidence, legend and conjecture which has gathered around his name and personality.

It may be that we know just too much about William of Stratford. If we knew absolutely nothing the task would be easier; we could then work backwards from the evidence in the plays and 'marry' our Shakspeare 'to his works', and this is what Mr. Thomas Looney has done so admirably in his *Shakespeare Identified*.

It is profoundly important to observe that had we been constrained to work in this way from the outset, combing the plays, letters and state papers of the period, to find the true author, this evidence would never have led us to Stratford-on-Avon and the butcher's apprentice.

As it is, we know just enough of the man of Stratford to make his identification with the author impossible, despite the similarity of names which has befogged the issue for three hundred years.

That William Shakspeare was born on or about April 23rd, 1564, we know, because he was **baptized** and the event recorded in **the register of the church, 'Gulielmus Filius Johannes Shakspeare, April 26th'**, he being the third child and first son of John Shakspeare and Mary Arden of Wilmcote, both illiterate, but respectable middle-class country-folk.

After this we get no record until that of his marriage; not a line or word about his education, no entry in any school register—or comment by master or fellow pupils—yet the facts that there was a free Grammar School in Stratford-on-Avon, and that his father, John Shakspeare, was an alderman, have suggested to his biographers, anxious to account even in so slight a way for his colossal learning, that he would have attended the school for at least a few years. On this assumption his desk in the school is shown to visitors!

Who taught the young William the rudimentary reading and writing that were the necessary adjuncts to a boy entering a grammar school, since his parents were unable to do so? We do not know. Sir Sidney Lee (in his *Life of William Shakespeare*) says he is convinced that John Shakspeare 'could write with facility, though he preferred to make his "mark" on important documents', a statement so absurd, taking into consideration that in those days to be able to write was a sign of gentility, which the Shaksperes were anxious to prove, that it is not worth refuting. One might as well say a man has perfect legs but prefers to walk on his hands!

Certainly John's son, William, never became 'a facile' penman, as may be seen by the only extant specimens of his hand-writing—the five signatures. (Photographic facsimile, see Plate XII.)

Mr. Dover Wilson thinks that John Shakspeare, as a recusant Roman Catholic, would not have allowed his son to attend a school where the master was a staunch Protestant, for fear of his becoming tainted with heresy; under which hypothesis we are left with no schooling at all for our budding genius!

As regarding the religion of the Shaksperes there seems little doubt that they were Roman Catholics, a thesis that may be studied in de Groot's book, *The Shakespeares and the Old Faith*. Richard Davis (1688-1708) in a note added to William Freeman's memoranda stated definitely 'He [Shakspeare] died a Papist.'

Presuming that the father overcame his religious scruples and did allow young William to attend the free school, the boy would have learned grammar, possibly some cyphering, and Latin, which was taught in a primer of progressive sentences, probably the *Sententice pueriles Anglo-Latince*, with an English translation for beginners, which book would have been chained to the desk.

According to tradition¹—via Aubrey—at thirteen young Shakspeare was set to assist his father in his business, which has been variously described as a maltster, corn merchant, tanner, dealer in hides, a glover and a butcher. Indeed, the slaughtered animals may have provided hides and skins for harness, gloves, etc., whilst as a side-line he dealt in malt and corn—or vice versa.

Rowe (in his 1704 legendary 'life') says that the youth would kill a calf to the accompaniment of a high-flown piece of oratory (the actor's characteristic rather than the poet's), but in any case legends are not facts; one can accept or reject such evidence to fit one's own bias.

The young butcher may have practised his village versifying (of which I will give an example later) whilst pursuing the trade to which he was apprenticed.

In 1582 the banns were **once** called (to effect this a special permit had to be obtained) and entered in the register of Bishop Whitgift's Diocesan Registry of Worcester, in which diocese Stratford lay, permitting **the marriage of William Shagspere to Anne Hathwey, November 28th**, though, curiously enough, we find that the day **previously** they were entered for **William Shakspere to Anne Whatley de Temple Grafton**.

Presumably there were two men of the same name (with varied spelling) married on two succeeding days to two different Annes—or what? Did the clerk err? The writing might have been difficult to decipher or the country accent difficult to understand. Hathwey *might* look—or even sound, to a partially deaf clerk—like Whatley; but Stratford-on-Avon could never look or sound like Temple Grafton. It seems that there were two separate entries for the marriage of the same man and that the affianced bride was snatched away to be replaced by another next day. We may conclude that William Shakspere was forced, by the girl's relatives, to marry in a hurry a bride eight years his senior, for on May 26th, 1582, six months after the marriage, a daughter was baptized—**Susanna, daughter to William Shakspere**. It may be remembered in passing that Mr. Lawrence in his *Adventures of Common-Sense* refers to him as a libertine in his youth.

Eighteen months later twins were born. They were baptized on **February 2nd** and named **'Hamnet and Judith, sonne and daughter to William Shakespeare'**.

Now follows a complete hiatus in the records of Shakspere's life until 1594—a period of ten years—and we are forced back on tradition. This tells us that William Shakspere was accused of stealing deer from Sir Thomas Lucy's estate, Charlchote Park. (One later authority adds 'arrested and whipped for it'.) It has been substantiated that this is impossible, for deer were 'wild' creatures, not subject to poaching laws unless within the confines of a legalized park, which was not the case at Charlchote. Thus this legend must be discarded, even though the versifying, referred to below, hangs upon it.

It is supposed that when the enraged Lucy set the authorities to apprehend the deer-stealer he avoided arrest by taking to his heels, leaving his native town, wife and three children and making his way to London, having first deputed a friend, probably another apprentice, to stick his last vindictive fling of verses on the gate of Charlchote Park.

Only one stanza has survived, which, presuming it to be the immortal Shakespeare's juvenilia, must be regretted:

A Parliament member, a Justice of Peace
 At home a poore scare-crow, at London an asse
 If lowsie is Lucy, as some volke miscall it
 Then Lucy is lowsie, whatever befall it:
 He thinks himself great,
 Yet an asse in his state
 We allow by his ears but with asses to mate
 If Lucy is lowsie; as some volke miscall it
 Sing lowsie Lucy, whatever befall it.²

I have no doubt that the butcher's apprentice was sufficiently intelligent to make this supposed pun on Lucy's coat of arms, displaying as it did the 'luces' or 'pikes' (the fully grown pike being known as a 'luce'), and the very word 'volke' for 'folk' betrays the country lout's pronunciation and spelling; but I refuse to believe that there was such alchemy in the streets of London that it could transmute the dross-filled mind which produced such trash into the pure gold which glows throughout the delightful 'First Heir' of his Invention, *Venus and Adonis*, which he is supposed to have published soon after his arrival and dedicated to the Earl of Southampton. Therein we read:

Lo, here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
 From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
 And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast
 The sun ariseth in his majesty:
 Who doth the world so gloriously behold,
 That cedar-tops and hills seem burnished gold.

The vision this creates is perfect, yet cedar trees were the appurtenances of noblemen's estates, not of London's narrow streets or the purlieu of a butcher's shop in Stratford.

Let it pass—he may have observed cedar trees when pursuing the deer in Charlccote Park!

There is no hint of any youthful poems between these two examples. Yet the 'Stratfordians' (those who still cherish the repute of John Shakspeare's son) prefer to perpetuate this legend of Lucy and his coat of arms because of the dependent clause; a similarity between them and a few lines in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Slender. They may give the dozen white luces in their coat.
Shallow. It is an old coat.

Evans. The dozen white louces do become an old coat well; it argues well, passant, it is a familiar beast to man, and signifies—love.

It is suggested that Justice Shallow is a caricature of Lucy, but so far as I know there is no description extant of Sir Thomas's character

upon which to judge whether it was a caricature or not, and the 'twelve luces' in the 'old coat' are a slender tag to hang it on.

In fact, it has been suggested, with more feasibility and authenticity, that the allusion is a satire on Sir Christopher Hatton, who, inheriting the Manor of Holdenby, inherited also the Lucy coat of arms, quartering it with his own, and thus showing the 'luces or pikes, haurient Argent', on which Shakespeare punned. Hatton's nephew, William Newport, may well have been the original of Slender.

It appears, in corroboration of this theory, that Sir Christopher Hajton did indeed bring an action against 'certain persons whom he accused of poaching on his preserves, killing his deer, breaking them up, and taking away the carcasses'. Corfe Castle, Dorset, was the scene of the crime, and the date 1583.³

The reason for the author of the Shakespeare plays thus to hold up Hatton to ridicule will appear in a later chapter.

In any case the joke was an old one even in Shakespeare's time, for in Holinshed's chronicles of Ireland appears the following dialogue between the King and Sir William Wise, when the King noticed the charges of ermine on Sir William's seal. 'Why, how now, Wise, what, hast thou lice here?' 'An it like your Majesty,' Sir William responded. 'A louce is a rich coat, for by giving the louce I part arms with the Frence king in that he giveth the flower de-lice,'

Is it not more reasonable to suppose that the young Shakspeare, finding financial and responsible burdens beyond his purse and capacity, and becoming enamoured of the histrionic prowess of certain actors—probably the 'Oxford Boys' who visited the town in 1584 whilst on tour—decided to try his luck, and returned with them to London in some small position such as property-man or call-boy? He might well hope for preferment when fully established in the theatre.

The legend of his holding horses' bridles for the gallants who rode out to the 'Curtain', the 'Theatre', or into inn yards where the plays were to be performed, thus falls into rational place. Any game young man, with ambition, will take a menial job whilst getting his experience and footing in the career he has chosen. And William Shakspeare was nothing if not ambitious to obtain worldly possessions. Have we not seen Pope commenting sardonically that 'Shakespeare'

*For gain, not glory, winged his roving flight
And grew immortal in his own despite.*

But all this tradition or hearsay is in the realms of 'might be'.

Nothing is known for certain of his activities in London or elsewhere until 1594, when he is named as one of the actors paid, on March 15th, for presenting at Court 'two several comedies or interludes' before Queen Elizabeth.

It seems that he had, during these ten years, made some considerable progress up the histrionic ladder, and, from back-of-stage or inn-yard hack, had become an actor worthy of being mentioned by name. A pity the report does not include the titles of the plays presented, or the parts portrayed: this would have let in some light on his abilities as an actor.

Certainly his behaviour betrayed sundry bad lapses, for in **November** of this year there was issued a writ of attachment, to the Sheriff of Surrey, in which a certain William Wayte asked for sureties of the peace against William Shakspeare, Francis Langley, Dorothy Soer and Ann Lee. A gay foursome!

Langley, the goldsmith, was the proprietor of Paris Garden on Bankside near Southwark. What the trouble was about we do not know, but it was serious enough for Wayte to apply for legal protection. Shakspeare was by this time thirty-two years of age, so it was no student's rag or youthful high spirits. In the document he is referred to as a 'whittawer' (a tanner of white leather).

In 1596 there was an assessment of 13s. 4d. on property of Shakspeare's valued at £5, in the parish of St. Helen's and we learn that he was now **residing on Bankside**; his previous residence, according to Aubrey, having been in Hog Lane, six doors from Norton Folgate. He may have moved to be nearer to the theatrical activities, though another two years were to elapse before the building of the 'Globe' on Bankside.

Turning our attention again to Stratford-on-Avon, we see that during **this year his son Hamnet died and was buried on August 11th**. Did Shakspeare support his country family? We do not know, but as he was successfully making money, we may assume he did, especially as we may safely conjecture that he always intended to return to his home town when he had made his 'pile'.

Described as 'of Stratford-on-Avon', and a 'gentleman', he may have wished, like the hero of the *Young Visitors*, to be 'a little less "mere" ', and in consequence **made a preliminary application at the Herald's College on his father's behalf for a coat of arms**. This was at the end of 1596.

The following year he probably travelled down to his home town, for he **bought a property there called 'New Place' and an acre of land for £60**—a large sum, equivalent to £600 to £800 nowadays.

Back in town, he appeared as one of the actors in Ben Jonson's

comedy *Every Man in his Humour*, but here again we are not told what part he performed, nor how friendly he was with the author.

Perhaps not very friendly, for when his **petition** for a coat of arms was at length **granted by the Herald's Office this year**, it is thought that Ben Jonson chose to make fun of it in his *Every Man out of his Humour*—as did an anonymous author in the *Pilgrimage to Parnassus* (1596 or 1598).

In the former we find the following amusing dialogue:

ACTUS TERTIUS. SCENA PRIMA

Carlo. I have come from him but now; he is at the Herault's office yonder: he requested me to go afore, and take up a man or two for him in Paules, against his cognisance was ready.

Puntarvolo. What? Hath he purchast arms then?

Carlo. I, and rare ones too: of as many colours, as ere you saw any fooles coat in your life. Fie go look among yond Billes and see if I can fit him with legs to his armes.

Puntarvolo. With legs to his armes? Good I will go with you, sir. (*Sogliardo, Puntarvolo and Carlo: walke.*)

Sog. Nay, I will have him, I am resolute for that, by this parchment gentleman, I have been so toyled among the Harrots yonder, you will not beleieve, they do speak in the strangest language, and give a man the hardest termes for his money that ever you knew.

Carlo. But ha' you armes? Ha' you armes?

Sog. I'faith, I thanke God I can write myself 'gentleman' now, heeres my Patent, it cost me thirtie pound by this breath.

Puntarvolo. A very fair coat, well charged and full—of Armourie.

Sog. Nay it has as much varieties of colours in it as you have seen a coat have.

After more fun he concludes with 'Let the word [motto] be—Not without Mustard. Your crest is very rare, sir,' referring to Shakspere's motto—'Non sans Droit'.

The aforementioned *Pilgrimage* is even more scathing; the author, hidden behind his anonymity, exclaiming:

With mouthing words that better wits have framed
They purchase lands, and now Esquires are made.

Probably Shakspere would not have greatly cared, for he had made some money mouthing the lines set down for him by Ben Jonson and others—perhaps Green—had purchased his lands, was now tired of it and intended settling down in Stratford as a retired country gentleman, with a side-line in malt. He was now referred to as '**Gentleman and householder of Stratford**'. An extract from John

Manningham's diary for February 2nd to March 13th, 1601, may show a lighter side to the player's activities.

Upon a tyme when Burbage played Rich[ard] 3 there was a citizen gaen soe farr in liking with him that before she went from the play she appointed him to come that night to her by the name of Ri: the 3. Shakspeareoverhearingtheirconclusionwentbefore,wasintertainedand at his game ere Burbage came. Then the message being brought that Rich: the 3rd was at the dore, Shakespeare caused returne to be made that William the Conqueror was before Rich: the 3. Shakspere's name William.

Apart from a side-light on the Stratford actor's less business-like diversions, this shows that as late as 1601 his Christian name was not generally known and to point his joke Manningham has to say it was 'William'.

Though no letter, indeed no writing at all save the six half illegible signatures, remains of Shakspere's penning, there is **a solitary letter of this year 1598, directed to him. It is from Richard Quinney [his son-in-law] asking for a loan of £30.** We do not know whether the letter was answered, or if Quinney received the loan, but it goes to prove without doubt that William Shakspere was now in very comfortable circumstances, or no one, not even a relative by marriage, would have petitioned him for the loan of so large an amount.

Encouraged by her husband's being permitted to 'bear arms', **Mary Shakspere, in 1599, claimed the Arms of Arden, but the petition was set aside and not granted,** and in September her husband, **John Shakspere, died,** leaving no will.'

In 1599 the Globe Playhouse was opened and the brothers Burbage, who built it, held five shares, whilst Shakspere, Hemminge, Philips, tope and Kempe took five shares between them. Probably Shakespeare was now only a 'sleeping partner', for his interests were concentrated on Stratford, where he was buying more land.

The shares may have proved profitable to an unforeseeable extent, for in **1602 we find him buying 107 acres of land near Stratford for £320** (nearly £4,000 present value).

Also to this **he added a cottage and a quarter of an acre of land at the back of 'New Place'.**

But, as Ivor Brown says, 'Actors are bad retirers', and in the following year, as well **as acting in Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*, he was listed second amongst players receiving scarlet cloth as King's servants.** (Queen Elizabeth had died this year, and her cousin King James VI of Scotland had become James I of England.)

The play may have been a 'Coronation' year event, and performed either at Whitehall or Greenwich. Two years later—1604—with still more money to burn, though he had **just sued a certain Philip Rogers, whom he had supplied with malt since the previous March, for £1 19s. 10d., and lent a paltry 2s. in cash, he bought half the unexpired lease of the Stratford tithes for £440.**

In 1912 Professor Wallace of Nebraska declared that he had made a remarkable discovery about the life of William Shakespeare, and presently produced the evidence that **the actor had been cited as witness in a law-suit between a man named Mountjoy (the landlord of his lodging) and the said Mountjoy's son-in-law, Stephen Bellott, about the recovery of the daughter's dowry, and some misappropriated blankets, etc.** But what did it all amount to? Merely that **W. S. was living with a wig-maker in Silver Street, Cripplegate,** and what was more likely than for an actor and the man who provided wigs for stage use, to become acquainted, and reside together. Even the knowledge that Shakspeare helped to promote the marriage between the daughter and son-in-law does not increase our knowledge of his character, or connect him with the plays which for the last seven years had been appearing on the stage and in the booksellers' shops under the name of 'Shake-speare'.

It was this year that **a fellow actor is recorded as having bequeathed Shakspeare the sum of 3Qs. for a memorial ring.** This was the man Philips, mentioned as one of the shareholders of the Globe Theatre. (Shakspeare, when making his will, himself gave sums of money for memorial rings to his fellow players Heminge and Condell. It seems to have been a customary form of bequest.)

In 1607 we hear that the **actor's brother, Edmund Shakspeare,** who may have followed William to the metropolis when the latter had become established, and found his milieu also in the theatre, had **died. He was buried in St. Saviour's Church, Southwark,** where his tomb is still to be seen, and **the great bell was tolled for his passing on December 31st.**

In 1608 **Shakspeare proceeded to take one seventh of a share in the Blackfriars Theatre,** which was built in 1598 within the precincts of the old monastery or friary.

Shakspeare then **reduced his share in the 'Globe' to one fifth and later to one fourteenth.**

He is not recorded as appearing in any play after this date, but he was now in affluent circumstances; indeed, his career seems to have been a sure success with no looking back.

Nevertheless, he chose in **1609 to bring a case against one John**

Addenbrooke for £6, and £1. 5s. 0d. costs, for malt or corn supplied, and when the defendant absconded, being unable to settle his debt, Shakspeare **proceeded against his surety, Thomas Hornby.**

The following year he again increased his holdings by a **purchase of twenty acres from old John Coombe**, the wealthy landowner and usurer of Wellcombe nearby. It is the same Coombe whose epitaph Shakspeare is supposed to have adapted from an existing four-lined verse:

Ten in a hundred must lie in his grave,
But an hundred to ten whether God will him save,
Who then must be interred in this tomb?
Oh! (quoth the Divill) my John a Coombe.⁵

This being even more objectionable than the lines graven for Will Shakspeare himself they were—before 1673—erased by John Coombe's descendants.

In the Bodleian Library there is a MS. of about 1650 which gives another verse upon the death of John Coombe—and with the comment:

hee [J Coombe] being dead and making the poore his heirs hee [W. S.]
after writ this for his epitaph.

How ere he lived judge not
John Coombe shall never be forgott
While poore, hath memorye, for he did gather
To make the poore his Issue; hee their father
As record of his tilth and seede
Did crown him in his latter deede.

Finis: W. Shak.

Perhaps the fact that old John Coombe, when dying, had made W. S. a legatee, produced the more favourable epitaph. Certainly Mr. Shakspeare always knew which side his bread was buttered, and he lost no time in **securing from the old man's heirs a deed of indemnity against personal loss should the common fields be enclosed.** William Camden, the antiquary, when publishing his 1610 edition of *Brittania*, a Latin survey of Great Britain, did not, in dealing with Stratford-on-Avon, mention Shakspeare although, according to orthodox belief, he had written nearly all of the great plays and was living retired in one of the largest houses in the town. It can only be assumed that the headmaster of Westminster School, and an admirer of the plays, as may be seen in his *Remains*, never connected them with Shakspeare of Stratford. His silence, indeed, is like the silence of Philip Henslowe who, having built the Rose Theatre on Bankside,

which he ran in partnership with Edward Alleyn, the actor, kept a diary of the theatrical transactions covering the years 1591-1609. Into this diary, written in bad handwriting and worse spelling, was entered the names of actors performing and dramatists who wrote, with the money paid to each. Moreover, we find the handwriting of various 'play makers' who themselves entered up the item they had supplied. In it are the names of nearly all the dramatic poets of the era, including Jonson, Drayton, Munday, Webster and Rowley, but not one entry recording the name of *Shakspeare*, despite the fact that he is always supposed to have been connected with the Rose Theatre and with Henslowe in particular. Sir Sidney Lee says: 'The Rose Theatre was doubtless the earliest scene of Shakespeare's pronounced successes alike as actor and dramatist.' How odd, then, that Henslowe never refers to him in ten years of diary jottings, especially when the years 1591 to 1601 are those of 'Shakespeare's' greatest, most varied and brilliant output.

So, as in the case of Camden, we meet with a vacuum as regards the Stratford man; for in both these sources we should expect to find reference, if not eulogy.

A story, first printed in the *British Magazine* in 1762, and later re-told with additions by a Stratford wheelwright, gives a reminiscence of the Stratford player's retired days. A Bidford club called the Topers' challenged William Shakspeare and his Stratford friends to a drinking match which was accepted, but when the actor and his team arrived at Bidford they learnt that the Topers' had gone to Evesham to the fair, leaving the 'Sippers' to take up their challenge. These worthies, despite their dainty title, proved too much for the men of Stratford, who set out on their return to their home town very much the worse for drink and succumbed halfway. . . . Will Shakspeare lay down under a crab tree to sleep off the result of his deep potations. If we may judge by the names of the awful brews drunk in those days, such as 'lift leg' and 'long stride', we may the better sympathize with their condition.

Our interest lies in the occasion being the incentive for another piece of yokel's verse from the leading protagonist. He said he had drunk with:

Piping Pebworth, Dancing Marston,
 Haunted Hillborough, Hungry Grafton,
 Dodgeing Exhall, Papist Wickford
 Beggarly Broom, and Drunken Bidford,

'a heavy-headed revel'. Even so, one must admit that it is a subject

that has inspired nobler verse, from the time of Anacreon by way of Omar Khayyam to Byron—and later.

Though the journey from Stratford to London by wagon, or on horseback, over rutted or muddy roads must have been gruelling, Shakspeare continued to visit the capital to keep an eye on his interests, and we find Thomas Green writing **on November 17th, 1614, 'My cosin Shaksper, coming yesterday to towne, I went to see him how he did.'**

I am afraid I am 'chronicling small beer', but when the facts are so few it is essential we get all of them.

The end came suddenly, so much is obvious, especially if James Ward's story of the 'merry meeting' be authentic, though Shakspeare was said to be in sound health when he made his will in January 1616. Two months later he revised and signed it, and it has been suggested that he must have had writer's cramp or paralysis to account for the shaky and execrable signatures. I believe it was Bernard Shaw (but if not it should have been) who said that with that calligraphy the writing of the plays would have taken him three hundred years!

Shakspeare used the old Gothic style of writing, although in *Twelfth Night* the dramatist refers to the Roman or Italian hand, which had become the mode, owing to its quick flexibility, for all cultured and educated persons. Malvolio says:

I think I do know her sweet Roman hand.

Examination of the signatures will probably bring conviction that, like his father, the writer was *not* a 'fluent penman'!

William Shakspeare left approximately £1,550 in estate and cash (£12,000 today) and various small bequests to friends, including the money to **purchase themselves memorial rings to his old theatre 'pros' Heminge and Condell, together with his second-best bed to his wife. He made a small bequest of 24s. &., to a local friend, Hamnet Sadler,** whose name suggests he may have been godfather to Shakspeare's son. This name G. B. Harrison, in his *Introducing Shakespeare*, gives erroneously—but deliberately—as *Hamlet*, to present before the reader a mental connection between the maltster and the playwright which the true name in no way suggests. This is the kind of historic writing to which Horace Walpole referred when he said, 'there is a wide difference between favouring—and lying'. The mayor and leading townsmen signed as witnesses of the will.

Shakspeare died a month later and was buried in the chancel of

the Parish church, the record of his death being entered in the register.

'Burials: 1616 25th April. Will Shakspere Gent.'

It will be seen that throughout this list of activities there is not one allusion to a literary avocation—I refuse to consider the bits of crude doggerel—nor is there one noble or elevating action or thought, one trait of character to commend itself to our sympathy. I am afraid he was that which he appears to be in his bust, 'an affluent butcher'.

At the utmost limit Shakspeare's 'London' period covers sixteen years, which Mr. Looney proves may be whittled down to less than five; for he was not known in London until 1594, and no record appears of his residence in the capital after 1598. Nothing, apparently, came from his pen *before* he left Stratford, except 'Lucy is lowsie', and nothing, we believe, after his return but old Coombe's epitaph and 'curs'd be he who moves my bones'. If this be so it follows that out of those five years must be conjured the whole gamut of his genius.

Looney says: 'Not till we reach the year 1598, the year in which the first dramas with "Shake-speareY" name were published, do we meet with any contemporary reference to "Shakespeare" as a writer of plays: and by this time W. S. was duly re-established in Stratford engaged in the multitudinous small activities of a country land-owner and trader.'

When, in this busy life of acting, malt-selling, litigation, property buying and travelling to and fro, can he have had time to write the best part of thirty-six plays, two long poems, and those Sonnets with their passionate self-revelation, their unsurpassed poetry and undying love? When can this prosperous actor-cum-landlord have looked upon himself as 'in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes', or tell his friend—'I all alone beweepe my outcast state'?

Surely he could not say:

I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought
And with old woes new wail my dear times waste,

unless he referred to his slumbers under the crab tree!

NOTES

1. The following passage from Halliwell Philips is enlightening: 'Although the information at present accessible does not enable us to determine the exact nature of Shakespeare's occupation from his fourteenth to his eighteenth year there can be no hesitation in concluding that during that animated and

receptive period of his life he was mercifully released from what to a spirit like his must have been the deleterious monotony of a school education. Whether he passed those years as a butcher or a wool-dealer does not greatly matter.' Indeed it does not!

2. Rowe.
3. See C. W. Scott-Giles in *Shakespeare's Heraldry*.
4. A religious testimony of John Shakespeare, presumably William's father, in which he declared himself an 'unworthy member of the Catholick religion' was found by a bricklayer in the rafters of the so-called 'Birthplace'. Malone published this believing it to be genuine, but its authenticity has been questioned. Reprinted in de Groot's *The Shakespeares and the Old Faith*.
5. From P. Hannay's *A Happy Husband* (1619).

CHAPTER 4

THE SEARCH FOR SHAKESPEARE

'I "stupefaction" the only word to describe my state of mind when, face to face with Shakespeare's achievement, I try to imagine what sort of man Shakespeare really was? Hadn't I better just sit down in silence and quietly go mad?'

This wail of despair by Logan Pearsall-Smith in his charming book, *On Reading Shakespeare*, is the feeling of nearly everyone who approaches the mystery; but discarding prejudice, and armed with literary acumen, the assault on this formidable task can be made with enlightening results.

There being nothing in the records of Chapter 2 that could make us ascribe to William Shaksper of Stratford England's finest literature, we will avoid the pitfall of hunting any further in the purlieus of Stratford, as Leslie Hotson and others have done without adding a penn'orth of interest to our appreciation of our poet, and follow the now-famous methods of Mr. Thomas Looney, by endeavouring to discover from the plays themselves what manner of man we should expect the author to be.

Mr. Danielle Vare, the Venetian diplomat, says: 'Whereas the personality of Dante dominates his work, the personality of Shakespeare lies hidden behind those of his creations.'² This deduction he has postulated from an intimate knowledge of the life-story of Dante Alighieri, which he finds reflected in his works, whilst what he has read of William of Stratford is not to be found in Shakespeare's plays. Indeed, anyone labouring under the false assumption that the maltster was the author of the plays must come to this conclusion.³

In actual fact the personality of the author of the plays and Sonnets of Shakespeare is to be seen even more vividly than that of Dante in his *Divine Comedy*, and this is making a sweeping statement, for the Italian poet is there by our side in Hell, in Purgatory and in Paradise, talking to us, revealing his loves and hates, his visions and his philosophy, but he is always the same Dante, whereas Shakespeare's mind has a thousand facets; his 'fantasie' assumes more changes than the chameleon, more colours than the rainbow—from the delightful, inane idiocy of Dogberry to the heartbreaking pathos of Lear; from the melancholy of Jaques to the gaiety of Beatrice.

'Everything is in our English Poet—all human knowledge, all

grace, all charm, all eloquence, all dignity, all sympathies, all experiences. . . . The whole world envies us the possession of this one name.' (R. M. Theobald in *Dethroning Shakspeare*, 1888.) Yet all these moods represent moods of the writer. *Hamlet* is practically pure autobiography, the Sonnets a private diary, and the plays are filled with topical allusions, family (i.e. Court) jokes and classical references, all drawn from his personal learning, his own peculiar character and mental bias; but no aspect of this revelation is the aspect presented by William of Stratford.

These moods reveal the true author, but who was he? Can we with certainty put our finger on him and say '*Here is the man*'! If each piece of evidence gathered together in these pages fits one man, and will not fit any other—then definitely we can.

1. First, in importance, his life history must cover the dates in question—that is, approximately the last half of the sixteenth century. Up to recent years the dating of the plays has been arbitrarily fixed, for the most part, to fit the life of William of Stratford, whereas it is now increasingly evident that many of the plays were written much earlier than the dates affixed by the critics, thus allowing for such works as the so-called *Ur-Hamlet* and the *True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York* to have been the first acting drafts from the master's pen. Hitherto, in an endeavour to account for these plays being in existence before Shakspeare came to London, and in consideration of his youth, the theory adopted was that they were works by older unknown authors which Shakespeare took and improved. The fallacy of this reasoning has been shown by Dr. Cairncross in his book *The Problem of Hamlet*, the date of which play he fixes as 1588 instead of 1598.

In 1588 William of Stratford would have been twenty-four, and possibly still in his home town, or if by then arrived in London still holding a subordinate position in the theatre. Furthermore the Sonnets were commenced about 1590 when Shakspeare was twenty-six. Could he possibly refer to himself as 'beated and chopp'd with tanned antiquity' even in a period when men aged younger than they do now? Such a phrase would be rather more than a 'poet's licence'. Therefore, if we could find someone older, rather than younger, it would give greater weight to our selection.

2. Secondly, he must have had an extensive education, despite Ben Jonson's declaration, in his ambiguous dedication to the First Folio, that Shakspeare had 'small Latin and less Greek'. All modern critics of the plays now agree that the author drew not only from Latin works in translations, but from those not yet rendered into English. His education must therefore have been on classical lines,

such as was then in use at the universities. The opinion that this must have been his course of study is so manifest that some orthodox 'Stratfordians' have tried to fit a university education on to William Shakspeare, the butcher's assistant.

To quote Mr. George Greenwood: ⁴ To Mr. Churton Collins we are indebted for having demonstrated that instead of Jonson's "small Latin and less Greek" Shakespeare had in truth large Latin and probably not a little Greek also.'

That Shakespeare had also an idiomatic knowledge of French and some reading acquaintance with Italian is evident, because according to Sir Sidney Lee neither Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques* ⁴⁰ for example, or Ser Giovanni's *Il Pecorone*, from both of which he drew plots, were then translated into English. And so naturally does he say—in the character of Hamlet, when referring to the play about to be performed before King Claudius at the Danish Court—'the story is extant and writ in choice Italian', that he must have read Italian well enough to know good from bad.

Certainly this is the opinion of Pietro Rebora in his *UItalia nella Dramma inglese*, for he says that Shakespeare 'possessed a profound knowledge of Italian language and culture, of which he made an amazing use in the plays'. Where did William of Stratford learn French and Italian?⁵

3. Thirdly he must have been known as a lyric poet *before* the publication of *Venus and Adonis*. Perhaps this is the most important 'must' of all, for even the hypothetical genius does not throw off a poem of that length and calibre without having tried out his 'pupil pen'. Undoubtedly many scraps of juvenilia would have been consigned to the flames or waste-paper basket; we may assume 'Time's old moth hath eaten' many more, as of no consequence, but surely there must be something left of the adolescent's efforts. If we find one who has also tried his hand at plays, so much the better. Where is William of Stratford's juvenilia?

4. Fourthly he must have been fond of music, possibly a musician himself. Mr. Eric Blom, in his *Music in England*, says: 'Shakespeare was much attached to music. . . . Had he been a little less [a great playwright] and but little closer in touch with the musicians, he might have become the musical world's first and greatest librettist.'

Throughout the plays this delight in music is evident, not only by the introduction of songs between the dialogue, but by the use of musical terms and imagery in the dialogue itself.

The man who wrote the following must have loved music deeply:

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

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
 But in his motion like an angel sings,
 Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims,
 Such harmony is in immortal souls;
 But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
 Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

Since naught so stockish, hard and full of rage,
 But music for the time doth change his nature.
 The man who hath no music in himself,
 Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
 Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils; . . .
 . . . Let no such man be trusted.

The Merchant of Venice, V. 2

These lines alone (and I have not space to particularize further) prove that the author was a music-lover; one who was used to it in his everyday life, and one, moreover, who had heard just such strains of lovely music from instrument or voice, floating over the soft Italian night air, as one hears in Venice even today.

When Hamlet speaks to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern of the recorder it is as one who *played* the instrument.

Ham. Will you play upon this pipe?

Guild. My lord, I cannot.

Ham. I pray you . . . 'tis as easy as lying: govern these ventages with your finger and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most excellent music. Look you, these are the stops.

(Here, I have no doubt, the author would have demonstrated by playing a few bars.)

Guild. But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.

(Then it appears that all this is only a peg upon which to hang a metaphor.)

Ham. Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you would make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet you cannot make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be play'd on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you fret me, you cannot play upon me.

With the viola da gamba, the virginals, harpsichord and other period instruments the author was equally familiar, as with 'plain song', 'prick song', 'airs' and 'ditties'.

Richard II in prison frets and fumes when the strolling player does not keep time. Each reflection on music is used to support a discourse or piece of philosophy, but it is not mere mechanical allusion—it is the inborn and well-trained musician who speaks.

Where and when did William of Stratford learn music?

5. For the fifth attribute—a knowledge of law. Shakespeare uses law terms, even in poetry where they are not a poetic idiom, which proves a familiarity with the law so profound that such expressions were automatic. Throughout the plays this is so evident that we must surmise that our author studied law. To quote a lawyer and eminent Shakespearian scholar Richard Grant-White:

No dramatist of the time, not even Beaumont. . . who, after studying in the Inns of Court abandoned law for the drama, used legal phrases with Shakespeare's readiness and exactness.. legal phrases flow from his pen as part of his vocabulary and parcel of his thought. . . . And besides, Shakespeare uses his law just as freely in his first plays as in those produced in his later period.

Perhaps to push my point, I cannot do better than give Lord Campbell's⁸ comment on Sonnet 46.

My eye and heart are at a mortal war,
 How to divide the conquest of thy sight;
 My eye mine heart thy picture's sight would bar,
 My heart mine eye the freedom of that right.
 My heart doth plead that thou in him dost lie—
 A closet never pierced with crystal eyes—
 But the defendant doth that plea deny,
 And says in him thy fair appearance lies.
 To cide this title is impannelled
 A quest of thoughts, all tenants to the heart;
 And by their verdict is determined
 The clear eye's moiety and the dear heart's part:
 As thus; mine eye's due is thine outward part,
 And my heart's right thine inward love of heart.

I need not go further than this sonnet, which is so intensely legal in its language and imagery, that without a considerable knowledge of English forensic procedure it cannot be fully understood. A lover being supposed to have made a *conquest* of (i.e. to have gained by *purchase*) his mistress, his EYE and his HEART holding as joint tenants, have a contest as to how she is to be partitioned between them, each moiety then to be held in severalty. There are regular pleadings in the suit, the HEART being represented as the Plaintiff and the EYE as the Defendant. At last issue is joined on what the one affirms and the other denies. Now a judge (in the nature of an inquest) is to be impanelled to decide, and by their verdict to apportion between the litigating parties the

subject-matter to be decided. The jury fortunately are unanimous, and after due deliberation find for the EYE in respect of the lady's outward form, and for the HEART in respect of her inward love. Surely Sonnet 46 smells as potently of the attorney's office as any of the stanzas penned by Lord Kenyon while an attorney's clerk in Wales.

To give endless examples would be tiresome—so I will conclude with the following line from *Macbeth*. 'But yet I'll make assurance doubly sure, and take a bond of fate.' And from *Venus and Adonis*:

Pure lips sweet seals in my soft lips imprinted,
What bargains may I make, still to be sealing?
To sell myself I can be well contented,
So thou wilt buy, and pay, and use good dealing;
Which purchase, if thou make, for fear of slips
Set thy seal-manual on my wax-red lips.

A thousand kisses buys my heart of me;
And pay them at thy leisure, one by one,
What is ten hundred touches unto thee?
Are they not quickly told and quickly gone?
Say, for non-payment that the debt should double,
Is twenty hundred kisses such a trouble?

Where did William of Stratford get his legal knowledge?

Perhaps the simplest solution of the problem [says Mr. Churton Collins],⁷ is to accept the hypothesis that in early life he was in an attorney's office, that he there contracted a love for the law which never left him, that as a young man in London he continued to dabble in it for his amusement, to stroll in leisure hours into the Courts and to frequent the society of lawyers. On no other supposition is it possible to explain his minute and undeviating accuracy. . . .

But unfortunately for this hypothesis William of Stratford never was in an attorney's office, as Sir Sidney Lee⁸ assures us: 'It may be safely accepted that from his first arrival in London until his final departure Shakespeare's mental energy was absorbed by his poetic and dramatic ambitions. He had no time to devote to a technical or professional training in another sphere of activity.' Yet Gerald Massey⁹ affirms that 'his knowledge is not office sweepings, but ripe fruits, mature as though he had spent his life in their growth'.

Well—the Stratford defenders cannot have it both ways—and the miracle is that they continue trying to fit a square peg in a round hole.

6. Attribute No. 6. Our Shakespeare was a travelled man—at least as far as Europe is concerned. He was imbued with the culture and mental outlook of the glorious renaissance of France and Italy.

The fact that the action of some of the plays takes place in foreign cities means little, for names can be acquired, but Shakespeare knew intimately the towns wherein he set his plays. Even topographical points which he makes, thought at one time to be errors, such as that which carping Ben pointed out, of a sea coast to Bohemia, or the characters coming by boat to Milan, have been proved to be correct; so correct, in fact, that only a visitor at that date *could* have written them! '•

'He was a Warwickshire man born and bred in the very heart of England: his professional life was spent in its capital city. Yet, like so many of his Renaissance contemporaries he had also, if not a spiritual, an imaginative home in the old world muse-haunted Mediterranean.' Thus writes Dr. Boas.¹⁰

Another author—H. F. Brown in his *Studies of Venetian History*—is of the same opinion: The whole of the first act of *Othello* is full of the spirit of Venice, which the poet has known how to breathe into his words. The dark night, the narrow street, Brabantio's house with close-barred doors and shutters, the low voices of Iago and Rodrigo, the sudden uproar springing up out of the quiet night. . . .'

And yet another critic, this time an Italian, Pietro Rcbora: 'The description of our moonlit nights in Act V of *The Merchant of Venice* seems to show an indubitable experience of Mediterranean nights and makes us loath to believe that such a description could have been created in a country where the living fragrant night does not exist.'

But it could and would live in the memory of one who had travelled in those parts. When did William of Stratford visit the 'muse-haunted Mediterranean'?

7. We pass now to the seventh attribute. His attitude towards women. Is it not a little cynical? Think of Hamlet and his attitude to Ophelia—or of Othello's attitude towards Desdemona. With a constitutional capacity for deep and enduring affection, as is shown in the Sonnets, where he is glad he cannot 'remove, or be removed', declaring 'Loves not Time's Fool', he yet shows a continual doubt and distrust of women's constancy; in Ophelia with some justification, but of Desdemona through jealousy.

His women characters, whether in sparkling comedies such as *Much Ado about Nothing*, or in tragedies like *Macbeth*, are always vividly drawn. These women are vital personages, as clearly envisaged as his men; they have minds of their own, and are not sentimentally drawn, except perhaps for Juliet, the heroine of his young writing days, before he was disillusioned.

The attitude of William of Stratford towards women we do not know; he left his wife to fend for herself, showing little consideration

for her, and whilst in town seems, by John Manningham's story of 'Burbage as Richard HI', to have sought his sex pleasures amongst the theatre habitudes.

8. In Shakespeare's historical plays we notice a distinct predilection for the Lancastrian side in the Wars of the Roses. The author gives his sympathy freely to Richard II—but, in the plays dealing with the succeeding reigns, though he never forgets that Henry IV's usurpation of his cousin's throne was the main cause of the broils and disturbances, he associates himself wholeheartedly with the Lancastrian cause. This, for a writer under the Tudors, was perhaps expedient, but Shakespeare appears to have a deeper interest than mere homage to his queen. This is a small point, perhaps, and more difficult to fit on to a possible claimant for Shakespearian honours; but if once fitted, it adds considerable evidence to our thesis.

9. This brings us to our ninth contention, that the author himself must have been a member of the aristocracy, with an ancient and noble lineage. His complete assurance when delineating Court scenes, with their own peculiar etiquette and procedure; his manipulation of Kings and their courtiers, who, with their grand ladies, move over the stage as to the manner born, and furthermore, express themselves in appropriate language with complete naturalness, all these bespeak the Court as his familiar milieu, whilst his remarkable lack of appreciation, to put it mildly, of the middle-class farmer or artisan to which Will Shakspeare belonged proclaims the author as no man of the people. True, he is at home with valets, grooms and jesters—like Touchstone—and, with all the lower order of court menials; such as my lady's maid—like Maria—but when he comes to characterize the artisans he lumps them all together as funny men or clowns. Think of the rustic 'actors' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, how we have laughed over their absurdities, not unkindly but as lordlings ourselves, seeing them with our author's eyes and watching their ignorant endeavours. Think of Dogberry who would write himself down an ass, or of the ineffectual tribunes in *Coriolanus*. These characterizations are those of one who was not in their sphere of life.

Moreover, the author introduces over and over again terms of heraldry, sometimes actual (which Mr. Scott-Giles says Shakspeare might have acquired had he 'dipped into heraldic records and books and perhaps discussed the subject with the officers of arms'), but more often as metaphors and imagery, showing incontrovertibly that the knowledge pertained to his basic education.

The blazonry of a coat of arms, the pennants flying, the King throwing his 'warder' down in the lists, gloves of defiance hurled at

each other by glowering, irate noblemen—surely 'only one of these wolfish earls' could have had this inborn tradition from Froissart's days which strikes such a mediaeval note in a humanistic Tudor setting. The symbols and significance of heraldry was a deep-seated 'love' with the author, which he understood in a way that William Shakspeare could not have acquired in an afternoon at the 'Harrot's Office', when the heralds 'gave him hard terms'.

Now listen to Sonnet 91:

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,
 Some in their wealth, some in their bodies force;
 Some in their garments, though new-fangled ill;
 Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse;

.

But these particulars are not my measure;
 All these 1 better in one general best.
 Thy love is better than high birth to me,
 Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost,
 Of more delight than hawks or horses be;
 And having thee, of all men's pride I boast:

It is inconceivable that a man who lacked these outward and visible signs of nobility could have written this. It would have been the acme of insincerity—a bad case of 'sour grapes' as has been amusingly suggested—and surely Shakespeare is a synonym for sincerity. Together with pride of birth and love of the pageant of heraldry, the blazoned star, the grotesque supporters, Shakespeare had a keen appreciation of the nobleman's prerogatives, pleasures of hunting and hawking, of tennis-playing and the tilt.

Francis Bacon said, referring to the chase, 'It is a sport proper to the nobility and men of better rank: and it is to keep a difference between the gentry and the common sort.'

But Shakespeare's humanism seldom finds joy in pursuing the chase, for his mind is obsessed with the suffering of the animal. Again and again similes are drawn from the foam-flecked, panting and fugitive stag, the bird in the trap bating its wings against the bars, the heaving heart of the hare as it bolts up the hill before the dogs.

Perhaps this is best seen in *Venus and Adonis*:

And when thou hast on foot the purblind hare,
 Mark the poor wretch, to overshoot his troubles,
 How he outruns the wind, and with what care
 He cranks and crosses, with a thousand doubles:
 The many musits through the which he goes
 Are like a labyrinth to amaze his foes.

By this, poor Wat, far off upon a hill,
 Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear,
 To harken if his foes pursue him still;
 Anon their loud alarms he doth hear;
 And now his grief may be compared well
 To one sore sick that hears the passing bell.

10. The next consideration concerns the author's character; what are his outstanding traits? Surely one of them is this deep understanding mind; the power to put himself in the place of the pursued, the downtrodden—even the mad—this 'quality of mercy that is not strained'. His immense, all-embracing understanding of the working mind of mankind, accompanied sometimes by a whimsical melancholy, only half real, like Watteau's unique bystander, who pensively watches *the fete galante* and the *retour de la chasse*.

In the early plays there is buoyancy, youthful laughter, skits and whimsicalities (*Love's Labour's Lost*) together with not-so-real romantic tragedy (*Romeo and Juliet*) but in the later dramas we feel the character of the man has saddened; he is somewhat cynical—a mind oppressed.

This is revealed particularly in the Sonnets. He has grown old prematurely, or feels he has, is lame and sad, clinging to his romantic heart-felt, love for the person to whom they are addressed. The poetic art is there, stronger and finer, but his spirit is dashed. Some mental and moral crisis had overwhelmed him.

11. Repeatedly he repined the loss of his good name, as in *Othello*:

Iago. Good name in man or woman, dear my lord,
 Is the immediate jewel of their souls:
 Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
 Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
 But he that filches from me my good name
 Robs me of that which not enriches him,
 And makes me poor indeed.

Queer that these lines should have been put into the mouth of *Iago*, who is just about to perpetrate the deed he pretends to abhor. But this is *theatrel*

12. Which brings me to my twelfth contention; our author must have been a man who, besides *writing* dramas, knew everything about play-producing, for we find constant references to stage work, and to actors, used, sometimes as similes:

All the world's a stage . . . [etc.]

or as actual directions to the players, as in *Hamlet*:

The Prince welcomes them each in turn.

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all. I am glad to see you well: welcome, my friends. O, my old friend! Why thy face is valanced since I saw thee last; earnest thou to beard me in Denmark? What, my young lady and mistress! By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine. [This being a lad now grown tall Hamlet chips him thus.] Pray God, your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not crack'd within the ring.

And before the play starts he harangues them as a stage-manager.

Speak the speech I pray you as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus; but use all gently: for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul, to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings . . . pray you avoid it . . . though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; O, there be players that I have seen play,—and heard others praise, and that highly,—that have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably. . . .

And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them: for there be some of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too; though, in the meantime, some necessary question of the play be then to be considered: that's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it.

This episode in the play has been cited by some critics to prove that the author was himself an actor, thus linking the author to the player Shakspeare of Stratford; but the deduction is false. These words are spoken by a producer—by one who was accustomed to sit in front at a rehearsal, to criticize, and to give instructions for the play's betterment. He nowhere says—', always do it in this way when , ' play the part—Watch me——' or 'When , ' played it—, ' did so—and so——' which would be the method of the actor, none of whom are modest about their achievements. This is the viewpoint of the audience—of the critic, who sees faults and wishes the actors to mend them. The author was clearly a producer, or stage-manager—not an actor, though he can if necessary recite a part with good accent and good discretion as is shown when he primes the actor in his speech of Dido and Æneas. We have no record of Shakspeare directing or stage-managing a company.

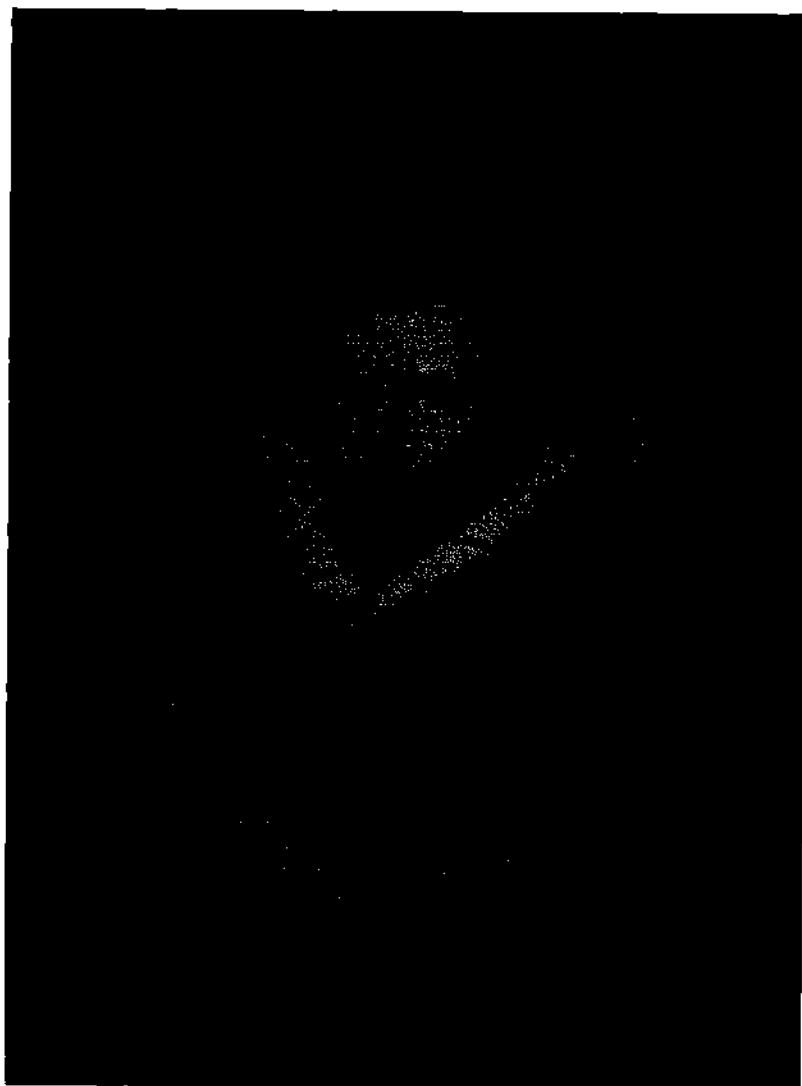
PLATE V



[Photo: Photo-Prrecision Ltd.]

LADY MILDRED BURLEIGH
(By Lucas de Heere, Hatfield House)

PLATE VI



[Photo: F. L. Nichols.]
LORD HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF NOTTINGHAM

Before concluding our list we must consider the author's attitude towards money matters.

13. Is it not evident that Shakespeare regarded money as trash in every sense? Few of his characters have the canny carefulness and money-making ability that was Shakspeare's—save Shylock, who bemoans the loss of his 'duccats and his daughter'. Love, honour, virtue, all these are put above the accumulating of wealth. For despite Sir Sidney Lee's assertion that 'Shakespeare's literary attainments and successes were chiefly valued as serving the prosaic end of providing permanently for himself and his daughters', we have his own words to prove that he thought otherwise:

How quickly nature falls into revolt
When gold becomes her object.
For this the foolish over-careful fathers
Have broke their sleep with thoughts, their brains with care,
Their bones with industry;
For this they have engrossed and piled up
The canker'd heaps of strange achieved gold.

Even travelling to that 'muse-haunted Mediterranean', when he would 'Sell his own lands to see other men's', was esteemed above possession of wealth as represented by real estate.

14. For our last and fourteenth contention, it is to be concluded from the Sonnets that, through some unfair fight, he was rendered lame. There are three separate references; thus:

So I made lame by fortune's spite!
So then I am not lame, poor nor despised!
Speak of my lameness and I straight will halt,

with the explanatory line:

The coward conquest of a wretch's knife.

This concludes the very remarkable list of attributes which the author Shakespeare must sustain.

To sum up:

1. Shakespeare must have lived in the second half of the sixteenth century—with his highest producing powers in the 80's or 90's.
2. He must have been a man of deep learning, having Latin, some Greek, French and Italian, with a little astronomy.
3. He must have been a lyric poet of very great distinction.
4. He must have been fond of music.

5. He must have had a clear understanding (bred of close study) of the law.
6. He had travelled, and imbibed a love of Italy's culture and a knowledge of North Italian cities.
7. He had an equivocal attitude towards women.
8. He had Lancastrian sympathies.
9. He was a nobleman of ancient and honourable lineage, shown by his knowledge of hawking, hunting, heraldry, etc.
10. His character showed great insight into men's minds with a corresponding sympathy.
11. He suffered from some libellous attack which defamed his name.
12. He was interested in the drama not only as a writer but as a producer.
13. In money matters he was thriftless and lax.
14. The Sonnets refer to his being lame.

This is indeed a formidable list of attributes to bring home and fit upon one person. Now, if we follow Mr. Looney's method of seeking our Shakespeare, we must pick out one of these attributes which we think essential to his character, and find a personality it will fit.

As we have anthologies to hand, perhaps the fact that our author was a lyric poet can be most quickly established. Admiral Holland, in his *Shakespeare, Oxford and Elizabethan Times*, says that there were well over sixty well-known poets in the second half of the sixteenth century, so we have a large field to cover. But confining our search to one who used the metre and imagery of *Venus and Adonis* we can at once reduce the number. In Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* we find only one. In the *Spenser Anthology* we find the same one with variant wording.

It is called *Women*, and as the Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* version is the more attractive I will use it here:

If Women could be fair, and yet not fond,
 Or that their love were firm, not fickle still,
 I would not marvel that they make men bond,
 By service long to purchase their good will,
 But when I see how frail these creatures are,
 I muse that men forget themselves so far.

To mark the choice they make, and how they change,
 How oft from Phoebus do they fly to Pan,
 Unsettled still like haggards wild they range,
 These gentle birds that fly from man to man;
 Who would not scorn and shake them from the fist
 And let them fly, fair fools, which way they list?

Yet for disport we fawn and flatter both,
 To pass the time when nothing else can please,
 And train them to the lure with subtle oath,
 Till, weary of their wives, ourselves we ease;
 And then we say, when we their fancy try,
 To play with fools, Oh, what a fool was I.¹¹

Here we have the same six-lined verse, first and third lines rhyming, and second and fourth, with a rhyming couplet to conclude, as in *Venus and Adonis*.

The author had found a woman fair, but false—and so generalizes the sex as frail and wanton. Here, too, we find the simile of hawking, the gentlewoman's pastime.

The gallant youthful poet admits that:

For disport we fawn and flatter both
 To pass the time when nothing else can please.

This writer was cynical, but he knew he would succumb to women's wiles over and over again. The theme of jilted and wilting lover is as old as pen and ink, but this poem has an original and personal ring.

It is signed 'E. Vere, Earl of Oxford': the author was therefore an aristocrat, a representative of one of England's foremost noble houses. Thus the poem fulfils four of our requirements; a *lyric poet* of undoubted charm, a *nobleman* who evinces a half-jesting, half-serious *doubt of woman's constancy*, and a man, moreover, who naturally, because it was an everyday habit with him, uses the simile of *hawking*, referring to the frail fair ones as 'haggards'.

Before proceeding further look at this extract from *Othello*:

If I do find her haggard,
 Though that her jesses were my dear heart strings
 I'd whistle her off, and let her fly down the wind
 To play at fortune.

and again at these lines from *The Taming of the Shrew*:

My falcon now is sharp, and passing empty;
 And, till she stoop, she must not be full-gorged,
 For then she never looks upon her lure.
 Another way I have to man my haggard
 To make her come and know her keeper's call.

Turning to the *Dictionary of National Biography* we find the two following paragraphs relating to the author of the poem called *Women*.

Oxford, despite his violent and perverse temper, his eccentric taste

in dress, and his reckless waste of substance, evinced a genuine taste in music, and wrote verses of much lyric beauty.

Puttenham and Meres reckon him among the *best for comedy* in his day; but though he was a patron of players no specimens of his dramatic productions survive.

Is this not an amazing coincidence? The author of the article in the *Dictionary of National Biography* tells us that though no plays of the Earl's have come down to us under his own illustrious name, *he did indeed write plays*, was even esteemed among the *best for comedy* and was a patron of a company of actors. Indeed, the poet must have been: how otherwise could he have given those directions to the players? But we are anticipating—one poem, like the proverbial swallow, is not enough to make a midsummer night's dream!

Let us see what other scraps of juvenilia are to be found, having been treasured among the fairings, till at last they saw the light of day—in print.

Poems signed E. O., E. Oxenford, L. O. are undoubtedly from his pen, whilst a few more signed 'Ignoto', or 'Meritum petere, grave', may be.

Frank Harris says,¹² 'Shakespeare gave immortal expression to desire, and its offspring love, jealousy, etc. Desire, in especial, has inspired him with phrases more magically expressive even than those gasped out by panting Sappho.'

Being beyond surprise now, our quest fulfils our expectations by the finding of a poem of de Vere's called *Fond Desire*.

Then 'Fond Desire' farewell
Thou art no mate for me;
I should be loath, methinks, to dwell
With such a one as thee.

and in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*:

But wherefore waste I time to counsel thee
That art a votary of Fond Desire?

Further from de Vere we get:

Love's a desire, which for to wait a time
Doth lose an age of years, and so doth pass
As doth a shadow sever'd from his prime,
Seeming as though it were, yet never was;
Leaving behind naught but repentent *thought*
Of days ill spent on that which profits *naught*,

whilst in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* we get the paraphrase: Love

Made me neglect my studies, lose my time,
War with good council, set the world at *naught*,
Made wit with musing weak, heartsick with *thought*.

For style compare the two following verses, the first from de Vere's *Rejected Lover*.

And let her feel the power of all your might,
And let her have her most desire with speed
And let her pine away both day and night,
And let her moan and none lament her need;
And let all those that shall her see,
Despise her state and pity me.

The second, published after the first, by 'W. Shake-speare' in *The Rape of Lucrece*.

Let him have time to tear his curled hair,
Let him have time against himself to rave,
Let him have time of Time's help to despair
Let him have time to live a loathed slave
Let him have time a begger's orts to crave
And time to see one that by alms doth live.

Again de Vere wrote:

What plague is greater than the grief of mind?
The grief of mind that eats in every vein,
In every vein that leaves such clots behind,
Such clots behind that breed such bitter pain,
So bitter pain that none shall ever find,
What plague is greater than the grief of mind.

And in Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*:

She is not hot because the meat is cold;
The meat is cold because you come not home;
You come not home because you have no stomach;
You have no stomach having broke your fast
But we that know what 'tis to watch and pray
Are penitent for your default today.

Is it to be supposed that the great dramatist was guilty of such plagiarism? Certainly some of the critics have reduced his works to little more than a pastiche; but I think it more reasonable to believe that both these examples came from the same pen, Oxford utilizing a first assay in theme and style for his later work, as he did repeatedly in the *Sonnets*: taking thoughts expressed there to adorn his plays.

Professor W. J. Courthope,¹³ C.B., M.A., Professor of Poetry at Oxford University, says: 'Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, a great patron of literature. His own verses are distinguished for their wit and tense ingenuity. His studied concinnity of style is remarkable. He was not only witty himself but the cause of wit in others. Doubtless he was proud of his illustrious ancestry.'

In passing we may remember Falstaff's words 'I am not only witty myself but the cause that wit is in others.'

T. J. Looney echoes Professor Courthope's opinion when he says that 'every line written by the poet is a direct and real expression of himself in terms at once forceful and choice, and no mere reflection of a fashionable pose'.

Here is another example of Oxford's youthful poems:

VISION OF A FAIR MAID, WITH ECHO VERSES

by

Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford

1. Sitting alone upon my thoughts in melancholy mood
 In sight of sea, and at my back an ancient hoary wood,
 I saw a fair young lady come her secret fears to wail,
 Clad all in colour of a nun, and covered with a veil.

Yet (for the day was calm and clear) I might discern her face,
 As one might see a damask rose hid under crystal glass
 Three times with her soft hand full hard on her left side she knocks
 And sighed so sore as might have made some pity in the rocks.

Before proceeding to the 'Echo' verses—have we not in Shakespeare's *A Lover's Complaint* a very definite 'echo' of this first verse of de Vere's?

From off a hill whose concave womb re-worded
 A plaintful story from a sistering vale,
 My spirits t' attend this double voice accorded,
 And down I laid to list the sad-tun'd tale;
 Ere long espied a fickle maid full pale,
 Tearing of papers, breaking rings a-twain,
 Storming her world with sorrow's wind and rain.

Is this not the same thought (possibly the same lady) much perfected?

2. Yet who doth most adore this wight,
 Oh, hollow caves tell true? you.
 What nymph deserves his liking best
 Yet doth in sorrow rue? you.

What makes him not reward good will
 With some reward or ruth? Youth
 What makes him show besides his birth
 Such pride and such untruth? Youth.

It is a conceited piece of the type in vogue amongst court gallants, and the 'untruth' is a carping allusion to the motto de Vere bore on his coat of arms, '*vero nihil verius*'—nothing truer than truth.

In *Richard II*, where John of Gaunt stresses his *gauntness* for the grave, the King retorts, 'Can old men play so nicely with their names?'

To conclude with another verse from Oxford's poem, in which we get an amusing play on his name, Vere, repeated in the echo.

Oh, heavens, who was the first that bred in me this fever? Vere.
 Who was the first that gave the wound whose fear I bear for ever? Vere.
 What tyrant, Cupid, to my harm usurps thy golden quiver? Vere.
 What wight first caught this heart and can from bondage it deliver? Vere.

(The name is pronounced Ver to make the echo perfect, as it was originally, being derived from the town of Ver near Bayeux in Normandy.)

Before dealing further with the poems, it is necessary to enquire into the life of the author—Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. But be patient—it will not all go on a postcard.

Arthur Collins, in 1772, wrote: 'De Vere'—An excellent poet and comedian whose compositions are *lost or worn out*.' Our investigations may reverse this assumption.

In this chapter we have found that our claimant fulfils five of our contentions. He was a lyric poet, he showed a certain cynicism towards women, he was an aristocrat of the old English nobility, and was a follower of the chase, also of hawking from which he draws similes, and he wrote comedies.

NOTES

1. See , William Shakespeare do Appoint—
2. *Autobiography*.
3. See further *In a Nook with a Book*, by F. W. Macdonald. The author says, 'After all that has been written about Shakespeare we do not know him and it is pretty certain we never shall. . . . Other men you may arrive at but not Shakespeare.' Also Halliwell Phillips in the same strain—'Fortunately for Shakespeare all came from within—I mean from his soul and his genius; circumstances and the external contributed but slightly to his development.' This is the ostrich-like refuge of those who deny Shakespeare any scholarship in conformity with the 'Stratfordian' thesis.

4. *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*.
- 4a. See Note in Appendix.
5. See *Shakespeare and Italy*, by Ernesto Grillo, 1949. He says, 'Shakespeare has a perfect knowledge of the correct use of names belonging to the Italian aristocracy of his own time; Lucentio, for example, describes his father Vmcentio as "come of the Bentivogli"Y
6. Lord Campbell was Lord Chief Justice 1850, and eventually became Lord Chancellor.
7. Churton Collins, *Studies in Shakespeare*.
8. In his *Life of William Shakespeare*.
9. Gerald Massey, Poet (1828-1907).
- 9a. See Appendix 2.
10. See *Queen Elizabeth in Drama*, by Dr. Fred S. Boas.
11. Published in W. Bird's *Psalms and Sonnets*, 1588.
12. See *The Man Shakespeare and his Tragic Life Story*, 1909.
13. See further George Greenwood's *Shakespeare Problem Restated*.

CHAPTER 5

'A GREAT AND NOBLE EARL OF ENGLAND'

George Chapman

'Whose infancy from the beginning was ever sacred to the Muses.'

Angel Day to the Earl of Oxford, 1586

TO appreciate Shakespeare's interest in the choice of history for dramatic presentation it is necessary to turn back those 'five hundred courses of the sun' and investigate the origins of some of those 'wolfish earls' that make the historical plays such compelling and forceful drama.

The family of de Vere were supposed to have come over with the Conqueror, but there is evidence that they were here prior to that event, their device of a harpy as a supporter to their escutcheon being of Danish origin, as may be seen on treasure chests of the eighth and ninth centuries, and these would have been found in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex where they raided England and where the de Veres settled. Furthermore, there is an entry in a MS. register at Earl's Colne Priory, now in Colchester Library, which is entitled *An Account of the Most Ancient and Noble Family of the de Veres, Earls of Oxford*, in which we read that one Alberic or Aubrey de Vere held land under King Edward the Confessor.

But there is no doubt of their French extraction, and that the name originated in the town of Ver in Bayonne: this is proved by the fact that the conquering William, when handing out land to his supporters and countrymen, not only bestowed on this Aubrey many estates, including the manor of Cheniston (now Kensington, where de Vere Gardens and Aubrey Walk still commemorate their first Norman landlord), but also cemented the friendship and bound de Vere to him by giving him his sister Beatrix to wife.

The grandson of this Aubrey went on the first Crusade in 1097, and added a cognizance to his coat of arms in the following manner:

In the year of our Lord 1098, Corborant, Admiral of the Soudan of Perce, was fought with at Antioch and discomfited the Christians. The night coming on in the chase of this battle, and waxing dark, the Christians being four miles from Antioch, God willing the safety of the Christians showed a White Star or Molette of five points on the Christian host, which to every man's sight did light and arrest upon the Standard of Alory the third, there shining excessively.

The five-pointed Star of the de Veres can still be seen on the tower of Earl's Colne Church, and also on the church doors at Lavenham—along with a boar (*Verres*—a boar)—a second cognizance of the family.

Earl's Colne Priory in Essex was founded soon after 1100, and the Earl who built the priory was created hereditary Lord Great Chamberlain of England. This title remained to the de Veres until 1625, when it passed to the family of Bertie, through the sister of the 17th Earl marrying Peregrine Bertie, Lord Willoughby d'Eresby.

It was the fourth successive Aubrey who was created 1st Earl of Oxford, whilst Robert, the 4th Earl, was made Duke of Ireland by Richard II. This title lapsed after the death of the owner, who, taken prisoner by the King's uncles whilst fighting for his royal master, was summarily beheaded. Richard, who was inconsolable for the loss of his dear friend, had his body brought back and buried in Westminster Abbey. This Robert, whom history may have unduly vilified to put more balance in the Lancastrian scale against Richard, is nevertheless given a character of which his descendants would not be proud. Thus we find that he is not included as a character in the play of *Richard 77*, although the bad influence of the favourites on the King's character is duly emphasized, and the young Duke of Ireland was supposed to be the worst offender in this respect. Indeed there is no mention of his name until the end of the play, where he is recorded as having been executed for his adherence to the King, thus ennobling his end. But, strangely enough, this name is omitted in the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays, and that of Spencer substituted. Why? Shakspeare had taken no interest in the publication of the plays, and after his death his daughters, apparently, could not have cared less! But this slightly 'black sheep' amongst the de Vere forbears provided a point of tarnished honour to be vindicated or suppressed by his descendants. The 17th Earl's daughters were in a position to use their influence when the First Folio was being edited: hence the substitution of Spencer for Oxford.

During the Wars of the Roses the Earls of Oxford supported the house of Lancaster, and when Edward, Duke of York, became King as Edward IV he caused to be attainted and executed John, the 12th Earl, together with his eldest son, Aubrey.

John, a younger son, was eventually reinstated in his titles and lands, and became a follower of the Earl of Warwick in his efforts to restore the crown to Henry VI in 1470.

Thus we find in Shakespeare's *Henry VI* the Earl of Oxford speaking angrily thus:

Call him my king, by whose injurious doom
My elder brother, the Lord Aubrey Vere,

Was done to death? And more than so, my father,
 Even in the downfall of his mellow'd years,
 When nature brought him to the door of death?
 No, Warwick, no; while life upholds this arm,
 This arm upholds the house of Lancaster.

In other scenes he is referred to as 'brave Oxford, wondrous well beloved' or 'sweet Oxford' or again, 'Where is the post that came from valliant Oxford?' And all this for a character who has little or no bearing on the plot.

Towards the close of the play Henry VI blesses the young Henry of Richmond and names him his successor; a diplomatic concession on the part of the author, to the house of Tudor.

Finally Edward IV, once more victorious, after ordering the immediate execution of Somerset, de Vere's companion in arms, gives the command to his soldiers, 'Away with Oxford to Hames Castle straight', betraying, on the part of the dramatist, a detailed knowledge of his ancestor's fate, even to the place of his imprisonment.

The 15th Earl was created a Knight of the Garter (1528), and lies buried in Hedingham Church beneath a black marble monument, on the top of which are incised the de Vere arms and small figures representing the Earl and his wife, kneeling. There were four sons and four daughters. It was this Earl who carried the crown at the Coronation of Queen Anne Boleyn in 1533.

John, the 16th Earl, married as his first wife Dorothy Neville, a sister of the Earl of Westmorland, by which marriage there was one daughter, Katherine, later Baroness Windsor; and secondly, Margery Golding who was the mother of our lyric poet, Edward.

The marriage of John de Vere and Margery Golding is recorded in the register of the little church of Belchamp St. Paul, Essex, the home of the bride, thus:

Ao. Domini 1548. The wedding of my lord John de Vere, Earl of Oxenford and Margery the daughter of John Goulding Esq. the 1st of August.

This entry proved, at a later date, very necessary evidence when Baron Windsor, husband of the Earl's first daughter, brought a charge of illegitimacy against the children of the second wife.

These children were Edward and Mary, who may have been twins, as there is a record that in 1564 they were 'aged 14'.

Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, was born on April 12th (old style), 1550, at Castle Hedingham, Essex. (See Plate III.)

Of this fine Tudor mansion nothing now remains, but on an adjacent hillock stands the solid mediaeval keep—strong enough to

stand till doomsday—and leading to it is an ancient bridge which once spanned the moat. The site of the original Tudor house is a level green plat, nothing more, and an early sixteenth-century drawing gives little idea of its appearance.

From the flat roof of the keep an extensive panorama spreads out on all four points of the compass, looking very much today as it must have done in the Earl's youth; green fields, massed trees, a speck of a red roof here and there denoting the village of Castle Hedingham in its dip below the mound on which the keep stands.

All the villages round about were famous for their excellent woollen cloth, the town of Lavenham in Suffolk being the centre of the industry. It was here that the 14th Earl of Oxford inspired the planning and erection of the church, still famous for its size and beauty, and where the clerestory windows originally displayed fifty-eight coats of arms illustrating the alliances of the de Vere family.

Wool was indeed the staple industry, and, of many notable families engaged in the trade, the Springs of Lavenham stand out conspicuously, Thomas Spring having provided funds for the erection of the church and handsome Guildhall, and Margaret, his niece, having married the Earl's second son, Aubrey, from whom the later Earls of Oxford were descended.

The names of Lindsey and Kersey (not to mention Hamlet) are East Anglian wool-weaving villages, which the author of the Shakespeare plays betrayed that he knew when he made his 'First Lord' in *All's Well that Ends Well* say, 'But what Lindsey-woolsey hast thou to speak to us again?'

Edward was born during the reign of the young King Edward VI and doubtless was named after him, John de Vere having been created a Knight of the Bath by Edward VI three years earlier. There were no previous 'Edwards' in the Vere family. He was given his father's subsidiary title of Viscount Bulbeck, the crest appertaining to which title is a lion rampant *brandishing or shaking a broken spear*.

During his early years the Viscount was surrounded by learned relatives, so that he was influenced towards the poetry and drama which became his absorbing passion. There was Aunt Frances and her husband the Earl of Surrey, who was the most outstanding poet of the 40's; Aunt Anne, who had married Lord Sheffield, the writer of a book of sonnets in the Italian style, owner of a company of actors, and a skilled musician; and more particularly there was uncle Arthur Golding, his mother's half-brother, a fine scholar who was justly renowned for his translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into English 'fourteeners'. This book, so the experts acknowledge, was the one more drawn upon than any other by Shakespeare in the plays

and poems; some believing that he knew the Latin as well as the English version; and what was more likely if he was brought up on it as his first 'primer'?

Furthermore there was the young Viscount's father, an intrepid huntsman, who supplied the active motif in an heroic vein to counter-balance the purely cultural influence. A story such as told by Gervase Markham in *Honour in his Perfection* is just that which would fire the enthusiasm of an imaginative boy. This is to the effect that whilst taking part in a boar hunt near Paris, John de Vere, 'attired as when he walked in his own bedchamber, only a dancing rapier by his side', slew a boar single-handed. To the exclamations of amazement from the French sportsmen he replied quietly, 'What have I done? Is it the killing of this English pig? Why, every boy of my nation would have performed it. They may be bugbears to the French; but to us they are servants.' A touch of theatrical flamboyance entirely in character, but in no way lessening his bravery.

So it comes as no surprise to read that this Earl delighted in masques and plays, and kept a company of actors to entertain his guests. Possibly these performers were also loaned to other large houses, or may even have toured from town to town, since there is an entry to the effect that:

The Earl of Oxford's jugglers, plaiers and flewte players were at Ipswich paid 23 shillings in June, 1562.

They are also recorded as playing at Tilby Manor, the seat of the Marquis of Dorset (1551), and at Maldon in 1560-61 and '62.

Could there be found a better environment in which to rear a youthful 'Shakespeare'?

The family were keen adherents to the Reformed Religion, which had caused the 16th Earl, under Mary's Catholic reign, to retire from Court. On the accession of the Protestant Elizabeth he and his family again came into prominence, and John de Vere himself accompanied Princess Elizabeth from her prison at Hatfield to London on November 23rd, 1558, whilst his wife was appointed one of her maids of honour. It was probably due to his Protestant bias that John was chosen to negotiate a proposed marriage between Elizabeth and the son of the King of Sweden; and he rode to meet the Duke of Friesland, younger brother of the proposed bridegroom, when he landed in England (1559).

In 1561 the Queen herself came to Hedingham Castle and stayed five days. She was now twenty-eight, vivacious, learned, with a shrewd wit, and possibly still a bit of a hoyden, whilst her host's curly-haired son was just eleven.

For her entertainment there would have been hawking and hunting in the lush meadows around Hedingham, sumptuous banquets (was not the family crest of a boar's head the symbol of hospitality?) with masques and music, plays and juggling acts in the evening; perhaps the handsome son of her host reciting hastily-learned verses in her honour.

Indeed there would have been great excitement for the 'young Juvenal' at the castle during these hectic five days, much to amaze and amuse him when his tutor (probably that same uncle Golding already mentioned) would excuse him from his lessons.

But Edward needed no goading to learn; his receptive mind was acquiring knowledge with precocious rapidity, for by the time he was thirteen, a later tutor, Lawrence Newell, intimated that his work for his young pupil was finished and he requested another appointment.

Nature had provided the boy with great beauty of person, a fine wit and a keen understanding (or, to quote two contemporary writers, 'so good a nature and common sense' and 'a safe harbour and defense of learning'), a cultural background, where lavishness in all things, from a laden table to a mode of expression, were the order of the day, and where music and the drama were an integral part of life.

From the easy ways and manner of the players he would have gathered something of their free speech and bonhomie; from his hero-father a fearless approach to bodily prowess; from his uncles, Surrey and Sheffield, the refinements of discourse, poetry and music, and from his uncle Golding a devotion to the classics.

When he was twelve years old his father began to think of a match for his son, and accordingly approached the 3rd Earl of Huntingdon, Henry Hastings, with the suggestion that when the lad had reached the age of eighteen he should marry one of Huntingdon's daughters, Elizabeth or Mary. A covenant was drawn up by which the Earl of Huntingdon should pay 2,500 marks in November 1562 and another 1,500 marks on the consummation of the marriage.

If John de Vere hoped by this arrangement to bring his son closer to the throne—Huntingdon being the lineal heir of George Plantaganet, Duke of Clarence (of Malmesbury wine fame), and also to fill his sadly depleted coffers, fate took a hand to mould events otherwise. Before the end of the year he was dead—the de Vere tent collapsed—and the new Earl, at the impressionable age of twelve, was left with the memory of this vivid youth—and a pile of debts!

From Machyn's Diary we learn that the old Earl's funeral was attended by 'three Heralds of Arms, with a standard and a great banner of arms, and eight banner rolls, crest, target, sword and coat

of armour, and a hearse with velvet, and a dozen of scutcheons, and with many mourners in black; and a great moan was made for him'.

Three days later the same diarist tells us: 'On the 3rd day of September came riding out of Essex from the funeral of the Earl of Oxford his father, the young Earl of Oxford, with seven score horse all in black; through London to Chepe to Ludgate—and so to Temple Bar . . . between 5 and 6 of the afternoon.'

For this young nobleman was to become a royal ward, and live in the house of Sir William Cecil, who was governor of the Queen's wards. (See Frontispiece.)

What did his mother feel in thus parting with her lovely son?

The answer to this question surely appears in *All's Well that Ends Well*:

Countess. In delivering my son from me I bury a second husband.

Bertram. And I in going, madam, weep o'er my father's death anew; but I must attend his majesty's command, *to whom I am now in ward* evermore in subjection.

Countess. Be thou blest, Bertram, and succeed thy father
In manners as in shape. Thy blood and virtue
Contend for empire in thee; and thy goodness
Share with thy birthright.

[My italics.]

Furthermore, in a subsequent scene the King descants upon the virtues of that excellent father, saying:

Thy father did look far
Into the service of the time and was
Discipled of the bravest.

It much repairs me
To talk of your good father.
So like a courtier, contempt nor bitterness
Were in his pride, or, if they were,
His equal had awaked them: who were below him
He used as creatures of another place,
And bowed his eminent top to their low ranks
Making them proud of his humility.
In their poor praise he humbled. Such a man
Might be a copy to these younger times.

Could anyone but an aristocrat have penned these lines? And does not the description exactly fit the reputation borne by the 16th Earl?

All's Well that Ends Well has much that is autobiographical in it, as will be revealed later.

Before passing on to the young Earl's life as a queen's ward,

another point may be made. The Countess of Oxford shortly remarried, her second husband being Charles Tyrrell, one of the Queen's Gentlemen Pensioners, and seems to have lost touch with her son, whose affairs she relinquished, or was forced to relinquish, to his new guardians. She wrote to Burleigh, 'And since that time the doubtful declaration of my Lord's debts hath so uncertainly fallen out that... I had rather leave the whole doings thereof to my son (if... I may so deal honourably). I mean the honour or gain (if any be) might come wholly to my son, who is under your charge.'

What effect this had on the lad's youthful mind is hard to determine, but her 'o'er hasty marriage' cut him deeply, as we see in *Hamlet* where he scathingly replies to Horatio, Thrift, thrift, Horatio, the funeral baked meats did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.'

Cecil House,¹ to which place of residence the young Earl came to take up his abode early in September, was on the north side of the Strand, built of brick and embellished with four turrets. It had a great chamber, an oratory and a very fine garden which for over twenty years was the sole care of the famous botanist John Gerard. Sir William Cecil was still adding more buildings to it and decorating the interior when Edward de Vere came to London.

The Queen's trusted minister here maintained a household of eighty persons, and when in residence spent £50 a week on upkeep, leaving as much as £30 for expenses during his absence.

John Clapham,² for seven years amanuensis to Lord Burleigh, and a great admirer of his master, wrote: 'After Sir Thomas Parry's death [he, Burleigh] was made Master of the Wards and Liveries, *by means whereof he became rich.*' [*My italics.*] (See Plate III.)

This must be recalled to mind when assessing the truth of later letters and accusations.

Arthur Golding was appointed the young Earl's 'receiver', presumably a glorified collector of 'rents and revenues', and may have accompanied the boy to Cecil House on this first visit. His influence even extended to the young John Clapham, who used his spare time composing, and later published, anonymously, a poem in Latin entitled *Narcissus*, based on Ovid's well-known story. The charm of Golding's translation made a great appeal to the public as is evidenced by the issue of a second edition of the *Metamorphoses* within two years.

Burleigh was no niggard. He allowed his ward to spend the colossal sum of £200 a year (£1,000 today) on his personal effects, some details of which, drawn from Chester Herald's account, are appended below. Remembering John Clapham's phrase recorded

above we may be forgiven for conjecturing that Sir William was taking a rake-off.

Payments made by John Hart, Chester Herald, on behalf of the Earl of Oxford from January 1st to September 30th, 1569,70.

To John Spark, draper for fine black cloth for a cape and riding cloak. £6 5 0.

To Myles Spilsby, tailor, for one doublet of cambric, one of fine canvas and one of black satin; and the furniture for a riding cloak. £12 13 0.

To John Martin, hosier, for one pair of velvet hose—black. £10 9 2.

It may be that these were mourning clothes, though the soberer of the aristocracy at this period favoured black. On the Continent, especially in Italy, it was practically universal, as will be seen by portraits by Tintoretto, Titian and others.

Further we read:³

To William Sears, stationer, for a *Geneva Bible*, gilt, a *Chaucer*, *Plutarch's works in French*, with other books and papers. £27 10. [Italics mine.]

To George Hill, saddler, for collars and girths for my lord's horse. 5 0.

To Riche, the apothecary, for potions, pills and other drugs for my lord's diet in the time of his sickness. £15 15s.

More to him for certain other articles for my lord during his being sick at Windsor and for the charges of keeping in the stable and shoeing of four geldings for my lord's service. £36 5 4.

And for board and diet of my lord with his tutors and servants at Cecil House for 14 days of this quarter at £3 a week. £6 0 0.

It seems by this that more than one tutor was living at Cecil House at this time. Lawrence Nowell left when the Earl was thirteen, as has been recorded, and a later tutor was Sir Thomas Smith,⁴ a man in his fifties, who had taken his degree at Cambridge after studying civil law at Padua University, which was particularly devoted to this study. It is thus with a clear understanding of what he was writing about that Shakespeare made his fair Portia—a young and learned doctor whom Bellario cannot enough commend—come from Padua to expound civil law to the court at Venice and so outwit the bloodthirsty Shylock.

I have given at some length the list of purchases made by the young Earl because it seems to bring us very close to his personality; his slight black-clad figure with rapier and dagger; Geneva Bible in hand—or perhaps more to his personal taste, the Plutarch's works. Finally the jaunty cap on his head, the 'capper' being paid £4 6s. *Qd.*

for one hat in velvet, one in taffeta, two velvet caps together with 'a scarf, two pairs of garters with silver at the ends, a plume of feathers for the hat, etc.'

When de Vere first came to Cecil House his lessons were set with precision and entitled 'Orders for the Earl of Oxford's exercises'.

Thus we find him rising early enough to commence dancing at seven; breakfast following from 7.30 to 8; then lessons, beginning with French and Latin, and a short period for writing and drawing.

After Common Prayers there was dinner which finished at one, and was followed by Cosmography, more Latin and French, and exercises with his pen until 4.30; then more prayers, and so to supper.

On Holy Days he read before dinner the Epistle and Gospel, and spent 'the rest of the day riding, shooting, dancing, walking, and other commendable exercises'. To these studies was added map-drawing, Lawrence Nowell's particular delight, which possibly his pupil shared, and we can smile at the tutor's exclaiming from his superior knowledge on the subject that the geographers of England 'jumble up haphazard in their maps imaginary sites and localities', and requesting Sir William Cecil to get him appointed chief cartographer.

His pupil was now proficient in French, as may be seen in a letter written to Burleigh which is still preserved in the Lansdowne MSS. 6.25.

At the early age of fourteen Lord Oxford received his degree at Cambridge, where he lodged at St. John's College. This is a tribute to his naturally receptive brain and also to the excellent tuition which Lord Burleigh provided for his wards. The young Edward Manners, 3rd Earl of Rutland, de Vere's cousin, who became his fellow pupil in Cecil House a year after Oxford had taken up his residence, is described by Camden as 'a profound lawyer and a man accomplished with all polite learning'.

Whilst Oxford was up at Cambridge Arthur Golding dedicated to his young nephew his book *TH Abridgment of the Histories of Trogus Pompeius* in the following words:

It came to my remembrance that since it hath pleased Almighty God [Golding it should be mentioned was a strong supporter of Calvinism—hence the *Geneva Bible*] to take to his mercy your noble father (to whom I had long before vowed this my travail) there was not any who, either of duty might more justly claim the same... or of whom I thought it should be more favourably accepted, than of your honour. For ... it is not unknown to others, and I have had experience thereof myself, how earnest a desire your honour hath naturally grafted in you *to read*,

peruse and communicate with others, as well the *histories of ancient times*, and things done long ago, as also of the present estate of things in our days and that not without a certain pregnancy of wit and ripeness of understanding.

It is to be observed that history, past and present, is one of the young Earl's abiding interests.

The following year he and Rutland acted as pages at the wedding of Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick, and Lady Anne Russell, and in 1566 he received his Master of Arts degree at Oxford.

Then in 1567 he was, with Philip Sidney and John Manners, a younger brother of the Earl of Rutland (likewise a Royal ward), admitted to Gray's Inn to study law.

Burleigh knew that to young men who would soon have large estates to control a knowledge of law was essential, and his two sons, as well as his wards, Oxford, Rutland, Southampton and Essex, were all given a legal training.

Sir D. Plunket Barton, Judge of the High Court of Justice of Ireland, in 1922 wrote:

Around this family circle Burleigh grouped within the walls of Gray's Inn the most brilliant young men of the day. . . . These names brought the Inn into touch with Shakespeare, who borrowed hints from Sidney's *Arcadia*, and is believed to have taken Southampton, Rutland and Pembroke as the models whom he reproduced under the names of Bassanio, Gratiano, Romeo, Benedict, Florizel and Valentine.

Indeed this group of Royal wards appears *en bloc* in *All's Well*. Together with Bertram they are offered to Helen that she may choose a husband, the King commending them thus:

this youthful parcel
Of noble bachelors stand at my bestowing
O'er whom both sovereign power and father's voice
I have to use; thy frank election make—
Thou hast power to choose, and they none to forsake.

.

Peruse them well:

Not one of these but had a noble father.

Campbell, in his *Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements*, 1859, says 'What law there is in Shakespeare, can, indeed *must* [the italics are the author's] be explained upon some ground other than that he was a lawyer, or an apprentice, or a student of the law.' The *must* is very significant, when we turn to sonnets such as the following, imbued as it is with the very spirit and jargon of the law:

So, now I have confess'd that he is thine,⁵
And I myself am *mortgaged* to thy will.

Myself I'll *forfeit*, so that other mine
 Thou wilt restore, to be my comfort still,
 But thou wilt not, nor he will not be free,
 For thou art covetous, and he is kind.
 He learn'd but, *surety-like*, to write for me
 Under that *bond* that him as fast doth *bind*
 The *statute* of thy beauty thou wilt take;
 Thou *usurer*, that *putfst forth all to use*
 And *sue* a friend came *debtor* for my sake;

[*Italics mine.*]

How little or how much of the law Oxford applied in practice when endeavouring to cope with his financial troubles, or how far he depended on untrustworthy agents or seeming friends, it is difficult now to assess, but he had every opportunity to acquire a wide knowledge of the law during his studies at Gray's Inn.

In the accomplishment of dancing, practised in the early hours, we know, from a report of the Spanish Ambassador, Mendoza, to his master the King of Spain (1578), de Vere became extremely proficient.

The scene was Long Melford Hall in Essex, whither the Queen and her Court had come on progress—

The next day the Queen sent twice to tell the Earl of Oxford, who is a very gallant lad to dance before the Ambassadors; whereupon he replied that he hoped Her Majesty would not order him to do so, as he did not wish to entertain Frenchmen. When the Lord Steward took him the message the second time he replied that he would not give pleasure to Frenchmen, nor listen to the message, and with that he left the room. He is a lord who has a great following in the country.

This petulance, though possibly a defect in his character, was not entirely unprovoked, for the Queen that day had reprimanded her Steward, the Earl of Sussex, de Vere's friend, on the small quantity of plate exhibited on the sideboard, and this she had chosen to do before the French Ambassador. De Vere was, boylike, repaying her for her high-handedness.

From the foregoing we may gather that though an excellent dancer, he disliked exhibitionism; knew how it should be done but rather despised the accomplishment.

And thus we find in *Twelfth Night* the following absurd dialogue between the comics, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew:

Sir A. I am a fellow o' the strangest mind in the world; I delight in masks and revels sometimes altogether.

Sir T. Art thou good at these kickshaws, knight?

Sir A. As any man in Illyria.

Sir T. What is thy excellence in a galliard, knight?

Sir A. Faith I can cut a caper . . .

. . . And I think I have the back-trick simply as strong as any man in illyria.

Sir T. Wherefore are these things hid? Why dost thou not go to church in a galliard and come home in a coranto? My very walk should be a jig. I did think, by the excellent constitution of thy leg, it was formed under the star of a galliard.

Later we hear of a tune for a galliard composed by the Earl of Oxford, which brings us to another of his accomplishments—music.

John Farmer (1591) dedicated his first song-book to Lord Oxford, testifying to his skill in these words:

For without flattery be it spoke, those that know your Lordship know this, that using this science [music] as a recreation, your Lordship have overgone most of them that make it a profession. . . . I hope it shall not be distasteful to number you here amongst *the favourers of music and the practicers*—no more than Kings and Emperors that have been desirous to be in the roll of astronomers, that being but a star fair, the other an angel's choir. *[Italics mine.]*

Farmer addressed this to the Earl in his maturer days; but that he was a 'favourer of music' from his youth is shown in a tribute by John Sooutherne, a Frenchman, at one time resident in the Earl's household, who, although a poor versifier, aspired to poetry and published a small volume entitled *Pandora* (1584).

For who marketh better than he
The seven turning flames of the sky?
Or hath read more of the antique;
Hath greater knowledge of the tongues
Or understandeth sooner the sounds
Of the learner to love music?

Dedications may be exaggerated in their tributes to patrons, and poor John Sooutherne was no poet, but we may credit him with sufficient honesty not to have praised where no praise was due, and from this verse we again get reference to the Earl's love of music, his study of ancient history, languages, and, as in John Farmer's dedication, astronomy.

It is thought that Oxford may have studied astronomy with the famous mathematician and philosopher Dr. John Dee, who in his rambling house at Mortlake entertained all the most illustrious people of England or visitors from abroad. On one occasion Prince Albertus Laski of Poland was his guest, coming down the river in the Queen's barge in company with Lord Russell and Philip Sidney. On

another, Abraham Ortelius, the Dutch map-maker, came to consult the doctor, whilst the Queen herself, when resident at Sheen, often rode to his door to be shown his latest instruments, books or maps. She consulted him when desirous of fixing an auspicious day for her coronation; and, when the alarming find was made of a wax figure in her likeness, stabbed through with a pin, a piece of sympathetic magic which she realized aimed at her life, she called him to the palace to allay her fears.

More homely and constant visitors were de Vere's sister and brother-in-law, the Willoughbys, who never failed to enrich their impecunious host with a much appreciated gift of 'xx angels'.

In the rambling rooms at Mortlake, surrounded by his famous library of four thousand books, shelves of alembics, crucibles, mattresses, telescopes and globes (an ancient drawing even gives the familiar stuffed crocodile suspended from the ceiling), the doctor expounded to his learned and illustrious guests his far-flung schemes and experiments, such as his project to reform the calendar, and so bring England into line with the Continent where Pope Gregory's calendar had replaced the Julian (for in England, as Hamlet knew, 'time was out of joint'); his proposal to found an army of 'sea soldiers' to fight in the 'Navy Royal'; or a National Library for which he himself would scour England and the Continent for rare volumes, making copies of those the owners would not sell. He was keenly interested in music, especially harmony—and had studied civil law and points of jurisprudence, even 'those accounted very intricate and dark',⁶ and on both these subjects de Vere would have much in common with his host.

Here came the sea-adventurers, Humphrey and Adrian Gilbert, John Davies and Henry Hudson, to plan further voyages, in which de Vere was to invest and lose money. A few of the doctor's privileged friends were permitted to enter the inner sanctum sanctorum, where behind locked doors that enigmatical person, Master Edward Kelley, the doctor's skryer, evoked the spirits.

When, later, Dr. Dee had to defend himself against a charge of witchcraft he spoke of 'the hon: the Earl of Oxford his favourable letters. 1570', as a recommendation of his true dealing and thorough Christian beliefs.

So in Sonnet 14,¹ suggest Shakespeare calls back to memory the days in Dee's study.

Not from the stars do I my judgment pluck;
And yet methinks I have astronomy,
 But not to tell of good or evil luck,
 Of plagues, of dearths, or seasons' quality;

Nor can I fortune to brief minutes tell,
 Pointing to each his thunder, rain and wind,
 Or say with princes if it shall go well,
 By oft predict what I in heaven find.

This seems to have been Shakespeare's attitude towards astrology, a healthy scepticism which exclaims:

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
 and puts into the mouth of Edmund:

This is the excellent foppery of the world that when we are sick in fortune we make guilty of our disasters the Sun, Moon and Stars, as if we were Villans on necessity, Fools by heavenly compulsion, Knaves, Thieves and Treachers by Spherical predominance.

Hotspur in *Henry IV* seems to have had Dee (who was of Welsh descent) in mind, but voices the author's personal opinions on Glendower's powers as a magician.

Glen. I can call spirits from the vasty deep.

Hot. Why, so can T, or so can any man,
 But will they come when you do call for them?

.

and later:

Hot. Sometimes he angers me
 With telling me of the moldwarp and the ant,
 Of the dreamer Merlin and his prophecies,
 And of a dragon and a finless fish,
 A clip-wing'd griffin and a moulten raven,
 A crouching lion and a ramping cat,
 And such a deal of skimble-scamble stuff
 As puts me from my faith. I tell you what,—
 He held me last night at least nine hours
 In reckoning up the several devils' names
 That were his lackeys: I cried 'hum' and 'well go to',
 But marked him not a word. O, he is as tedious
 As a tired horse, a railing wife;
 Worse than a smoky house:—I had rather live
 With cheese and garlic in a windmill, far,
 Than feed on cates and have him talk to me
 In any summer-house in Christendom.

Mortimer's gentle reprimand describes Dee's character to perfection:

In faith, he is a worthy gentleman;
 Exceedingly well-read, and *profited*
In strange concealments; valiant as a lion,

And wondrous affable, and as bountiful
As mines of India.

When did William of Stratford come in contact with Dr. Dee? Ben Jonson knew of the doctor and his activities, and satirized him in *The Alchemist*, but where is the connecting link between the player himself and the old scholar and philosopher? We shall find de Vere and the doctor together again later, when they were mutually interested in the exploitation of the 'New World'.

Hawking, hunting, the tilt and sword-play occupied the young Earl's more active hours, and his proficiency in fencing led to tragedy in July of 1567, when Sir William Cecil entered in his diary: 'About this time Thomas Brinkwell, an undercook, was hurt by the Earl of Oxford at Cecil House in the Strand, whereof he died; and by a verdict found felo-de-se with running upon the fence sword of the said Earl's.'

We know no more than this cryptic record expresses; what happened is a mystery. Were the young men practising? Or was the fellow spying upon de Vere's actions, and so drew upon himself an unlucky thrust—as did Polonius? We will look further into the question of Sir William's spying proclivities and his use of menials for espionage in a later chapter.

Meanwhile this concludes the various interests and accomplishments to which the Earl devoted those years spent under William Cecil's roof, having become by 1569, according to Thomas Underwoune, 'the right pattern of a noble gentleman'.

His felicity in writing will be discussed in its proper place.

In this chapter we have seen that our nominee fulfils two more of our requisite attributes. He lived during the last half of the sixteenth century, having his best producing period from 1594-1604. He was thoroughly educated in the classics, languages and bodily prowess, and he had had a legal training.

Pandarus. Is not birth, beauty, good shape, discourse, manhood, learning, gentleness, virtue, youth, liberality, and such like the spice and salt that season a man?

Troilus and Cressida, I. 2

NOTES

1. See *The House of Cecil*, by Ravenscroft Dennis.
2. John Clapham, born 1566. Spent seven years in Burleigh's household and wrote *Certain Observations concerning the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*. The MS. of this was sold by Sir Hans Soane to the British Museum in 1753. There is a portrait of Clapham, aged thirty-two, with the motto 'Cendendo Silendo'.
3. Domestic State Papers and an old account book.

4. De Vere was particularly fortunate in his tutors. Golding was a man of principle and integrity. Of Sir Thomas Smith, Sir Clements Markham writes: 'Sir Thomas Smith was a learned and very able statesman, and one of the few thoroughly honourable and fearless public men that the age produced' (*King Edward VI, an appreciation*, 1907).
5. Sonnet No. 134.
6. Dr. John Dee, besides writing philosophical and mathematical treatises, also kept two diaries: (1) the jottings of daily occurrences, written down the side of an almanac in a scribbling hand; (2) the records of his psychical researches contained in a volume eventually published by Dr. Meric Casaubon, 1659, under the title of *The True and Faithful Relation of What happened between Dr. John Dee and some Spirits, etc.*⁹ There is no later edition.
7. At Hatfield House.

CHAPTER 6

THE RED KNIGHT

LET us leave the young Earl at his studies for a moment (from which he will emerge like a gilded butterfly) whilst we examine the political situation in which his young manhood is to develop, and in the workings of which he will wish to take his part.

In France, even more particularly than elsewhere in Europe, the feud between Catholics and Protestants was growing in intensity, seething up to bubble over in that holocaust, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, which was to drench Paris in blood in 1572.

Francis II, the young French Valois King, had died in 1561 and had been succeeded by his brother, Charles, whilst his young and lovely widow, Mary, had returned home to become Queen of Scots.

Catherine de Medici, mother of Charles IX, the virtual ruler of France, had proposed first her son, Anjou, and later her youngest son, Alencon, as a possible husband for Queen Elizabeth. Meanwhile both Spain and Turkey were arming for a day of battle; the great sea-fight of Lepanto first, in which Don John of Austria won glorious renown by driving the Turks back from the Adriatic, and crippling their sea power for all time; and then Spain v. England when the English, still minus their special 'sea-soldiers', drove the Spanish Armada from these shores in 1588, to be battered to pieces by the elements.

In the Low Countries, King Philip, in an endeavour to stamp out the new religion which had spread westward from Germany and Switzerland through his Netherlandish dominions, gave the command of his army to the bigoted and unscrupulous Duke of Alva, whose harshness roused the Prince of Orange to espouse the cause of the Protestants.

The struggle in the Netherlands, in which at length Elizabeth was persuaded to take a hand, had thus begun.

The headquarters of the Calvinists under the Prince of Orange was at Dillingburg near Cologne, whither he had retreated on Alva's approach, to collect an army.

And it is here that we find a courier from the young Earl of Oxford, one Thomas Churchyard,¹ sometime a dependant of the Earl's and resident at Cecil House. The purport of his message has not been recorded, but the interest lies in the link between the Protestant ward of Sir William Cecil, and the heroic leader of the Netherlandish

reformed party, William of Orange. It evinced an early desire in the young man to do battle for his 'Prince' (Elizabeth) and faith.

In December 1568 the Earl's mother, the Dowager Countess, died and was buried at Earl's Colne. There is no record that Edward attended her funeral, but the probability is that he did not. He was ill during that or the following year and we have already seen what doctors and physics cost him.

As soon as he was restored to health he eagerly requested Sir William to forward a plea to the Queen that he should be allowed to see service with the army, hoping for permission to join the forces in the Netherlands. His letter concluded, 'It has always been my wish to see the wars and services in strange and foreign parts ... do me so much honour as that by your purchase of my licence, I may be called upon to the service of my Prince and Country.'

His permit came through, with a special grant of £40, and he joined the campaign of the Earl of Sussex which was going north to quell a rebellion in favour of Mary Queen of Scots—'seeking the bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth'.

Those who feel that Shakespeare betrays more knowledge of camp life and the wars than William Shakspeare could have found at Stratford or on Bankside fill in the ten years' hiatus in his life with the trailing of a pike in the Netherlands. He would have had time to go round the world and back, but there is no evidence that he did anything but that which tradition ascribes to him—hold horses' bridles in London inn yards.

In de Vere's case we have in this expedition an early acquaintance with army life, which was followed later by two short spells in the Low Countries.

The delightful idiocy of Parolles and his lost drum may well be an exaggeration of an army reminiscence.

Coming of a warlike stock—his cousins Francis and Horace (the Francesco and Horatio of Hamlet) were known as 'the Fighting Veres'—Oxford's ambitions turned to glory in the field, ambitions that were to be repeatedly thwarted by the Queen, at the suggestion of one or other of her favourites, Hatton or Leicester.

The Northern rebellion collapsed, but not until Lord Sussex had taught the rebels a lesson with, possibly, undue severity. Lord Oxford served on Sussex's staff, and the two men became staunch friends for many years to come, but as Sussex and Leicester were mortal enemies it meant that Oxford thus allied himself with one who was set against the Queen's powerful favourite, of whom Sussex gave a warning:

Beware of the Gipsy; you do not know the beast as well as I do.

Elizabeth was well pleased with Lord Sussex's campaign, and wrote him a long letter of 'praise and thanks'. 'For indeed we have not known in our time that such entries into Scotland, with such acts to avenge have been so attempted and achieved with so small numbers, and so much to our honour, and the small loss or hurt to any of our subjects.'²

De Vere, aged twenty, must have glowed with pleasure in the reflected glory. In the autumn he returned to London, an occasion which is undoubtedly referred to by John Stowe in the following paragraph: 'and so to his [Oxford's] house by London Stone, with four score gentlemen in a livery of Reading tawny, and chains of gold about their necks, before him; and one hundred tall yeomen in the like livery to follow him, without chains, but all having his cognizance of the Blue Boar embroidered on their left shoulder.'

London Stone³ still remains, built into the South Wall of St. Swithin's church near the Mansion House.

Shakespeare (*Henry VI*) introduces it thus:

London, Cannon Street.

Enter Jack Cade and the rest, and strikes his staff on London-Stone.

Cade. Now is Mortimer Lord of this City, and here sitting upon London Stone, I charge and command that, of this city's cost, the conduit run nothing but claret wine this first year of our reign.

Vere House, granted to the 16th Earl of Oxford by Henry VIII on the dissolution of Tortington Priory, stood adjacent to London Stone. Here Lord Edward Oxford resided until 1589, paying to the Queen an annual rent of thirty shillings.

'Burn down the Savoy and the Inns of Court,' Cade continues, and we find that besides rooms in the Savoy which de Vere may have rented for his secretary, John Lyly, he had his law training in the Inns of Court. He also purchased another large mansion in Bishopsgate ward of which John Stowe makes mention,

There is a fair house of late built by John Powlet. Next to that a far more large and beautiful house with gardens of pleasure, bowling alleys and such like built by Jasper Fisher, free of the Goldsmiths. It hath since for a time been the Earl of Oxford's place. The 9th of May Elizabeth hath lodged there. This house, being so large and sumptuously built by a man (Fisher) of no greater calling, possessions or wealth, was mockingly called Fisher's Folly.

In April 1571, when Parliament was opened by the Queen, the Earl of Oxford at this, his first entry to the House, attended the Queen as Lord Great Chamberlain, and on her departure he carried her train. In precedence he followed the Lord Privy Seal, and pre-

ceded the High Constable (a post vacant at this date), the Marshal, Admiral, Steward and Lord Chamberlain (which is a separate and entirely different office from that of Lord *Great* Chamberlain).

In his leisure hours the Tilt occupied the young Earl's desire for activity, and he became exceptionally adroit in the management of his horse and lance.

In May 1571, at a Tournament held at Westminster before the Queen, it is reported that 'The Challengers were, Edward, Earl of Oxford, Charles Howard, Sir Henry Lee, and Christopher Hatton, Esq. who all did very valliantly; but the chief honour was given to the Earl of Oxford.'

A year later another Tournament was held to celebrate the installation of the Due de Montmorenci as a Knight of the Garter, but de Vere was arranging a display of Arquebusiers and Artillery in St. James's Park and did not tilt.

In the three-day Tournament of 1571, however, he was conspicuous for his skill and bravery; George Delves, himself one of the defendants, writing to the Earl of Rutland, 'There is no man of life and agility in every respect in the Court but the Earl of Oxford', whose 'livery was crimson velvet, very costly; he himself, and the furniture, was in some more colours yet he was *the Red Knight*'⁹.

Giles Fletcher, in Latin verse, appears to have written something like a running commentary on Oxford's prowess.

Fearlessly he settles himself in the saddle, gracefully bending his body this way and that. Now he circles round; now with his spurred heel he rouses his charger. The gallant animal with fiery energy collects himself together, and flying quicker than the wind beats the ground with his hoofs, and again is pulled up short as the reins control him. Bravo! valiant youth! 'Tis thus that martial spirits pass through their apprenticeship in war . . . glory already ripens thy earliest deeds.

The Harleian MSS. say that

This Triumph continued three days. The first at Tilt; the second at Tournay; and the third at Barriers. On every one of the Challengers Her Majesty bestowed a prize, for the receiving whereof they were particularly led, armed, by two ladies, into the Presence Chamber; Oxford himself receiving a tablet of diamonds.

It was at Palermo in Sicily that de Vere, when on his travels later, bravely and gaily challenged all comers to do battle, but none were hardy enough to oppose him. He was, as the Spanish Ambassador said, 'a gallant lad'.

What did he look like at this period? There is no portrait in oils earlier than the one painted in Paris when he was twenty-five years

of age, and which is now in the possession of the Duke of Portland at Welbeck Abbey (see Frontispiece). He had a fair complexion, hazel eyes, a clear-cut sensitive mouth, curly hair of light brown tending towards auburn, a faint line of a moustache but otherwise clean shaven, a high forehead, and an oval, almost feminine facial contour. Above all he had that undefined noble glance, verging on hauteur, inseparable from his birth and breeding. In stature he was rather under medium height.

For confirmation of this latter contention there is firstly Hollar's engraving of the painting by Marcus Gheerhaedts, representing a procession of Knights of the Garter at Windsor Castle, June 18th, 1572 (see Plate IV). Here the Earl of Oxford precedes the Queen as state sword-bearer⁴ and is shown as slightly shorter than Elizabeth, who was not a tall woman. Secondly, from the measurements of a drawing of the Earl's tomb in Hackney Church, taken at one inch to the foot, the length is five feet seven inches. And finally, Thomas Nashe, writing to Gabriel Harvey, describes him as a 'little fellow who hath one of the best wits in England'.⁵

NOTES

1. Thomas Churchyard (1520-1604), minor Elizabethan poet, was first in the household of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, the poet, and later of Surrey's nephew, the Earl of Oxford. He wrote a lament for the death of the Earl of Surrey. Spent many years fighting in the Netherlands and received a pension from Queen Elizabeth.
2. Quoted in E. St John Brooks's *Life of Sir Christopher Hatton*.
3. London Stone—thought to be a Roman mark from which to measure distances from the centre of the City, but possibly a Saxon Coronation Stone. See William Kent's *London for Everyman*.
4. It is possible that Edward de Vere, as Lord Great Chamberlain, could not be a Knight of the Garter.
5. Othello, the Moor, a valiant soldier, and victor of many a battle, says, 'With this little arm——' For a man of his type, would not the adjective 'strong' be more suitable than 'little', unless the author had himself in mind?

CHAPTER 7

'SOLDIER, STATESMAN, SCHOLAR', THE OBSERVED OF ALL OBSERVERS'

Hamlet

IN 1571 the Earl of Oxford married, an event recorded by Lord St. John to the Earl of Rutland in Paris, in this amusing strain:

The Earl of Oxford hath gotten him a wife, or at least a wife hath caught him; this is Mistress Ann Cecil; whereunto the queen hath given her consent and the which hath caused great weeping, wailing and sorrowful cheer of those that had hoped to have that golden day. Thus you may see whilst that some triumph with olive branches, others follow the chariot with willow garlands.

Anne Cecil was the fifteen-year-old daughter of Sir William Cecil, de Vere's former guardian. Elizabeth now created him Baron Burleigh to enhance his status to the peerage, and thus make him not unworthy to become the father-in-law of the noble young Earl.

What is more natural than that two young people who had grown up together should eventually fall in love and marry, but on the part of de Vere who, as Lord St. John says, could have chosen as he list amongst the young daughters of the nobility, it seems a queer choice, especially as Anne had been previously promised to Philip Sidney, whose uncle, Lord Leicester, had given his word for a handsome endowment in the event of the marriage taking place; for Philip was not only his nephew but his heir-apparent.

Perhaps the antagonism between Sidney and Oxford commenced at this date, when de Vere's proposal of marriage was accepted by Burleigh and Sidney's rejected. Sidney may have resented the rebuff to his pride, and Oxford have been as surely elated.

Burleigh writing to Lord Rutland says:

I think it doth seem strange to your Lordship to hear of a purposed determination in my Lord of Oxford to marry with my daughter; and so before his Lordship moved it to me I might have thought it, if any other had moved it to me himself. For at his own motion I could not well imagine what to think, considering I never meant to seek nor hoped of it. And yet reason moved me to think well of my Lord, and to acknowledge myself greatly beholden to him, as indeed I do. . . . Now that the matter is determined betwixt my Lord of Oxford and me, I confess to your Lordship I do honour him so dearly from my heart as I do my own son, and in any case may touch him for his honour and weal, I shall think him mine own interests herein.

And little Anne might have said with Helena,

'Twere all one, That I should love a bright particular star, and think to wed it: He is so above me in his bright radiance and celestial light.

The marriage took place on Wednesday, December 19th, at the Royal Chapel, the Queen herself being present. The French Ambassador, Moth6 F6n61on, wrote to his master, the King of France:

Last Tuesday I had audience with the Queen; and on Wednesday she took me with her to dine with Lord Burleigh who was celebrating the marriage of his daughter with the Earl of Oxford.

The Earl of Leicester was also present despite the rejection of his nephew by Burleigh, and it was a sumptuous affair, at which the proposed marriage of the Queen with the Due d'Anjou was discussed.

Now if we return to *All's Well* where we saw Bertram become the King's ward, we further find that he, too, married a girl with whom he had been brought up and who was also socially his inferior. Here again it was the woman who eagerly pursued the young man until by craft she trapped him.

Helena says:

I am from humble, he from honour'd name;
No note upon my parents, his all noble,
My master, my dear lord he is; and I
His servant live and will his vassal die.

De Vere, it will be remembered, had written:

May I his favour match with love if he my love will try.
May I requite his birth with faith, then faithful will I die.

Anne Cecil was born on December 5th, 1556, and so was just Juliet's age—a mere fourteen years when the marriage was first mooted. We know little about her—a few letters, a poem she wrote when her baby son, little Lord Bulbeck, died, and the references to her by contemporaries as the 'sweet little Countess of Oxford'. She was so young, so dominated by the authority of her parents, particularly of Lady Burleigh, that she can scarcely be judged as an entity of her own.

Suffice to say the marriage was not a happy one, and the fault may have lain as much with Lord and Lady Burleigh as with the young married couple.

Now, even Stratfordians admit that the character of Polonius in *Hamlet* is drawn satirically from that of Lord Burleigh, and who could have known the idiosyncrasies of the Queen's treasurer better than his ward and son-in-law? Moreover, who could have seen or overheard the maxims which Burleigh sent to his son Thomas in

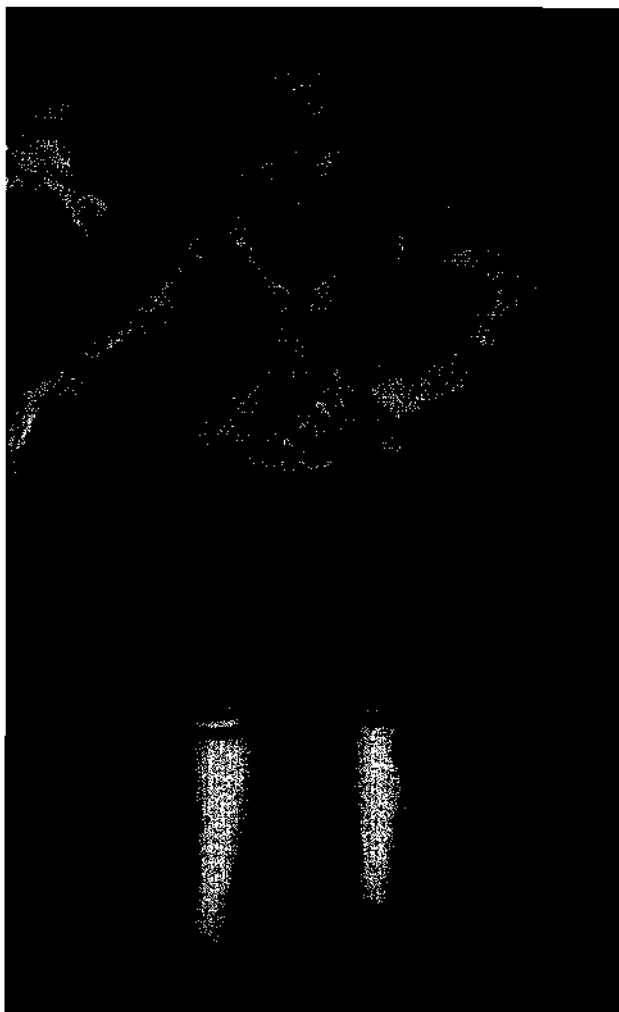
PLATE VII



[photo: *Photo'Precision Ltd.*

QUEEN ELIZABETH AS DIANA
(By Cornelius Vroom, Hatfield House)

PLATE VIII



HENRY WROITHESLEY, EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON
(British Museum)

Paris, and reproduce them in the 'few precepts' Polonius gives to his son Laertes as easily as Lord Oxford?

When delineating Burleigh's character John Clapham, his secretary, wrote: True and *Faithful* he was of his word; more ready to perform than promise . . . more desirous to do good than to be seen to do it.'

Polonius says: 'I will *be faithful*, madam', and to his query, 'What do you think of me?' the King replies—'As of a man *faithful* and honourable.'

'Touching his method of speech and writing,' continues Clapham, 'it was short and plain, without curiosity, but not altogether without ornament, for he especially regarded substance and *matter*, and not *artificial* composition of words.'

'More *matter*, with less *art*', urges Queen Gertrude, and Polonius retorts a little huffily, but with respect: 'Madam, I swear I use no art at all.' [*Italics mine.*]

More compelling is Clapham's description of his master's attire—for, as though paraphrasing Polonius's precept to Laertes:

Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy
But not expressed in Fancy; rich not gaudy;

he says: 'His apparel was rather neat and seemly than sumptuous.'

The aphorism Burleigh gave to his son, Robert, such as 'Gentility is nothing else but ancient riches', cannot have endeared him to his twelve noble wards.

Mr. Rowse¹ comments—'No nonsense about blue blood or status of a caste; one admires the good common sense of it.'

One laughs rather, remembering that Burleigh, coming from a nobody, amassed a fortune during his Treasurership and Governorship of those twelve rich wards, acquired a number of immense mansions, accepted a peerage, and died having founded the House of Cecil and a continuous line of noble statesmen to the present day.

But whatever de Vere, or his estate, suffered at the hands of Burleigh, his subtle revenge is 'not for an age but for all time'; a gentle satire indeed, for everyone at heart likes 'the tedious old fool' Polonius, but cruel in its thoroughness, as will be seen from the following citation. Burleigh wrote as follows:

I am but a monoclous, because of a flux in mine eye²

which Hamlet takes up quizzically and sarcastically:

For the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards;
that their faces are wrinkled; *their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum.*

Is it possible that William of Stratford had been so close to the old man as to observe his infirmity thus? I doubt it. Yet Dover Wilson (one among many) says, Tolonius is almost without doubt intended as a caricature of Burleigh.'

'All his traits of character', says Gerald Philips, 'were Cecil's also, —his grave demeanour, the garb of self importance; his industry and grip of affairs; his long-winded pompous utterance,' which latter may be seen in the tetter to Lord Rutland just quoted.

Moreover in the First Quarto of *Hamlet* the character of Polonius is given as Corambus (meaning double-hearted) which is undoubtedly an allusion to Burleigh's motto, 'Cor unum via una' (single-hearted).

Polonius had 'one daughter' of marriageable age who was 'passing fair', and he stood to the King as Burleigh did to the Queen. Except for the fact that Hamlet never got so far as making a mesalliance with one so far out of his sphere, his position was analogous to that of de Vere.

Thus if we identify Polonius with Burleigh, Hamlet is Oxford and Ophelia Anne Cecil. The play then becomes highly autobiographical. Consider the death of his 'dear father', the 'o'er hasty marriage' of his mother, his disappointment in advancement to a post of responsibility, his affection for his cousin Horatio (Horace de Vere), 'a man that fortune's buffets and rewards hast ta'en with equal thanks', his doubts as to the 'honesty' of the woman he loves and his would-be father-in-law's duplicity; here you have a parallel between the real and the stage character.

If we consider Burleigh's spying methods we find Polonius behaving in a like manner, setting a servant, Reynaldo, to spy on his son, Laertes; hiding behind the arras to listen and so finding sudden death.

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell,

Sonnet 48 shows that the writer knew his private papers were subjected to unscrupulous and hostile overhauling.

How careful was I, when I took my way
Each trifle under truest bars to thrust,
That to my use it might unused stay
From hands of falsehood, in sure wards of trust.

Hamlet was suspicious of Ophelia because he believed her to be conspiring with her father to spy upon him, as her conduct gave him every reason to believe, even to lying to him that her father was at home when she knew he was behind the tapestry—listening. And in this corollary lies the next phase in the lives of Edward and Anne.

Before telling it, the political situation at the time of the marriage needs a word or two.

In addition to the rebellion which *Lord* Sussex quelled and in which de Vere took part, there had been a number of uprisings or subversive plots engineered by the supporters of Mary Queen of Scots which aimed at the removal of Elizabeth and the substitution of the Scots Queen on the English throne.

In the most recent of these the Catholic cousin of the Earl of Oxford, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, had been implicated, and at the time of de Vere's marriage the Duke was in prison awaiting trial.

Oxford was in a frenzy of apprehension and impotent rage that his kinsman should thus be held, and he implored Burleigh to use his influence with the Queen to effect his liberation; it may be that his offer to marry Burleigh's daughter was a factor thrown into the scale to gain that statesman's co-operation.

Perhaps he estimated Burleigh's powers too highly, or the wily statesman, as the foremost Protestant in England, fearing the foremost Catholic, may have felt it expedient to sacrifice the Duke for the safety of the Queen and State.

De Vere, realizing there was no help to be had from that quarter, instigated an eleventh-hour attempt at rescue, chartering a boat, *The Grace of God*, to lie off Barnard Castle stairs and take the Duke to Spain when his liberty had been effected. The plot was betrayed, and the Duke duly brought to Tower Hill and executed, a state of affairs that must have sunk bitterly into de Vere's heart—for he had loved Lord Thomas. If he held Burleigh, not responsible, but apathetic in his cause, it is quite natural; but to aver as the Rev. Majendie did in his treatise on Hedingham Castle and the family of Vere, that Edward destroyed his inheritance to spite Lord Burleigh, for his refusal to exert himself on Norfolk's behalf, is ridiculous. Careful research shows that the largest proportion of land sales were during the Earl's travels in 1575-6 and his order, many years later, for the removal of certain buildings at Hedingham was because they had become decrepit.

Whether Oxford showed any personal animosity towards Burleigh for the death of Norfolk, other than his famous satire of Polonius, it is impossible to say, for his letters, though proving his determination to live his own life in his own way without interference from his father-in-law, are uniformly courteous.

The two men were so opposite in character that they were bound to come into conflict over every issue. The poetic youth would resent the scorn of poetry exhibited by Burleigh (Polonius it will be remembered found the actor's speech about Hecuba 'too long'); and the careful statesman would bemoan the reckless wastefulness of his patrimony exhibited by his son-in-law.

Another issue in which Burleigh and Lord Oxford were in opposition was the desire of the latter to travel, to see foreign lands and to enlarge his knowledge.

It had been customary for the upper, or more highly educated, classes to make the 'Grand Tour', and de Vere fretted at being refused permission which was accorded to others. Philip Sidney at seventeen set out on his travels, whilst the more noble and versatile Lord Oxford at twenty-four was kept tied to the Court and his father-in-law's leading strings. Burleigh himself may have put obstacles in de Vere's way, for one of his maxims was, 'Suffer not thy sons to cross the Alps ... if by travel they get a few broken languages they shall profit them nothing more than to have one meat served up in divers dishes.'

If the Queen enjoyed the young Earl's company and wished to keep him by her side she would listen to Burleigh's reasoning against travel.

Thus we have Bertram exclaiming: 'I am commanded here and kept a coil with "too young" and "the next year" and "'tis too early";' and with rising annoyance:

I shall stay here the forehorse to a smock,
Creaking my shoes on the plain masonry,
Till honour be bought up and no sword worn
But one to dance with. By heaven! I'll steal away.

So the Earl made a secret dash for liberty. 'He took horse [from Lady Yorke's house in Walbrook] and so to Wyvenhoe in Essex [one of his country houses] and the next night he took ship and coasted over to Flaunders, arryving at Callise.'³ But his liberty was short; he was pursued by the son of the Governor of the Tower, Master Bedingfield, de Vere's own personal friend, and within three weeks was back in England.

The Queen had no option but to act as she did, for the Earl had departed without a licence, and already his flight had been construed into a disaffection towards the Queen and England, and a determination on his part to join the malcontents (Catholics) in Rouen or Spain.

As Oxford returned without coercion and presented himself before the Queen in a magnificent new suit, which Burleigh protested he could ill afford, he was, for his submission, easily forgiven. But the bitterness sank deep, a bitterness that even a subsequent Grand Tour could not eradicate, and he expresses his feelings repeatedly.

'Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits', comments Valentine in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, which if written by William of

Stratford was but a poor compliment to his own intelligence, seeing that he never left England. Then again he urges Proteus

rather
To see the wonders of the world abroad
Than, living sluggardised at home
Wear out thy youth with shapeless idleness.

The same thought is repeated in Act III, when Panthino chivies the father of Proteus for insisting that the young man

spend his youth at home,
While other men of slender reputation
Put forth their sons to seek preferment out.

And further:

Twere good I think your Lordship should send him hither.
There shall he practise tilts and tournaments,
Hear sweet discourse, converse with noblemen
Worthy his youth and nobleness of birth.

Another three years were to elapse before de Vere at length got his permission to visit the Continent. And here is Polonius-Burleigh, saying in answer to the King's question whether Laertes, his son, has his permission to travel:

He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave
By laboursome petition, and at last
Upon his will I seal'd my hard consent:
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

During those three years of waiting de Vere was forced back on to the occupation that was to be the chief absorption of his life—writing.

We may see his youthful literary style in the following preface which he penned to his friend Bartholomew Clarke's translation of Baltazarre Castiglione's ,,' *Cortegiano*.

Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, Lord Great Chamberlain of England, Viscount Bulbeck and Baron Scales and Badlesmere to the Reader—Greeting.

A frequent and earnest consideration of translation of Castiglione's Italian work which has now for a long time been undertaken and finally carried out by my friend Clarke, has caused me to waver between two opinions: debating in my mind whether I should preface it by some writing and letter of my own, or whether I should do no more than study it with a mind full of gratitude. The first course seemed to demand greater skill and art than I can claim to, the second to be a work of no

less good-will and application. To do both, however, seemed to combine a task of delightful industry with an indication of special good-will.

I have therefore undertaken the work and do so the more willingly, in order that I may lay a laurel wreath of my own on the translation in which I have studied this book, and also to ensure that neither my good will (which is very great) should remain unexpressed, nor that my skill (which is small) should seem to fear to face the light and eyes of men.

With this prose of de Vere's, probably his first serious composition for publication (1572), may be compared the 'Argument' set before the poem of *Lucrece* (1594), which is the only prose, other than the two dedications, we know of as coming from Shakespeare's pen.

Lucius Tarquinius (for his excessive pride surnamed Superbus), after he had caused his own father-in-law Servius Tullius to be cruelly murder'd, and, contrary to Roman laws and customs, not requiring or staying for the people's suffrages, had possessed himself of the kingdom, went, accompanied with his sons and other noblemen of Rome to beseege Ardea. During which siege the principal men of the army meeting one evening at the tent of Sextus Tarquinius, the King's Son, in their discourse after supper every one commended the virtues of his own wife; among whom, Collatinus extolTd the incomparable chastity of his wife Lucretia [etc.].

The clarity of expression in both these prose examples, in an age when ambiguity and hyperbole reigned supreme, is particularly noticeable.

De Vere's modesty as to his literary abilities needs comment, and finds an echo in Sonnet 72:

For I am sham'd by that which I bring forth
And so should you, to love things nothing worth.

In this same year Arthur Golding dedicated to the young Earl his translation of John Calvin's version of the *Psalms of David*. It may have been a veiled attempt to influence his nephew towards Puritanism, but if so it failed. Oxford had before him examples of rigid Protestantism in his father and mother-in-law, and the probability is that his own heart turned towards something warmer, the grand Renaissance that was coming out of France and Italy.

The old round of Court life had been resumed, and when Gilbert Talbot wrote to his father, the Earl of Shrewsbury (who had the onerous duty of guarding the Queen of Scots in his own home), on May 11th, 1572, he announced:

My Lord of Oxford is lately grown into great credit, for the Queen's Majesty delighteth more in his personage and his dancing and his valiantness than any other. I think Sussex doth back him all he can.

If it were not for his fickle head he would pass any of them shortly. My Lady Burghley unwisely has declared herself, as it were, jealous, which has come to the Queen's ear: whereat she hath been not a little offended with her, but now all is reconciled again. At all these love matters my Lord Treasurer winketh and will not meddle in any way.

The meddlesome interference and infuriating prudery touching the Queen's delight in his company must have sent the young man to seek solitude in his pleasant country house at Wyvenhoc. Situated at the mouth of the Colne, on a green hill above the clustered houses and old wharfside, whence he could see the ships in the estuary, it was an ideal retreat. From here he had slipped away to 'Callis' for his stolen three weeks.

Here he spent his time—penning another long preface; this time to his friend Thomas Bedingfield for his translation of *Cardanus Comfort*.

Bedingfield (son of the Governor of the Tower) had loaned the Earl his translation in MS. at Oxford's especial request, sending with it a letter from which the following is an extract:

Sure I am it would have better beseemed me to have taken this travail in some discourse of arms (being your lordship's chief profession and mine also) than in philosopher's skill to have thus busied myself: yet sith your pleasure was such, and your knowledge in either great, I do (as I will ever) most willingly obey you because most faithfully I honour and love you.

And Lord Oxford, turning from his desire for travel or 'war's alarms', gave his heart to literature, publishing Bedingfield's translation and himself writing a prefatory letter and poem.

Cardanus⁴ Comforte, translated into English. And published by commaundment of the right honourable the Earle of Oxenforde, Anno Domini 1573.

To my loving friend Thomas Bedingfield Esq. one of Her Majesty's Gentlemen Pensioners.

After I had perused your letters, good Master Bedingfield, rinding in them your request far differing from the desert of your labour, I could not choose but yield to your desire, or execute mine own intention towards the publishing of your book. For I do confess the affections that I have always borne towards you could move me not a little. But when I had thoroughly considered in my mind, of sundry and diverse arguments, whether it were best to obey mine affections, or the merits of your studies; at the length I determined it were better to deny your unlawful request than to grant or condescend to the concealment of so worthy a work. Whereby as you have been profited in the translating, so many may reap knowledge by the reading of the same that shall

comfort the affected, confirm the doubtful, encourage the coward and lift up the base-minded man to achieve to any true sum or grade of virtue, whereby ought only the noble thoughts of men to be ... when you examine yourself what doth avail a mass of gold to be continually imprisoned in your bags, and never to be employed to your use? Wherefore we have this Latin proverb: *Scere tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter*. What doth avail the tree unless it yield fruit unto another? What avail the vine unless another delighteth in the grape? . . . Why should this tree be accounted better than that tree but for the goodness of its fruit? . . . And so it is in all other things as well as in man. Why should this man be more esteemed than that man but for his virtue, through which every man desireth to be accounted of? Then you amongst men, I do not doubt, but will aspire to follow that virtuous path, to illuster yourself with the ornaments of virtue. And in mine opinion as it beautifieth a fair woman to be decked with jewels and precious stones, so much more it ornifieth a gentleman to be furnished with glittering virtues. Wherefore, considering the small harm I do to you, the great good I do to others, I prefer mine own intention to discover your volume, before your request to secret same. . . .

Again we see, if our friends be dead we cannot show or declare our affection more than by erecting them of tombs, whereby when they be dead in deed, yet make we them live as it were again in their monument. But with me behold it happeneth far better; for in your lifetime I shall erect you such a monument that, as I say in your lifetime you shall see how noble a shadow of your virtuous life shall hereafter remain when you are dead and gone . . .

From my new country Muses of Wivenhoe.

From your loving and assured friend

E. Oxenford.

Though there is no 'proof here of the same hand as in the Sonnets, the same mind seems to actuate the writer—the emphasis on 'virtue' as man's utmost goal and good: the desire to perpetuate his memory as in a tomb.

SONNET 81

Your monument shall be my gentle verse
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er read;
And tongues to be, your being shall rehearse
When all the breathers of this world are dead;
You still shall live—such virtue hath my pen—
Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men.

'Let that courtly epistle, more polished even than the writings of Castiglione himself, witness how greatly thou dost excel in letters,' wrote Gabriel Harvey⁵ in his address to the Queen and her Courtiers, 1578,

It is probable that the bulk of the Earl's youthful poems were written about this date; the simpler love lyrics and such pieces as appeared in *A Paradise of Dainty Devices* or *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* a few years later:

The lily in the field
That glories in its white,
For pureness now must yield
And render up his right,
Heaven pictured in her face
Doth promise joy and grace.

With this there is a red
Exceeds the Damaske-Rose,
Which in her cheeks is spread;
Whence every flower grows
In sky there is no star
But she surmounts it far.

The lilies' white, and damask red roses compared to a fair woman, is imagery used in many instances by Shakespeare, especially in *Lucrece*:

Her lily hand her rosy cheek lies under.

or as in the Sonnets (130, 98):

I have seen roses damask'd red and white
Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose.

And again in *Love's Labour's Lost* (I. 2):

If she be made of white and red
Her faults will ne'er be known.

This same idea is satirized in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 'These lily lips, This cherry nose' of Thisbe. There is a sonnet of some charm written by the Earl called *Love thy Choice*:

Who taught thee first to sigh alas, my heart?
Who taught thy tongue the woeful words of plaint?
Who filled your eyes with tears of bitter smart?
Who gave thee grief and made thy joys to faint?
Who first did paint with colours pale thy face?
'Who first did break thy sleep of quiet rest?
Above the rest in Court who gave thee grace?
Who made thee strive in honour to be best?
In constant truth to hide so firm and sure,
To scorn the world regarding but thy friend?

With patient mind each passion to endure
 In one desire to settle to the end?
 Love then thy choice wherein such choice thou bind
 As naught but death may ever change thy mind.
 Earle of Oxenforde.

It is probable also that, with the aid of his friend George Gascoigne, Oxford was gathering together the posy of verses which were eventually to see the light as *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*. They were published in 1573 with Latin tags or initials at the end of each poem. A number signed *Si fortunatus infelix* are by Master Christopher Hatton, some by Gascoigne and the rest are doubtful. The motto, *Meritum Petere Grave*, may be Oxford's 'posy'—'Ever and Never' most certainly is. In the following poem we may get an allusion to the ups and downs of love between Oxford and his Countess or the lady may be a passing 'fancy', but undoubtedly the young man is *Vere*. Its anonymity is well kept under the motto *Spreta tamen Vivunt*.

The advertisement runs as follows:

A loving Lady being wounded in the spring time and now galded eftsones with the remembrance of the spring doth therefore thus bewaile.

The tenth of March when Aries receyv'd
 Dame Phoebus rayes, into his horned head:
 And I my selfe, by learned lore perceyv'd,
 That *Ver* approacht, and frostie wynter fled.
 I crost the Thames, to take the cherefull ayre,
 In open fieldes, the weather was so fayre.

And as I rowed, fast by the further shore,
 I heard a voyce, which seemed to lament:
 Whereat I stay'd, and by a statly dore,
 I left my Boate, and up on land I went.
 Till at the last by lasting payne I found,
 The wofull wight, which made this dolefull sound.

In pleasaunt garden (placed all alone)
 I saw a Dame, who sat in weary wise,
 With scalding sighes, she uttred all hir mone,
 The ruefull teares, downe rayned from hir eyes:
 Hir lowring head, full lowe on hand she layed,
 On knee hir arme: and thus this Lady sayed.

(This is reminiscent of the opening verse of de Vere's echo song, and Shakespeare's *Passionate Pilgrim*—quoted in an earlier chapter.)

Alas (quod she) behold eche pleasaunt greene,
 Will now renew, his sommers livery,

The fragrant flowers, which have not long bene scene,
 Will flourish now, (ere long) in bravery:
 The tender buddes, whom colde hath long kept in,
 Will spring and sproute, as they do now begin.

.

The lustie *Ver* which whillome might exchange
 My griefto joy, and then my joyes encrease,
 Springs now elsewhere, and shoves to me but strange,
 My winters woe, therefore can never cease:
 In other coasts, his sunne full clere doth shyne,
 And comfort lends to ev'ry mould but myne.

What plant can spring that feelles no force of *Ver*!
 What flower can flourish, where no sunne doth shyne?
 These Bales (quod she) within my breast I heare,
 To breake my barke, and make my pyth to pyne:
 Needs must I fall, I fade both roote and rynde,
 My branches bowe, at blast of ev'ry wynde.

This sayed: she cast a glance and spied my face,
 By sight wherof, Lord how she chaunged hew?
 So that for shame, I turned backe a pace
 And to my home, my selfe in hast I drew:
 And as I could hir woofull wordes reherse,
 I set them downe in this waymenting verse.

Now Ladies you, that know by whom I sing,
 And feeble the wynter, of such frozen wylls:
 Of curtesie, yet cause *this noble spring*,
 To send his sunne, above the highest hilles:
 And so to shyne, uppon hir fading sprays,
 Which now in woe, do wyther thus alwayes.

A letter of August 6th, 1574, shows that Oxford was back in favour, but his 'desire of travel is not yet quenched in him, though he dare not make any motion unto her majesty that he may with her favour accomplish the said desire. By no means can he be drawn to follow the Court, and yet there are many cunning devices used in that behalf for his stay.'

These cunning devices were eventually successful, for he went on progress with the Queen for nearly six weeks and towards the end of the tour his wife wrote to the Earl of Sussex requesting him to increase the size of her apartments at Hampton Court, 'for', she adds naively

the more commodious my lodging is the willinger I hope my Lord my

husband will be to come thither, thereby the oftener to attend Her Majesty.

. . . Your Lordship's poor friend,
Anne Oxenforde.

The Earl was probably spending a great deal of his time with those whom Burleigh designated his 'lewd friends', the writers, poets and actors of London.

Or perhaps there were some less reputable acquaintances even than these—just as Prince Henry had those low hangers-on Poins and Falstaff, for in May 1573, two men, Faunt and Wotton, formerly in Oxford's employ, complained to Lord Burleigh that they were set upon and held up on the highway between *Gravesend and Rochester* by 'three of my Lord of Oxford's men; Danye Wylkyns, John Hannam and Deny the Frenchman who lay in a ditch awaiting our coming with full intent to murder us'.

They had been followed from London and set upon, and now lay at *Rochester*, afraid to stir abroad, for fear their fellow-servants should again seek their lives.

This episode, with amusing dialogue, presently found its way into *King Henry IV*.

Prince Henry [after the robbery of the thieves by Poins and Falstaff near Rochester], The thieves hath bound the true men. Now, could thou and I rob the thieves, and go merrily to London, it would be argument for a week, laughter for a month, and a good jest for ever!

But I doubt if Burleigh thought so.

Can anyone suggest how William of Stratford could have come to hear of this incident?

NOTES

1. *The England of Elizabeth*, by W. H. Rowse.
2. In *Lord Burleigh in Shakespeare*.
3. Quoted by Mrs. Kathleen Le Riche in an article in the *Essex Review*, 1952.
4. Hieronimo Cardano (1501-1576), better known in England as Jerome Cardan, an Italian mathematician and philosopher whose charm of personality can be sensed in his outspoken autobiography. He visited England and Scotland and his influence on English thought was considerable.
5. Gabriel Harvey (1545-1630), son of a rope-maker of Saffron Walden, fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, and a friend of Spenser. He appears in Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calendar* under the name of Hobbinol, and Nashe satirized him in *Have with you to Saffron Walden*.

CHAPTER 8

FOREIGN TRAVEL

AT length the desired permission to travel was accorded the Earl, the licence signed, and on January 7th, 1575, with a retinue of two gentlemen, five grooms, one payend, a harbinger and a trenchman, he set out for France.

This retinue was considered small, as Dr. Dale, the English Ambassador, wrote to Burleigh: 'he [Oxford] did well to cumber himself with as little company as he might.'

Previously he had announced Oxford's arrival and spoken of his introduction at the French Court.

I presented my Lord of Oxford also unto the King and Queen, who used him honourably. Amongst other talk the King asked whether he was married. I said he had a fair lady. 'Ily a done ce' dit il 'un beau couple.'

According to Aubrey he was accompanied by Nicholas Hill,

a great mathematician, philosopher, traveller and poet. He was so eminent for knowledge that he was a favourite of the great Earl of Oxford who had him to accompany him on his travels (as his steward) which were so splendid and sumptuous that he kept at Florence a greater court than the Great Duke.

Within six weeks of his stay in Paris Oxford received the news that he was a father, and he replied happily to Burleigh's letter:

My lord your letters have made me a glad man. ... I thank God that it hath pleased Him to make me a father where your Lordship is a grandfather and if it be a boy I shall likewise be the partaker with you in a greater contentation. But thereby to take an occasion to return I am off from that opinion: for now it hath pleased God to give me a son of my own (as I hope it is) methinks I have the better occasion to travel, sith whatsoever becometh of me I leave behind me one to supply my duty and service, either to my Prince or else my country.

Evidently Burleigh had made the birth of the child an excuse to urge its father's return—and presumably for that reason he did not tell him it was a daughter!

But de Vere was not the bird to be lured with that bait. Now he had at length set out he meant to see the beloved country of the Renaissance.

Because of the Inquisition raging against heretics in Milan, where

the Bishop was tyrannically persecuting Protestants, Oxford set out by way of Germany, intent on visiting Sturmius, the renowned rector of Strasbourg University.

He carried the French King's letters of recommendation to his ambassador at the Turkish Court, and others from the Venetian Ambassador for furtherance of his accommodation to Venice. He proposed, if the Turks did not descend upon the Adriatic coast, to visit Constantinople; if they did, he would be content to see service against them.,

Before leaving Paris he had sent home to the Countess his portrait painted by a Fleming, of which Dr. Dale reported, 'It seemeth to us he hath done my Lord of Oxford well. . . . God send him always a Raphael in his company.' This is the portrait previously referred to as being now at Welbeck Abbey.

Oxford's letters home during his travels, for the most part to Burleigh, are chiefly concerned with financial matters and are too lengthy to quote *in toto*. Money was scarce and he authorized his father-in-law to sell more land, to pay clamouring creditors at home. He had reckoned that his debts amounted to at least £6,000, a large percentage of which he owed to the Queen. He had left an annuity for Ann and had given her his country seat at Wyvenhoe. He even remembered to leave £100 for his sister Mary.

Now he wrote 'sell more of my land where your lordship shall think fittest, to disburden me of my debts to Her Majesty, my sister, or elsewhere I am exclaimed upon——' He suggested getting rid of some Cornish property, and meanwhile took up 500 crowns of Master Baptista Negrone to tide him over.

What says Rosalind to Jaques in *As You Like It*

A traveller! By my faith you have reason to be sad: I fear you have sold your own lands, to see other men's, then to have seen much, and to have nothing, is to have rich eyes and poor hands.

It is not necessary that every phrase a dramatist makes should have origin in fact; he is a *creator* first and foremost, but remarks such as that quoted above do not help the plot, would not occur to a writer at random, and are obviously reminiscences.

Debts or no debts de Vere was determined not to curtail his journey, and when a fever, caught in Venice, kept him from sight-seeing for several weeks he requested for a prolongation of his licence for a few more months.

For having made an end of all hope to help myself by Her Majesty's service—considering that my youth is objected unto me, and for every step of mine a block is found to be laid in my way.

The frustration to his hopes and ambitions was engendering a bitterness that was now finding vent in words.

That I am determined to hope for anything, I do not; but if anything do happen *prefer spem* I think before that time, I must be as [so?] old as [that?] my son, who shall enjoy them, must give the thanks; and I am to content myself according to the English proverb that it is my hap to starve while the grass doth grow.

Siena Jan 3rd.

Hamlet echoes this with his anacoluthic sentence:

While the grass grows—the proverb is something musty.

Other letters which de Vere sent home from Venice were returned to him owing to the plague raging and the messengers being unable to pass through. On this mischance hinges the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*.

He visited, but in exactly which order cannot be deduced, Padua, Siena, Genoa, Milan and Palermo, where one Edward Webbe, a Master Gunner who lodged at Rochester House and a friend of both Dr. Dee and Sir Edward Dyer, met him, and recorded in his book of *Travels* (1590):

Many things I have omitted to speak of, which I have seen and noted in the time of my troublesome travel. One thing did greatly comfort me which I saw long since in Sicilia—in the city of Palermo, a thing worthy of memory, where the Right Honourable the Earl of Oxford, a famous man of Chivalry, at what time he travelled into foreign countries, being then personally present, made then a challenge against all manner of persons whatsoever and at all manner of weapons, as Tournaments, Barriers with horse and armour, to fight a combat with any whatsoever in the defence of his Prince and Country. For which he was very highly commended, and yet no man durst be so hardy to encounter with him, so that all Italy over he is acknowledged the only Chevalier and Nobleman of England. This title they gave unto him as worthily deserved.

George Chapman, the poet and playwright, on his way out to Italy, must have met de Vere returning, covered in glory from challenging all comers in Palermo, attended by his retinue, attired in extravagant clothes. The very air was full of bravery then; de Vere would have talked of Venice where he had been aboard a Turkish galley and seen the long green pennants so lately wrested from the Infidel by Don John of Austria, of Padua and its University and the scholars' scuffles with the 'Saffi'. He was in Lyons in Carnival time, and in Milan where he probably saw the lovely duchess.

We may be sure his adventures would lose nothing in the telling. But Chapman gauged his real worth, and when writing his play, *The*

Revenge of Bussy cTambois, he introduced the following lines, to be spoken by his hero, Clermont, Bussy's (purely fictional) brother:

Cler. I overtook, coming from Italy
 In Germany, a great and famous Earl
 Of England; the most goodly fashion'd man
 I ever saw; from head to foot in form
 Rare and most absolute; he had a face
 Like one of the most ancient honoured Romans
 From whence his noblest family was deriv'd
 He was beside of spirit passing great,
 Valiant and learn'd, and liberal as the sun,
 Spoke and writ sweetly, or of learn'd subjects
 Or of the discipline of public weals
 And 'twas the Earl of Oxford; and being offer'd
 At that time, by Duke Casimir, the view
 Of his right royal army then in field,
 Refus'd it, and no foot was mov'd to stir
 Out of his own free fore-determin'd course;
 I, wondering at it, ask'd for it his reason,
 It being an offer so much for his honour.
 He, all acknowledging, said 'twas not fit
 To take those honours that one cannot quit.'

Guise. 'Tis answered like the man you have described.

Cler. And yet he cast it only in the way
 To stay and serve the world. Nor did it fit
 His own true estimate how much it weigh'd
 For he despised it; and esteemed it freer
 To keep his own way straight; and swore that he
Had rather make away his whole estate
 In things that cross'd the vulgar, than he would
 Be frozen up, stiff, like Sir John Smith,
 His countryman, in noble's fashions;
 Affecting, as though the end of noblesse were
 Those servile observations.

The contention that this speech is an interpolation finds no justification. The year the play was published, 1613, is not one of any moment to the Vere family. Oxford himself was dead, his son fighting in the lowlands. The very phrase that he would rather make away his whole estate is 'straight from the horse's mouth', and I believe that the line given to Guise, 'Tis answered like the man you have described', gives the clue. Chapman envisaged in 'Bussy', the gay swordsman, his 'beau ideal' when he met Oxford in Germany; his 'Clermont', a far finer character, represents the philosopher that Oxford became in his later days. He was 'Valliant' says Chapman; was he not accorded the title of the only Chevalier and Nobleman of

England'? He was 'learned'; how many tributes to his learning have we not seen from his contemporaries? He was 'goodly fashioned'. Indeed he must have been, for he was an expert swordsman and horseman and an accomplished dancer. Queen Elizabeth would not have asked him to dance before the French Ambassador and his entourage, had he 'capered' like Sir Andrew Aguecheek. There is no doubt that he was 'from head to foot rare and most absolute'. He 'had a spirit passing great'; yes, in these days of travel, before Lady Burleigh, the Queen, his enemies and his debts had crushed it. And 'as liberal as the sun', giving 'ten pounds to a beggar to make him happy'.¹ 'He spoke and writ sweetly.' This we know also: we have his juvenilia, and his letters, the testimony of his *confreres*, and the whole gamut of his later powers.

'He understood the public weals.' Perhaps no one more so; he had that quality (as Shakespeare had) of understanding the lot of the underdog, and stating it in a way that may not have added to his popularity amongst his own class. To prove this I cannot do better than quote the poem which followed the introduction which he wrote to Bedingfield's translation of *Cardanus Comforte*.

The labouring man that tills the fertile soil,
And reaps the harvest fruit, hath not indeed
The gain, but pain; but if for all his toil
He gets the straw, the lord will have the seed.

The manchet fine falls not unto his share;
On coarsest cheat his hungry stomach feeds.
The landlord doth possess the finest fare;
He pulls the flowers, the other plucks but weeds.

The mason poor that builds the lordly halls,
Dwells not in them; they are for high degree;
His cottage is compact in paper walls,
And not with brick or stone, as others be.

The idle drone that labours not at all,
Sucks up the sweet of honey from the bee;
Who worketh most to their share least doth fall,
' With due desert reward will never be.

The swiftest hare unto the mastiff slow
Oft times doth fall, to him as for a prey;
The greyhound thereby doth miss his game we know
For which he made such speedy haste away.

So he that takes the pain to pen the book
 Reaps not the gifts of golden goodly muse
 But those gain that, who on the work shall look,
 And from the sour the sweet by skill shall choose;
 For he that beats the bush the bird not gets,
 But who sits still and holdeth fast the nets.

Perhaps no nobleman ever wrote lines so socialistic. The proud Leicesters and Hattons must have hated this stirring-up of the proletarian duck-pond, only consoling themselves with the reflection that in those days few of the lower class could read. We shall see that de Vere's outspokenness and his determination to keep his own 'true determined course' brought its reward of contumely.

There is no doubt that Chapman's estimate of the Earl was the true one, and I shall bring forward further points in support of this contention when discussing Shakespeare's Sonnets.

One other item of interest connected with these days of travel is a little poem of ten lines, originally written on the fly-leaf of a Greek Testament, from which the existing copy at Litchfield was made. It must have been in the possession of Countess Anne for it is addressed:

To the illustrious Lady Anne de Vere, Countess of Oxford, while her noble husband, Edward Vere, Earl of Oxford, was occupied in foreign travel.

There is no evidence as to who wrote it. De Vere himself may have done so, or maybe Lord Burleigh, who had already written one little poem to Anne on her twelfth birthday. Indeed, there is something of Polonius's style of rhetoric about it.

Words of truth are fitting for a Vere . . . Therefore since thou, a Vere, art wife and mother of a Vere daughter, and seeing that thou mayst with good hope look forward to being the mother of an heir of the Veres, may thy mind always glow with love of the truth and may thy true motto be—*Ever lover of the Truth.*

Shakespeare's Sonnet 76 echoes this little Latin homily:

Why write I still all one *ever* the same,
 And keep invention in a noted weed,
 That every word doth *almost tell my name*,
 Showing their birth and where they did proceed?

and in Sonnet 82—

Thou *truly* fair wert *truly* sympathised
 In *true* plain words by thy *true-telling* friend;
[My italics throughout.]

To cite another example of the same thought, from one of the Earl's letters:

truth is subject to no prescription for truth is truth though never so old,
and hence cannot make that false which was once true.

Vero Nihil Verius

NOTE

1. John Aubrey in his account of Nicholas Hill.

CHAPTER 9

THE LOSS OF HIS GOOD NAME

IN every respect Oxford's return to England may be regarded as the crisis of his life, yet we can only conjecture as to what took place to cause the maelstrom which altered his life and temperament. He was twenty-six years of age and seemed destined to be Fortune's darling.

Before leaving Paris he wrote in good spirits, expressing pleasure in the arrival of his daughter, but when he landed on these shores, after a frightful crossing in which his ship was attacked by pirates and all his possessions stolen, he dodged Thomas Cecil who had gone to Dover to meet him, refused to speak with Burleigh or his wife who awaited his coming in London, and went, from Rowland Yorke's house, direct to the Queen.

It is evident from after events, and from the letters that now remain as open books for us to study collectively, that a rumour of Anne's infidelity had reached him before he left France, and it is equally evident that his cousin, Lord Henry Howard, was the author of the calumny. This relative and his equally obnoxious cousin, Charles Arundel, were the evil geniuses of de Vere's life.

Henry Howard (see Plate VI) was a younger son of the famous poet, Earl of Surrey, and brother of Thomas, whose death on the scaffold had so distressed de Vere, and which untimely end was probably hastened by this younger brother's intrigues. He was one of the leading Catholic noblemen of England, and his letters abound in hypocritically pious phrases and sickening flattery where he hoped for gain and advancement. He was learned and scheming, entirely unscrupulous, and secretly supported the cause of Mary Queen of Scots, for which subversive activity he spent many years in prison or under restraint.

Lady Bacon warned her son, Anthony, against him, saying he was a 'dangerous intelligencing man, and no doubt a subtile papist inwardly',¹ though he thought it expedient to assume Protestantism until 'he openly reverted to popery in the next reign'. 'I have long known him, and observed him,' said the shrewd Lady Bacon, 'for he, pretending courtesy, worketh mischief perilously.'

De Vere was soon to discover this to his detriment and shame.

'Lord Harry Howard was held for a ranter,' confessed Rowland White. 'One of the greatest flatterers and calumniators that ever

lived,' adds the French Ambassador, M. de Beaumont, yet none of these knew of his treachery to Lord Oxford. He was 'a subtle serpent', Lady Bacon insists in warning her son, and Fulke Greville echoes her warning in a letter to Robert Sidney, saying he should beware of Lord Howard's 'secret insinuation'.

This is the man de Vere still trusted. 'Your noblest natures are the most credulous,' says Chapman in the *Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois*, with, I believe, de Vere in mind.

It seems as though Anne must have been entirely innocent, and her father, in a letter to the Queen, vouches for her honesty, chastity and love towards her husband; but from his own circumlocutive wording one is left with a doubt as to what lay behind it all. How much did the Lord Treasurer know? When Anne had divulged to her doctor, Dr. Masters, that she was pregnant, and he had endeavoured to encourage her, telling her to 'be gladsome and rejoyce', she had replied miserably, according to Masters's report, 'Alas, alas, how should I rejoyce seeing he that should rejoyce with me is not here; and to say the truth, I stand in doubt whether he pass upon me and it or not.'

What did Anne fear? What had she heard? As a mortal enemy of Burleigh Lord Howard may have engineered this domestic upheaval to spite him, but Burleigh was entirely unsuspecting, as will be seen from some confused jottings in his diary. 'He [Oxford] confessed to my Lord Howard that he lay not with his wife but at Hampton Court, and that then the child could not be his because the child was born in July which was not the space of twelve months.'

Lord Howard must have had a poor estimation of Burleigh's intelligence to have made a remark so ridiculous, or Burleigh equally foolish to have believed it. In any case the whole suggestion was false, as may be seen from the following facts. Oxford went abroad in January and it was not until March that Anne informed her father that she was pregnant, she having concealed the news for a few days. Oxford and Howard had not met since January; how could de Vere have confided to him any such remark, which, it was alleged, had been made to the Queen before witnesses?

If Howard was retailing this piece of idiotic scandal to all and sundry, making de Vere appear doubly ridiculous, it is no wonder that he came home in a rage, and refused to meet the author of his discomfiture. Oxford was then entirely unaware of Howard's treachery.

If a perverted nature such as Lord Howard's needed a motive, it is probable that his aim was to alienage Oxford from the Protestant Burleigh faction, and lure him into the Jesuitical group, formed by

himself, Arundel, Southwell and Lord Windsor, Oxford's brother-in-law who had already attempted to dishonour de Vere by questioning his legitimacy.

Returning to England, and cutting himself adrift from all association with his wife and her family, Oxford became an easy prey for his scheming cousins.

There was a report in Spanish circles that he had joined the Catholic Church, pledging himself, with the Howard-Arundel faction, to further its aims.²

Later, when de Vere realized that he had been twice fooled, first by the false tales about Anne which had roused his jealousy, and then by being drawn into a coterie whose aim was the overthrow of the government and destruction of the Queen, he acted quickly and decidedly to prevent their machinations, but it took him several years to find out that his cousin Howard was the lingo of the piece.

And now see how closely the real-life drama prefigured that of the play of *Othello*. Oxford believed Burleigh responsible for his leave not being prolonged, and that, in this, Anne had abetted her father.

Desdemona, young and lovely and 'half the wooer', as Anne had been, asked her husband:

Why do you weep?
Am I the motive of these tears, my Lord?
If haply you my father do suspect
An instrument of this your calling back,
Lay not the blame on me!

Othello had, in fact, been recalled from Cyprus, whither Oxford had intended travelling had time permitted; and he came back to Venice, the city de Vere had just left. This Howard-Iago poisoned his mind with jealousy. Edward made no accusations against Anne, only saying that 'until he could satisfy himself concerning certain mislikings he was determined not to accompany his wife', and meanwhile kept aloof, being egged on in his resentment by the conspirators. Later, when all was made clear to him, he could exclaim, 'My Lord Howard is the worst villain on earth,' and The Howards the most treacherous race under heaven.'

Now see that most autobiographical of the plays, *Hamlet*.

Oxford-Hamlet, railing wildly at Anne-Ophelia, cries: 'Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape *calumny*.' One point which the play never elucidates is *who* had been calumniating Ophelia? The whole of Hamlet's tirade is Oxford's anger and heart-break over Anne, and the play came into being shortly after his reconciliation to her.

In 1576 the break may have coincided with his dearer wishes; to

be able to pursue his life according to his own tastes; to associate with the writers and actors for whom Burleigh showed open scorn. His travels may have enfranchised his spirit, and he may have seen the chance to remove himself from Burleigh's dominance.

The poetic mind of genius must of necessity be a 'cut above his fellow men', and therefore, to them he appears strange, whilst they to him are dull and commonplace. Thus it may be he chose to 'put an antic disposition on' and was known to his associates as a 'fantastico' or 'a singular odd man'. In these, his young days, he favoured the extreme of fashion—a dandy at all points, which pose he later satirized in *Osric*; and in his later days he assumed a not altogether fictitious melancholy.

Clown in *All's Well that Ends Well*:

I know a man that had this trick of melancholy sold a goodly manor for a song.

He was a man apart whatever aspect he presented to the public, and this would engender a devotion near 'idolatry' amongst his admirers, but a censure, deep, sincere, even aggressive, amongst those who disliked him. Ridicule, censure, cold-shouldering, every device a polite society can inflict upon its victim was meted out to the poet, but de Vere pursued his own 'fore-determined course', with what patience he could bring to bear on his hypersensitive, proud, impatient nature.

In Sonnet 90, directed to one who had loved him, the author says:

Then hate me when thou wilt; if ever, now;
Now, while the world is bent my deeds to cross,
Join with the spite of fortune, make me bow,
And do not drop in for an after-loss:
Ah, do not, when my heart hath 'scaped this sorrow,
Come in the rearward of a conquer'd woe;
Give not a windy night a rainy morrow,
To linger out a purposed overthrow;
If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last,
When other petty griefs have done their spite,
But in the onset come: so shall I taste
, At first the very worst of fortune's might.

Had Burleigh left the Earl to work out his and Anne's future alone a final breach might not have transpired.

As touching my wife [Oxford wrote], what they are,—because some mislikings are not to be spoken of or written upon as imperfections,—I will not deal withal. Some that otherwise discontented me I will not blaze or publish until it please me.

But Burleigh wrote rambling letters to the Queen justifying himself and exonerating his daughter.

Oxford was exasperated, and wrote again to his father-in-law a letter which is now lost and has to be pieced together from Burleigh's notes under the heading: The Communication I had from my Lord Oxford.'

Not providing him with sufficient money; ill-treating his followers; rousing the Queen's indignation against him. His mother-in-law is accused of having said she wished him dead, and of taking away his wife's affections.

(At this point the reader should look at the portrait of Lady Burleigh. Plate V.)

Eventually even Burleigh realized that a mischief-maker and scandal-monger had been at work:

I hope my Lord of Oxford doth now understand that the conception which he had gathered to think unkindness in me towards him was grounded upon untrue reports of others . . . the maintainers and devisers of them to be liars and malicious backbiters.

Shakespeare describes it as:

This sour informer, this bate-breeding spy,
This canker that eats up Love's tender spring,
This carry-tale, dissentious Jealousy.

Venus and Adonis

Burleigh's last letter brought a response; the two men met, and although de Vere still resolutely refused to cohabit with his wife he allowed her father to bring her to Court, and the tension began to decrease.

Added to the domestic upheaval Oxford was greeted on his arrival in England with the news that the Anthology which he had edited and published, the famous *Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, had met with abuse from all quarters. Hatton, in particular, was furious that his flighty love poems to a certain 'Eleanor' should appear in print, when he was endeavouring to make himself beloved and indispensable to the Queen. A second edition was prepared, in which the story was given an Italian setting and all distinguishing names suppressed. What Oxford had intended as a delicious bit of fun containing some gem-like poems was made a matter of abuse. In the second edition George Gascoigne fathered all the poems, and the subject was forgotten; but it added to Oxford's mortification. So the next poems he wrote

had lost their lightheartedness, and when the *Paradise of Dainty Devices* was published in 1576 it contained the following:

Fram'd in the front of forlorn hope past all recovery
 I stayless stand, to abide the shock of shame and infamy.
 My life, though ling'ring long is lodg'd in love of loathsome ways;
 My death delay'd to keep from life and harm of hapless days.
 My spirits, my heart, my wit, and force in deep distress are drown'd;
 The only *loss of my good name* is of these griefs the ground.

And since my mind, my wit, my head, my voice and tongue are weak
 To utter, move, devise, conceive, sound forth, declare and speak
 Such piercing plaints as answer might or would my woeful case
 Help crave I must, and crave I will with tears upon my face,
 Of all that may in heaven or hell, in earth or air be found,
 To wail with me *this loss of mine*, as of these griefs the ground.

The three verses which complete the poem are signed E. O.
 Compare this with another excerpt from *Othello*:

But he that filches from me my good name
 Robs me of that which not enriches him,
 And makes me poor indeed.

Elsewhere in the same play we find the misled and deluded Cassio crying distractedly,

Reputation, reputation, reputation. O, I have lost my reputation!
 I have lost the immortal part of myself and what remains is bestial.
 My reputation, lago, my reputation.

Despite this moral and mental tension, these five years—1576-81—before his discovery and denunciation of his cousin's treachery—were, for Oxford, both active and character-forming.

In an endeavour to recoup his sadly depleted finances and from a keen interest in the exploits of the sea-going adventurers, he took up altogether £3,000 worth of shares in Martin Frobisher's proposed expedition to find a north-west passage to Cathay (China).

Humphrey Gilbert,³ the navigator-adventurer, Michael Lok, and Dr. Dee, the mathematician, who had a keen interest in cartography, planned the voyage, and between them published a pamphlet which Gilbert had written, entitled *A Discourse of a Discovery of a New Passage to Cataia*.

This venture, unfortunately for all concerned, and de Vere's purse in particular, was a complete failure, as the ore brought back proved to be entirely worthless.

Frobisher accused Lok of cozening Lord Oxford of £1,000 because he said he knew the ore was worthless when he sold him the shares,

and despite his asseverations of innocence, Lok was lodged in the Fleet Prison.

In passing—the word 'shy' meaning shifty, attached to 'Lok' the unscrupulous promoter, becomes the name of the old Jew of Venice who determined to have his pound of flesh.

The next expedition to which Lord Oxford subscribed, though to a far less extent, was led by Captain Edward Fenton (another name, he it observed, which crept into the Shakespeare canon).

Again de Vere was unlucky, though between his first and second venture the Queen had reaped £11,750 (£90,000 today) in Drake's capture of Spanish treasure on its way from Peru. These speculations helped to drain the Earl's resources, and more land went on to the market to pay for his bad luck. But Oxford still retained his faith in Frobisher, who, two years later, wrote to Leicester that 'he had not moved Sir Francis Walsingham nor any of the rest but my Lord of Oxford, who bears me in hand, and would buy the *Edward Bonadventure*.' De Vere did indeed offer £1,500 for the ship and eventually secured her, since she sailed in Frobisher's next voyage. As this venture was restricted by the Queen to 'strict trading', and the King of Spain absolutely refused to allow trading in the Americas, the little flotilla of three vessels returned empty of either goods or loot.

Now, the reader will find it interesting to note that Dr. Cairncross, in his book *The Problem of Hamlet*, in which he has no other motive than to prove that *Hamlet* was written as early as 1588, says, 'Shakespeare, in some way not known to us was interested in the sea and in naval enterprise; and acquainted beyond the limits of a landsman, with naval terms.'

In 1577 de Vere's sister, Mary, became engaged to Peregrine Bertie, Lord Willoughby d'Ersby, the 'brave Lord Willoughby' of the old ballad. Everyone seemed to be set against the match, Lady Suffolk, the bridegroom's mother, particularly. She evidently sided with Burleigh and Anne in the Earl's marital quarrel. On July 2nd, 1577, she wrote to the Lord Treasurer as follows:

It is very true that my wise son has gone very far with my Lady Mary Vere, I fear too far to turn. I must say to you in counsel what I have said to her plainly, that I had rather he had matched in any other place; and I told her the causes. Her friends made small account of me; her brother did what in him lay to deface my husband and son; besides, our religious agree not, and I cannot tell what more. If she should prove like her brother, if an empire follows her I should be sorry to match so. She said that she could not rule her brother's tongue, nor help the rest of his faults, but for herself she trusted so to use herself as I should have

no cause to mislike her. ... I told her her brother used you and your daughter so evil that I could not require you to deal with it [i.e. approach the Queen for permission to marry].

Lady Suffolk resorted to the usual ruse:

Within this fortnight there was one spoke to me for one Mistress Gaymage, an heir of a thousand marks land, which had been a meeter match for my son.

But both Peregrine and Mary had made up their minds and neither mother nor future brother-in-law could do aught to hinder the match. Possibly Oxford's objection was on the grounds of religion, he having embraced the Catholic faith, and the Berties being zealous Protestants. Certain it is that after he renounced Catholicism in 1582, Oxford and Willoughby became fast friends.

Lady Suffolk grieved that Edward and Anne remained estranged from each other, and, with Mary, devised a scheme which she revealed to Lord Burleigh. She said she had heard from Harry Cook that Lord Oxford would gladly see his child 'if he could devise how to see her and not go to her' and suggested that little Elizabeth Vere should be sent to their house.

Then,' quoth I [to Mary] 'an you will keep my counsel we will have some sport with him; I will see if I can get the child hither to me, and whilst my Lord your brother is with you I will bring in the child as though it were some other child of my friend's and we will see how nature will work in him to like it, and tell him it is his after. For one other besides his sister and Harry Cook told me that my Lord would fain have the child awhile in my house with his sister. . . . But I pray you keep all those things secret.'

Whether the ruse was in any way successful we have no records to tell us, but it probably helped towards the ultimate reconciliation.

It was in July 1578 that the Queen again visited the University at Cambridge. She was accompanied by her usual entourage; Burleigh, Leicester, Hatton, Sussex and Oxford amongst the number.

At Audley End, where the Court stayed, Gabriel Harvey, a fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, presented to the Queen and her courtiers a series of Latin verses. His tribute to Oxford, after its opening flourish, was as follows:

Thy splendid fame, great Earl, demands even more than in the case of others the services of a poet possessing lofty eloquence.. . .', *have seen many Latin verses of thine, yea, even more English verses are extant; thou hast drunk deep draughts not only of the muses of France and*

Italy, but hast learned the manners of many men, and the art 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. . . . Thine eyes flash fire, thy countenance *shakes a spear*: who would not swear that Achilles had come to life again.

Here in italics is the possible origin of the Earl's eventual pseudonym. Harvey said he had become acquainted with the Earl who in the 'prime of his gallantest youth' had 'bestowed Angels upon me in Christ's College in Cambridge, and otherwise vouchsafed me many gracious favours'. Yet Harvey's ponderous sense of humour made him shortly write a lampoon on the Earl's 'Italianate garb and manners' which Edmund Spenser unfortunately published.

Entitled *Speculum Tuscanismi* it is couched in barbarous hexameters:

No words but valourous, nor works but womanish only.
 For life Magnificos, not a beck but glorious in show,
 In deed most frivolous, not a look but Tuscanish always
 His cringing side neck, eyes glancing, fisnomie smirking,
 With forefinger kiss, and brave embrace to the footward.
 Large bellied kodpeased doublet, unkodpeased half hose
 Straight to the dock like a shirt and close to the breech like a drivling
 A little Apish hat flat couched fast to the pate like an oyster,
 French Camarick ruffs, deep with a whiteness, starched to the purpose.
 Every one A per se A, his termes and braveries in print,
 Delicate in speech, quaint in array, conceited in all points.
 In courtly guiles a passing singular odd man.
 For Gallants a brave mirror, a Primrose of Honour,
 A Diamond for nonce, a fellow peerless in England.
 Not the like discourser for Tongues, and head to be found out
 Not the like resolute man for great and serious affairs
 Not the like Lynx to spy out secrets and privities of states.

John Lyly, the Earl's secretary, sprung to his master's defence and abused Harvey, after which Thomas Nashe entered the fray, and a literary altercation ensued, carried on through published letters.

He [writes Nashe, meaning Lyly] hath written something in your [Harvey's] praise for all you accuse him to have courtly [greatly?] insensed the Earl of Oxford against you. Mark him well; he is but a little fellow, but he hath one of the best wits in England. Should he take thee in hand again I prophesy there would be more gentle readers die of a merry mortality engendered by the eternal jests he would maul thee with. I myself that enjoy but a mite of wit in comparison of his talent in pure affection to my native country make my style carry a press of

sail and run fair to cut off half the stream of thy sport-breeding confusion, for fear it should cause a general hicket [hiccup] throughout England.

Gabriel Harvey, finding Oxford easily mollified, said, 'the noble Earl, not disposed to trouble his jovial mind with such saturnine paltry, still continued like his magnificent self. There is as much praise as abuse in the foolish poem, and it gives us the view of the Earl as seen by 'the man in the street'. His fantastic attire; his polished manners that verged on the ridiculous; his 'braveries', meaning his poems and prefaces, in print; his easy discourse not only in English but in foreign languages. He had certainly profited by his year in Italy as the lampoon said in its conclusion, having brought back with him an indelible memory of those Tuscan courts and climes as well as such gay fripperies as perfumed jerkins and gloves. The gloves he presented to the Queen, and she so favoured them that she had her portrait painted wearing them, whilst that particular perfume was ever afterwards known as the 'Earl of Oxford's perfume'.

During the progress through the Eastern Counties, which included a visit to Wansted Park, the seat of the Earl of Leicester, and Audley End, already mentioned, the Queen was welcomed to Lavenham Park by the Earl of Oxford as Lord of the Manor, Sir Thomas Spring, the rich clothier, assisting at the reception.

In a previous September progress, where Woodstock and Warwick were visited, as well as the Earl of Leicester's place, Kenilworth, there is a curious report of the Privy Council granting '8 carts to carry my Lord of Oxford's stuff from the Courte to London'.

What could the Earl be carrying with him to need '8 carts'? And if he was allowed this immense baggage train would not the other courtiers have requested a like permission? Even a 'fantastico' direct from Italy would not have needed 8 carts for his wardrobe.

The explanation may lie in the two following paragraphs.

No. 1. In 1578 the Queen presented Lord Oxford with the Manor of Rysing, which had originally belonged to his uncle, the Duke of Norfolk (executed six years earlier), and in the bill of conveyance are the words,

The Queen to all to whom these present letters may come, Greeting. Know you that We, as well in consideration of *the good, true and faithful service done and given to Us before this time* by Our most dear cousin Edward, Earl of Oxford [etc.].

No. 2. A letter from Gilbert Talbot to his father.

It is but vain to trouble your lordship with such shows as were showed

before Her Majesty this Shrovetide at night. The chiefest was a device presented by the persons of the Earl of Oxford, the Earl of Surrey [his cousin], the Lords Thomas Howard [cousin] and Windsor [brother-in-law]. The device was prettier than it happened to have been performed.

What was the 'good, true and faithful service' de Vere rendered the Queen? It may have been, in part, assisting with the negotiations for the proposed Anjou marriage, but more likely to have been the writing and producing of such 'devices' to amuse the Court; was he not, in a few years' time, acclaimed 'the best for comedy'?

Devices of this kind were produced most lavishly in the matter of costumes, scenery, decorations, and even mechanical contrivances, and, when the Queen was on one of her progresses, all this had to be carried to the place where the Court sojourned.

In these circumstances, the organizer, to remove the theatre props, might well need '8 carts'.

In this matter of the Queen's proposed marriage with the Due d'Anjou, Oxford favoured the match, and may have been employed by Elizabeth in the negotiations between the French and English Courts as is hinted above. He had recently visited the Louvre and had been well received, so would have been eminently suitable as a secret envoy.

Gabriel Harvey, in the poem already quoted, which satirized the Earl for his adoption of foreign clothes and manners, said, 'Not the like Lynx to spy out secrets and privities of states.' This could hardly refer to any English political transactions, as Oxford never held any state or governmental post until he was made a Privy Councillor in the reign of King James.

We have, moreover, a letter from the Due d'Anjou, or rather from the Duke's secretary, saying that he had received 'by Vere* her Majesty's letter, together with the 'safe-conduct' which M. de Simier had sent him on her Majesty's behalf, for which he thanks her, and 'has no greater desire in this world than to see the hour of his embarkation'.

If de Vere's participation in this marriage plan was in any way extensive, as his desire for peace and amity with France, to play off France against Spain, may have made it, it might account for his temporarily embracing Catholicism, the better to deal with the French Catholic Court.

Certainly when hostages were demanded for the safety of the Due d'Anjou in the event of his coming to England, the names of Edward de Vere and the Earl of Shrewsbury were put forward as acceptable to the French Crown.

Antagonism caused by the holding of opposite opinions in the matter of the French alliance was undoubtedly the basis of the bad feeling between Oxford and Philip Sidney, vividly instanced in the now famous tennis court quarrel, which, because it has been magnified into an event of importance, and is, moreover, the only event of which the average person has heard, and then always in a manner to the Earl's detriment, must be recorded here.

Many years after the incidents he relates, Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, wrote a Life of Sir Philip Sidney, and in it he records the quarrel that took place between the two young men on the tennis courts at Whitehall; a careful re-reading of which will, I am sure, convince the reader that Greville's account is both muddled and biased.

To begin with he says that Sidney was playing on the court, within the precincts of the royal palace, when Oxford came on to the court and commanded Sidney to withdraw so that he could play. They had high words, emphasis being laid on de Vere's temper. Sidney refused to go and made protest; both young men got angry and Oxford called Sidney a 'Puppy', even repeating the epithet when Sidney asked what he had said.

The followers of the French Ambassador who were in the dedans or gallery of the court, awaiting an audience with the Queen, came to the windows at the sound of raised voices and angry words, and Sidney, after a moment's hesitation, quitted the court. Greville then says, 'Oxford continued his game'. He must have forgotten his first statement that Sidney was playing and Oxford came on to the court—for if Oxford *continued his game* he must have been there first and it was Sidney who intruded.

Moreover Greville stated that Oxford challenged Philip to a duel, which is again incorrect, for from Sidney's especial friend Hubert Languet, then in Germany, we learn that it was Sidney who sent the challenge for which Languet chides him, and for his hasty temper which led him to do so, as it left the choice of weapons to his opponent. However, before Oxford could take up the challenge the Queen intervened, read Sidney a lecture and banished him—though not in anger—from the Court. He retired to Wilton Place, the home of his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, and remained there until his reinstatement in Court favour in 1581.

The incident has little significance; for two young men who were literary rivals as well as rivals for the Queen's favour may have 'words' without becoming life-long enemies. In fact eighteen months later they were together as defendants in a tournament, against the challengers, Lord Arundel and Sir William Drury.

It has been suggested that in Sir Andrew Aguecheek we have a

caricature of Sir Philip Sidney. Maybe. Sir Toby tells Viola when encouraging her to fight Sir Andrew that 'He is a knight dubbed with unhatched rapier, and on carpet consideration; but he's *a devil in a private brawl*', which sounds like an echo from the tennis court. Oxford's scathing quips were well known and dreaded by all; even his sister, as we have seen, saying she could not control his tongue.

Could the man of Stratford ever have heard of the disagreements of the Queen's courtiers within the walls of the palace, or should he have done so, would he have dared to satirize the failing of a so highly esteemed member of the aristocracy?

A further allusion to this episode may be found in *Hamlet*, in the scene where Polonius is giving his servant Reynaldo orders for spying on his son in France, and says he may discover 'a falling out at tennis'.

Oxford, who, as we have seen, was 'the cause of wit in others', had written the following verse, which Sidney chose to paraphrase.

Were I a king, I might command content,
 Were I obscure, unknown would be my cares,
 And were I dead, no thoughts should me torment,
 Nor words, nor wrongs, nor love, nor hate, nor fears.
 A doubtful choice of three things one to crave,
 A kingdom or a cottage or a grave.

And Sidney's paraphrase:

Wert thou a king, yet not command content
 Where empire none thy mind could yet suffice,
 Wert thou obscure, still cares would thee torment,
 But wert thou dead, all care and sorrow dies.
 An easy choice of three things one to crave.
 No kingdom, nor a cottage, *but a grave*.

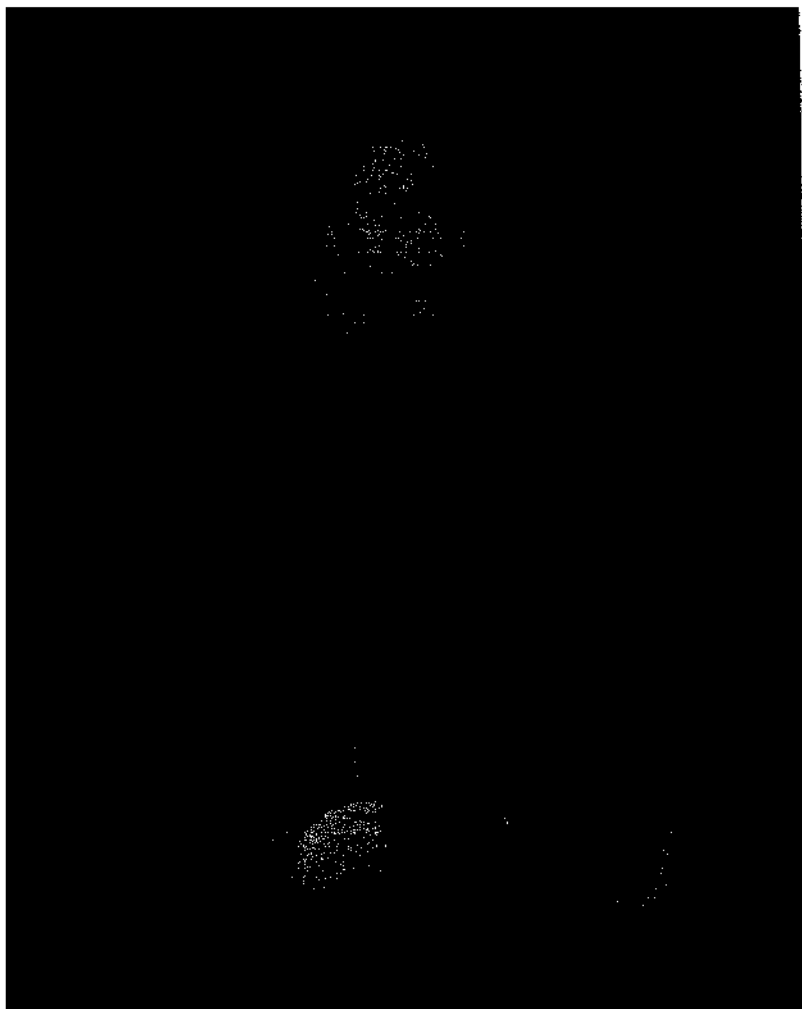
Now see *Twelfth Night* again:

Sir Toby [speaking of Sir Andrew]. He plays o' th' viol-de-gamboys, and speaks three or four languages word for word without book, and hath all the good gifts of nature.

Maria. He hath, indeed, almost natural; for, besides that he's a fool, he's a great *quarreller*, and but that he hath the gift of a coward to allay the gust he hath in quarrelling; 'ts thought amongst the prudent he would quickly have the *gift of a grave*.

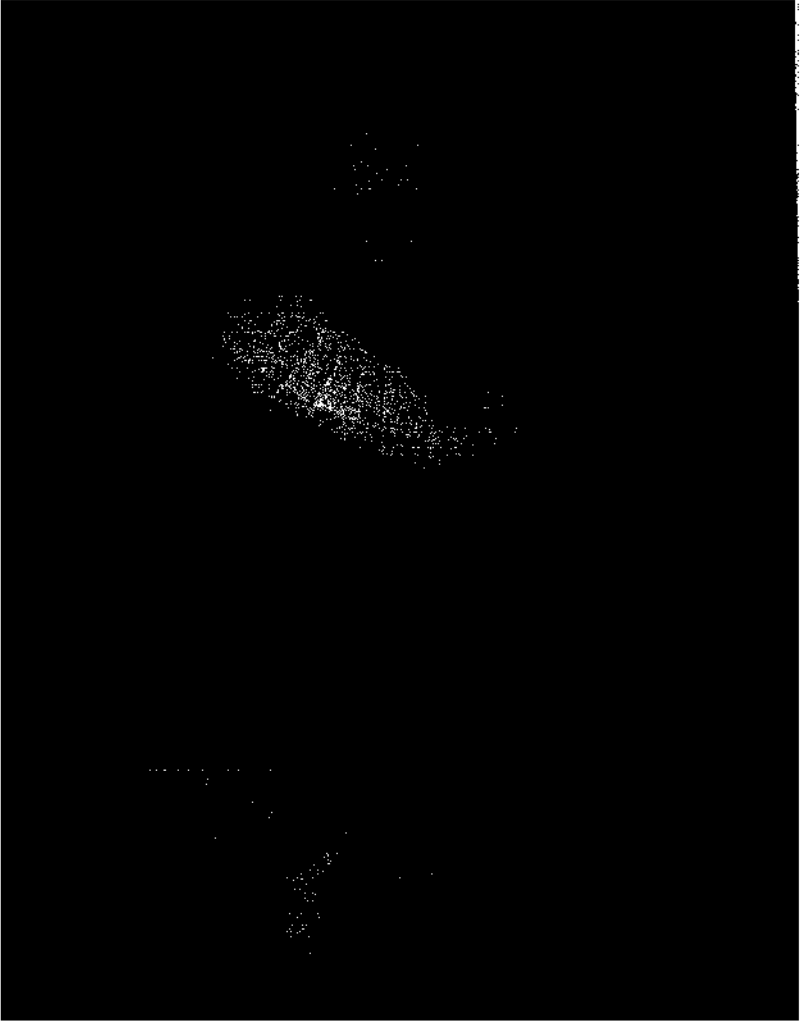
Of Sidney's quarrelsomeness there can be no question. It is fully borne out in the account of an incident recorded in the *Historical Guide to Penshurst Place* by his descendant, the Hon. Mary Sidney (1928).

PLATE IX



LORD BURLEIGH
(Artist unknown, National Portrait Gallery)

PLATE X



HORACE DE VERE
(By M. J. Van Miereveldt, National Portrait Gallery)

From some cause or another about this time Philip seems to have fancied that some private affairs which he had written to his father had leaked out, and he hastily jumped to the conclusion that Edmund Molineux, his father's secretary, was the culprit. With that impetuosity of temper which was one of his failings, he wrote him an angry ill-considered letter, threatening to thrust a dagger into him.

That a high-spirited young man should be quick-tempered is not surprising, but one must bear this in mind when accusing de Vere of quarrelsomeness in the tennis court affair.

What is important to this thesis is that de Vere would have known the young man's temper very intimately thus to hold it up to ridicule, whilst there is no possibility of William Shakspeare ever knowing of it, of daring to portray it scathingly thus if he did, or, furthermore, of imagining that it would be of any interest to the audience of a public theatre were he to pen such a satire. Only a Court audience, for whom undoubtedly the plays were originally written, could have appreciated the jest.

During the year 1580 Oxford took over the Earl of Warwick's company of actors. This caused a break in his prose and poem writing and a concentration on the drama.

We have seen him acting at Court in masques and privately composed plays, and how from his earliest youth his interest in the drama had been aroused by his father's players. Now he had a company of his own for whom he could write plays suitable for the Court; or he could produce the plays of others, and himself train the actors that they 'o'erstep not the modesty of nature' but 'hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature', and insist that the clowns spoke 'no more than is set down for them'. This he did so successfully that we find Francis Meres, when listing the playwrights of the time, saying that 'the best for comedy amongst us be Edward, Earl of Oxford'.

As the titles of not one of these plays of his have come down to us, and as the 'best' of any art is never wholly lost, I contend that these comedies, written ostensibly for the delectation of the Court, were eventually published under a pseudonym, that that pseudonym was 'Shake-speare' in remembrance of Harvey's reference to his 'countenance shaking a spear', and that these early comedies included *All's Well that Ends Well*, so reminiscent of his youth, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Love's Labours Lost* with its Court atmosphere and (now obscure) Court jokes.

With the taking over of the Earl of Warwick's actors, assistance in production and writing was needed, and this year Anthony Munday was listed as one of the Earl's servants. His opinion of his master

is preserved for us. In the dedication of his Translations of French, Italian and Spanish Romances, under the title of *Primaleon of Greece*, to the Earl of Oxford, he said that it would be a reproach to him who had 'once been so happy to serve a master so noble to forget his precious virtues, which make him so beloved'.

As a traveller in France and Italy, in showing a laxity in money matters, a doubt of woman's constancy, and writing 'the best' comedies, our claimant fulfils four more of our list of contentions.

NOTES

1. Horace Walpole, in *Royal and Noble Authors*.
2. Spanish State Papers.
3. Brother of Adrian Gilbert of Marldon Castle, Devon, still owned by their descendant, Commander Gilbert.

CHAPTER 10

'THE EARL OF OXFORD, A MAN MORE NOBLE THAN FORTUNATE'

John Clapham

LORD OXFORD now took a course which, however commendable it may seem in our judgment, completely alienated him from his Court position, the Queen's favour and even from his friends.

Discovering that his cousins, Henry Howard and Charles Arundel, were in the pay of Spain, and that their plots endangered the Queen's life and England's safety, he threw himself upon the Queen's mercy and declared all.

The Catholic Record Society's report gives the details:

A few days before Christmas the Earl of Oxford (who about four and a half years ago on his return from Italy made profession of the Catholic faith together with some of his relatives among the nobility and his best friends, had sworn, as he says, and signed with them a declaration that they would do all they could for the advancement of the catholic religion) accused his former friends to the Queen of England.

At the first intimation of this action, which de Vere himself divulged to Charles Arundel on Christmas evening, the cousins fled to the house of the Spanish Ambassador for safety.

(Chapman, in his *Revenge*, wherein as I have shown, he prefigures the Earl of Oxford, says:

These are your Machiavelian villains.
Your bastard Teucers, that, when mischiefs done
Run to your shield for safety.)

Elizabeth was angry, but by keeping a close watch on the cousins she soon became convinced that de Vere was speaking the truth, as we, who can now lay out the documents and letters of the Spanish and French Ambassadors, know to be so. Howard, Arundel and Southwell were kept in durance, and de Vere at first consigned to the Tower, but soon released.

The conspirators, being allowed to correspond, concocted a list of counter-accusations,¹ charging Oxford with every vice and crime to which they could set their pens, and consequently so exaggerating his wickedness and their own innocence that the accusations carried their own condemnation; each being in fact 'hoist with his own petard'.

Amongst other charges they denounced the Earl as a great liar, for he had told them that the streets of Venice were paved with diamonds and rubies! And that when he harangued his army as 'he marched towards Genoa, he left nothing to reply, but everyone to wonder at his judgement; being reputed for his eloquence another Cicero, and for his judgement a Caesar'.

Arundel, who penned this accusation, admitted that he had often been 'driven to rise from his table laughing'—as, I have no doubt, Oxford intended he should. When we consider his natural modesty we can smile at these 'Baron Miinchausen' tales with which he regaled his guests at supper, and which the villains pretended to take seriously. A traveller's tales, like the fisherman's account of a catch, have always been 'taken with a pinch of salt', as Shakespeare shows in *All's Well*:

Lafeu. A good traveller is something at the end of a dinner; but one that lies three-thirds, and uses a known truth to pass a thousand nothings with!

But these suppers were not always mirth-provoking; sometimes there was plotting with heads together behind locked doors. In one set of Record Office papers de Vere has charged the cousins with conspiracy. In his own handwriting he makes his demands:

What combination, for that was their term, was made at certain suppers in Fish St.?

Switch over to *Henry VI* where Cade shouts orders to the rebels—
Up Fish Street, and down St. Magnus Corner!

and you get the echo.

Fish Street was by London Stone, exactly by de Vere's front door.

Arundel, on behalf of himself and friends, denied ever being at Fish Street, as he denied being at the Duke of Northumberland's; but it was well known that the Duke was a party to their plots, and he too was arrested.

The counter-accusations compiled by Howard and Arundel against Oxford are to be found in the Record Office, and do credit to their imagination and unscrupulousness. But it must not be forgotten that they were fighting for their lives; they had no mind to follow brother Thomas to the block.

A summary of some of their accusations I give below, to show how Oxford used them later.

Thus wrote Charles Arundel:

To record the vices of this monstrous earl were a labour without end;

they are so many and so vile and so scandalous that it would be a shame to write them, and a loss of time to read them ... I will truly decipher him and lay all his villainies to open gaze... his impertinent and senseless lies ... he hath perjured himself a hundred times and damned himself to the pit of hell... he is a most notorious drunkard and very seldom sober;—in his drunken fits he is no man but a beast;—all acts of cruelty, injury and villainy, sparing no woman be she never so virtuous, nor any man, be he never so honourable.

Now see, when the bitterness had somewhat abated, how Lord Oxford took his revenge. Parolles, in *All's Well*, a braggart, coward and calumniator, when pinioned and blindfolded by his friends who were tired of his tricks, believing himself to be in danger of death thus defames his former friends:

Par. He will steal, sir, an egg out of a cloister, for rapes and ravishments he parallels Nessus, he professes not keeping of oaths; he will lie, sir, with such volubility that you would think truth a fool; drunkenness is his best virtue; for he will be swine-drunk; of honesty he hath everything an honest man should not have, what an honest man should have, he has nothing. For a quart d'ecu he will sell the fee-simple of his salvation, and cut the entail from all remainders.

The Court would laugh, and enjoy the joke at the expense of the defamers, the parallel is too close to be mistaken.

In a short, passionate poem, de Vere had poured out his bitterness:²

Fain would I sing, but fury makes me fret,
And Rage hath sworn to seek revenge of wrong;
My mazed mind hi malice so is set,
As Death shall daunt my deadly dolours long;
Patience perforce is such a pinching pain,
As die I will, or suffer wrong again.

I am no sot to suffer such abuse
As doth bereave my heart of his delight;
Nor will I frame myself to such as use,
With calm consent, to suffer such despite;
No quiet sleep shall once possess mine eye
Till Wit have wrought his will on Injury.

My heart shall fail, and hand shall lose his force,
But some device shall pay Despite his due;
And Fury shall consume my careful corse,
Or raze the ground whereon my sorrow grew.
Lo, thus in rage of ruthless mind refused
I rest revenged on whom I am abus'd.

[My italics.]

That which Burleigh, Walsingham and the House of Commons had vainly urged Elizabeth to do was accomplished by Oxford when he denounced his treacherous cousins; the tightening or enforcing of the laws regarding Catholics in this country.

The Queen forbade the 'retaining of Jesuits and Massing priests, sowers of sedition and other treasonable attempts'.

No action was taken against Oxford, save his loss of Court prestige, despite the cousins' crafty attempt to curry favour with the Queen by touching her vanity and telling her that de Vere had railed against her singing, and had said that she did everything with the worst grace possible. This was unpardonable; she refused the Earl her presence, but it did not merit punishment. Perhaps she had seen the proviso which Henry Howard had penned against the accusation, as we can see it today. 'Yes,' he wrote, 'I heard him say so, but he was intoxicated at the time.'

How furious they must have been that she took no action, not even after they had accused him of attempting to murder all her favourites, Raleigh, Sidney, Hatton and Walsingham. At the bottom of the list Francis Southwell added a self-damning phrase: 'For if the Earl could get one man to aver anything we are utterly overthrown.'

As indeed they were. Charles Arundel fled to Spain, where he eked out a miserable life as a pensioner of King Philip, and Henry Howard remained under suspicion, often suffering spells of imprisonment until the accession of King James, when, as one who had favoured the King's mother, Mary Queen of Scots, he won some favour. This he enhanced by successfully slanderously attacking and by bringing about the death of Raleigh, for which he was rewarded with the Earldom of Nottingham. Finally, to curry favour with James's favourite, Robert Carr, he was instrumental in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury in the Tower.

Good had been done by Oxford's drastic action of warning the Queen against these dangerous men, but his own reputation suffered. Never again would anyone say he was 'superlative in the Prince's favour'.

'Shakespeare' voices Oxford's reminiscence of those desperate days.

Did you but know the city's usurers,
And felt them knowingly: the art o' the court,
As hard to leave as keep; whose top to climb
Is certain falling, or so slippery that
The fear's as bad as falling: the toil o' the war,
A pain that only seems to seek out danger
In the name of fame and honour; which dies in the search;

And hath as oft a slanderous epitaph
As record of fair act; nay, many times
Doth ill deserve by doing well; what's worse,
Must courtsy at the censure . . .

My report was once

First with the best of note:
And when a soldier was the theme, my name
Was not far off; then was I as a tree
Whose boughs did bend with fruit: but in one night,
A storm or robbery, call it what you will,
Shook down my mellow hangings, nay, my leaves,
And left me bare to weather . . .
My fault being nothing,—as I have told you oft,—
But that *two villains*, whose *false oaths* prevail'd
Before my perfect honour. [My italics.]

(*Cymbeline*, III. 4)

With the discovery of the source of the calumnies against Anne, and his revenge taken, de Vere made up the quarrel with his wife—and in December 1581 a correspondent noted that 'The Earl hath company with his wife since Christmas.'

In June 1583 an heir was born, but unfortunately died within four days.

Little Anne, grieving, tried her pen at several poems to relieve her full heart.

Had with morning the Gods left their wills undon,
They had not so soone herited such a soul:
Or if the mouth, tyme, did not glotten up all
Nor I, nor the world were deprived of my sonne.³

Poor Anne was doomed to disappointment, for she had three daughters but not another son. The great name and heritage of the de Veres would pass to distant relatives.

During the five years that the Earl of Oxford had been estranged from his wife he had become entangled with one of the Queen's Maids of Honour, Anne Vavasour, the daughter of Henry Vavasour of Coppenthorpe.

It will be remembered that one of de Vere's early poems was *Anne Vavasour's Echo*, an amusing play on the name of 'Vere' written for the entertainment of their friends.

From a report in the *Fugger News-Letters*⁴ of April 29th, 1581, we learn:

The Earl of Oxford was also arrested but set at liberty, but he is again in the Tower of London for forgetting himself with one of the Queen's

Maids of Honour, who is in the Tower likewise. This is in spite of his having a pretty wife, the daughter of the Lord Treasurer, but he will not live with her.

B. M. Ward, in his biography of the Earl of Oxford, says that he could find no record of the Earl's imprisonment in the Lists which cover that period and seem to be complete. But the informant of the Augsburg banker seems to have some authority for his report. On June 9th, 1581, in a letter to the Yeoman Porter of the Tower, it is stated that the Earl of Oxford, being released the day before, disputed the point of parting with his 'uppermost garment' which was the Yeoman's perquisite on all prisoners condemned for treason, in that he had committed no treason and therefore was not liable: it was a point that touched his patriotic honour.

If the *Fugger News-Letter* is correct, Oxford's first temporary imprisonment was due to the Howard-Arundel scandal, the second to their revealing to the Queen his association with Anne Vavasour; a fact of which they were cognizant as will appear from the following extract in Charles Arundel's accusations:

On Sunday last, being Christmas Day, the Earl of Oxford desired secret conference with me, as he had done the night before ... we met in the evening at the Mayde's chamber door, and after long speeches between him and my cousin Vavasour. . . the Earl made this speech unto me. 'Charles, I have ever loved you, and you have already given your word to my mistress, so now I crave it myself.'

That this was a declaration for the eyes of the Queen speaks for itself.

Anne Vavasour was the mother of a son born about this time and called Edward Vere, of whom little or nothing is known save that he died fighting in the Low Countries.

On March 3rd, 1582, Oxford fought a duel⁵ with Master Thomas Knyvett, the girl's uncle, in which both swordsmen were wounded but Oxford the more dangerously.

In the Diary of the Reverend Richard Madox is the following note. 'My Lord of Oxford fought with Master Knyvett about the quarrel of Bessie Bavisour—[Anne Vavasour] and was hurt, which grieved the Lord Treasurer so much the more for that the Earl hath company with his wife since Christmas . . . the Lord Treasurer was sick.'

There is no doubt that Oxford received from this duel a wound from which he never entirely recovered. He refers to it as 'my old infirmity', and the Sonnets describe it as 'the coward conquest of a wretch's knife'.

The servants of Oxford and Knyvett took sides with their masters, and fierce fighting in the streets resulted, in the manner of the Montagues and Capulets in *Romeo and Juliet*, one of Lord Oxford's men was slain.

It is interesting to read in the Howard-Arundel accusations to which reference has been made that Arundel, when citing Oxford's 'lying' stories of his travels, says that the story de Vere most favoured was that on 'his being in Italy there fell discord and dissention between two families', and how he was instrumental in reconciling them.

Three years after the duel between Oxford and Knyvett de Vere received another challenge couched in violent language,⁵ this time from Thomas Vavasour, probably the girl's brother. Why he left it so long before attempting to vindicate her honour remains a mystery, for Oxford had severed his connection with her after his liberation from the Tower, when he became reconciled to his wife. Burleigh, who is not given to strong phrases, refers to her as 'that drab'.

It appears that Vavasour was in some way connected with the Howard-Arundel group, for he writes angrily: 'Is not the revenge taken of thy victims sufficient?' and includes another phrase which still defies elucidation. 'I speak this, that I fear thou art so much wedded to that shadow of thine, that nothing can have force to awake thy base and sleepy spirits.' Did he refer to the Earl's wielding the 'insignificant pen' when he should have been drawing the sword? Anyway, he endeavoured to sting the Earl to fight him, leaving de Vere the choice of weapons and the place of meeting. We have no evidence that the duel ever took place, and Burleigh, who knew de Vere's calumniators were not yet laid low, endorsed the letter: 'a lewd letter from Vavasour to the Earl of Oxford', and wrote on March 12th, 1583,

I doubt not but my Lord of Leicester will honourably declare to Her Majesty how my Lord of Oxford resteth untouched (in honour) or at least unblotted in any kind of matter objected to by Master Knyvett. . . . While we seek favour, all crosses are laid against him and by *untruths* sought to be kept in disgrace.

Possibly this letter helped towards a final reassessment of the case, for in June of this year the Queen pardoned Oxford and all was forgotten.

. . . Yesterday [writes Roger Manners to the Earl of Rutland], the Earl of Oxford came to her presence, and after some bitter words and speeches, in the end all sins are forgiven and he may repair to the Court

at his pleasure. Master Raleigh was a great man herein, whereat Pondus [Burleigh?] is angry for that he could not do so much.

In the following July Oxford's brother-in-law, Lord Willoughby, with whom the Earl was now on friendly terms, was sent to Denmark to confer the Order of the Garter on the Danish King, and on his return wrote: 'Relation of my Lord Willoughby's embassy to Denmark in his own hand:'—on the 22nd he was in Elsinore, and when the presentation was performed 'a whole volley of all the great shot of the castle [was] discharged, a royal feast, and most artificial and cunning fireworks'.

Which immediately calls to mind King Claudius' words in *Hamlet*.

In grace whereof
No jocund health that Denmark drinks today,
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell;
And the King's rouse the heaven shall bruit again,
Re-speaking earthly thunder.

On which *Hamlet* comments:

The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering upspring reels;
And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettle drum and trumpet there bray out
The triumph of his pledge.

During the social reverses caused by his denunciation of his two treacherous cousins, Oxford had been driven back to his literary diversions as a solace. Undoubtedly the writing of plays became more and more his pursuit, until he was completely obscured by that 'shadow' of his.

John Lyly, whilst in de Vere's service, wrote his two books, *Euphues his England* and *Euphues the Anatomy of Wit*, the latter being dedicated to his master, whom he undoubtedly portrayed in the character of his hero.

Courthope says that 'Euphuism' was a 'linguistic movement, which at some particular stage of development, affected every literature in Europe', and further, 'Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, is unfortunate in being chiefly known to posterity as the antagonist of Sidney in the quarrel already alluded to; beyond this little is recorded of him. We see, however, that he was a great patron of literature and headed the literary party at court which promoted the Euphuistic movement.'

To this group belonged Thomas Lodge, Thomas Watson and

Anthony Munday, who dedicated *The Mirror of Mutibility* (1579) to Lord Oxford, commending it to 'his courteous and gentle perusing'. In it we find the following acrostic poem:

Except I should in friendship seem ingrate
Denying duty, whereto I am bound;
With letting slip your Honour's worthy state
At all assays, which I have noble found.
Right well I might refrain to handle pen;
Denouncing aye the company of men.

Down, dire despair, let courage come in place
Exalt his fame whom Honour doth embrace.

Firtue hath aye adorn'd your valliant heart,
Exempl'd by your deeds of lasting fame:
Regarding such as take God Mars his part
Each where by proof, in honour and in name.

Thomas Watson, another of Oxford's literary *confreres*, even addressed his own poem in a *Protcepticon*, telling it to find a place 'on the learned bookshelves of Vere—ever the friend of the Muses'.

The Euphuistic group headed by Oxford was opposed to the 'Romantics', which included Spenser and Sidney, whose group was known as the 'Areopagus'. The Euphuists were chiefly concerned with the 'manner' of writing, the Romantics with the matter.

In 1586 Oxford received the highest tribute to his poetry, written by William Webbe in *A Discourse of English Poetry*.

I may not omit the deserved commendation to the many honourable and noble Lords and Gentlemen in her Majesty's Court, which, in the rare devices of poetry, have been and yet are most skilful; amongst whom the Right Honourable the Earl of Oxford may challenge to himself the title of the most excellent among the rest.

It was in this, or during one of the next two years, that William Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon is supposed to have come to London, probably as the property-man in a touring company of actors.

In 1593 the courtly and skilful poem *Venus and Adonis* was published as by 'William Shake-speare', with its dedication to the Earl of Southampton, who had been a Queen's ward and lived at Cecil House as de Vere had done.

Who is the more likely author of this rather artificial poem, in a metre we know de Vere used, with its classical allusions culled from

Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; or *of Lucrece* published two years later, with its extraordinary dedication?

The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end; whereof this pamphlet without beginning is but a superfluous moiety. The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutor'd lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater my duty would show greater, meantime, as it is, it is bound to your lordship, to whom I wish long life, still lengthened with all happiness.

What curious language for the unknown struggling actor to use to a great peer of the realm—what insufferable impudence! But as from one nobleman to another—from one Queen's ward, whose humility regarding his literary achievements have already been noted, to a junior ward—it falls into reasonable place, both for time when written, to whom, and from whom written, and as regards its classical subject matter, its style and the glowing dedication, which has, moreover, to *seem* to be from a Mr. William Shake-speare for the general public.

Whilst pursuing the subject of *Lucrece* it is pertinent to note that during the course of the poem, Lucrece, left alone in misery after Tarquin's brutality, ruminates on the vicissitudes of life and recalls to mind a panel of pictures in a room of the palace. These she describes at length and in minute detail. The painting depicts the story of Troy, and the author describes by the mouth of his heroine how Nestor stands addressing the crowd, which presses close, listening:

Some high, some low,—the painter was so nice;
The scalps of many, almost hid behind,
To jump up higher seem'd, to mock the mind.

Here one man's hand lean'd on another's head,
His nose being shadow'd by his neighbour's ear;
Here one, being throng'd, bears back, all bol'n and red;
Another, smother'd, seems to pelt and swear;
And in their rage such signs of rage they bear,
As, but for loss of Nestor's golden words,
It seem'd they would debate with angry swords.

And so on—a careful description of the painting to the length of twenty-eight verses! It holds up the story beyond any legitimate poetical parenthesis and is obviously a reminiscence of the author.

Somewhere he had seen such a painting; he may even have sketched it or made notes. It has no resemblance to an English tapestry. Indeed Shakespeare seems to have disliked tapestries, for we find old Falstaff saying . . . 'the story of the Prodigal—or the German hunting in water-work, is worth a thousand of these bed hangings and fly-bitten tapestries'.

Now in the 'Appartamento di Troia' in the Palazzo del Te built by Giulio Romano in Mantua, is a painting which corresponds to Lucrece's description. William of Stratford can never have seen it, but the Earl of Oxford when visiting Venice and Padua would also have gone to Mantua which lies between the two cities only a few miles to the south.

Here at the home of the Gonzagas he would have seen Romano's paintings of the Siege of Troy; so rich in their imaginative beauty and newly painted colour that the memory would have remained indelibly printed on his mind until at length it had to find verbal outlet.

Furthermore, Giulio Romano is the only artist mentioned by Shakespeare in his plays, and he is correct in referring to him as a sculptor, although better known to us today as a painter. Indeed, he was, as were so many Renaissance artists, an architect as well.

If for no other reason de Vere would have visited Mantua to see the tomb of Baltezarre Castiglione, whose work *The Courtier* he had so much admired that he had written a Latin preface to his friend's translation. When told the tomb was designed and built by Giulio Romano (1527), would not the name have remained in his mind as that of a sculptor of great excellence?

So in *A Winter's Tale*, when Hermione disguises herself as a statue, it is reported that it was

a piece many years in doing, and now newly performed by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity, and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly is he her ape: he so near to Hermione hath done Hermione that they say one would speak to her, and stand in hope of an answer.

What a fine tribute to one whom we now regard as only second class.

If one considers *Venus and Adonis* again, and the verses dealing with Adonis's strayed horse, we shall find in another parenthesis lasting thirteen verses, a rather tedious description of a blood-stock mare and stallion. If we again turn to the Palazzo del Te at Mantua we see on the walls paintings of fine Barbary steeds by the artist

Andrea Mantegna, so photographically life-like that they are a marvel of *chiaroscuro*.

Look when a painter would surpass the life
 In limning out a well-proportion'd steed,
 His art with nature's workmanship at strife,
 As if the dead the living should exceed:
 So did this horse excel a common one
 In shape, in courage, colour, pace and bone.

These fine horses had been reared in the stud of the Marquis of Mantua, Francesca Gonzaga, who at one time owned as many as three hundred of them, and from whose stables Barbary horses were bought for all the courts in Europe. We may be sure that these paintings of noble steeds, which still thrill the modern visitor, made an inefaceable image in Oxford's mind.

Whilst on the subject of pictures, it will be remembered that in the Induction to the *Taming of the Shrew*, Sly, the tinker, lying drunkenly abed, and attended by the duke's servants as though he were a lord, is offered the delights of music and pictures:

Dost thou love pictures? We will fetch thee straight
 Adonis painted by a running brook,
 And Cythera all in sedges hid. . .
 . . . We'll show thee lo as she was a maid,
 And how she was beguiled and surprised,
 As lively painted as the deed was done.

Sir Lionel Cust believes this to be a description of Correggio's painting of *Jupiter and Io* which hung in the studio of the sculptor Leoni at Milan, where, of course, de Vere would have seen it.

Shakespeare's obvious pleasure in art, as with most people until the present age, was that the picture should look as much like nature as possible:

His art with nature's workmanship at strife.

The statue was 'as much like Hermione as Hermione herself, and the blood of Adonis looked real enough to trickle down his thigh, whilst in the Siege of Troy the crowd hidden behind each other save for their scalps seemed to be jumping up to get a look at Nestor who was speaking; and so 'to mock the mind'.

It would be interesting to know what pictures Lord Oxford himself owned, and if like Sir Joseph Surface he had to sell his ancestors, because there is an unusual dialogue in *Timon Of Athens* that leads to this conclusion:

Timon. Whither art thou going?

Apemanius. To knock-out an honest Athenian's brains.

Timon. That's a deed thou'lt die for.

Apemantus. Right, if doing nothing be death by the law.

Timon. How likest thou *this picture*, Apemantus? [My italics,}

A knock-out is made by the bidder getting an article below the market price so that the vendor is cheated of his due reward, and the two concerned in the 'knock-out' share the difference between the true and the paid price. This is particularly a practice of the auctioneer's room.

Before leaving this train of investigation let us note the name Gonzaga mentioned in connection with Mantua.

Hamlet says in the Play scene, 'This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna [perhaps a mis-reading for Venice]: Gonzago is the duke's name'—etc., and again—'His name's Gonzago: the story is *extant* and writ in choice Italian.'

It is not necessary to push this point beyond observing it, as names can be easily acquired from books or travellers. Also it must be stated that there was published in 1592 a play called *The Cheats* by an Italian author, C. Gonzaga. An actor, such as William Shakspeare, would have been as likely to see or hear of this as anyone, but I agree with Leslie Hotson and Dr. Cairncross that *Hamlet* was first drafted as early as 1588, and therefore before Shakspeare is known to have arrived in London, and certainly before *The Cheats* was published.

In any case I think it has been shown that the author of the Shakespeare plays knew intimately the towns of Northern Italy which were just those de Vere had visited in his short but fully utilized time of travel.

'Nay, more than this doth practice of Italy in one year,' sneered Gabriel Harvey.

More particularly Shakespeare must have had a personal knowledge of the Castle of Mantua before he wrote the two long classic poems.

NOTES

1. State Papers Domestic Addenda. Eliz. Vol. 27. A. 1580.
2. Reprinted by T. Looney in the *Poems of Edward de Vere*.
3. *Four Epytaphes made by the Countess of Oxenforde after the Death of her young sonne the Lord Bulbecke, etc.*, contained in a book of poems by John Sootherne, called *Pandora*. In the British Museum. John Soothern, probably a Frenchman, was a member of the Earl of Oxford's household.

4. *The Fugger News-Letters*. 2 Vols. Correspondents from the principal cities of Europe kept their master, J. Fugger, the Augsburg banker, informed of all news of importance. These letters were copied and circulated amongst a group of select friends.
5. John Aubrey recounts in his *Brief Lives*, under the heading 'Sir Walter Raleigh': *He was a second to the Earl of Oxford in a duel. Was acquainted and accepted with all the hero's of our nation in his time.'

CHAPTER 11

EUPHUES AND THE MINION SECRETARY

IN 1584 de Vere became the lessee of the Blackfriars Theatre, and John Lyly, his secretary, when not himself writing plays (culled from his master's garden), helped to produce the plays arranged for the Children of the Chapel Royal, who had been trained in singing by Master Thomas Edwards.

In *English Drama in the Age of Elizabeth*, by W. Creizenach, there occurs the following passage:

He [Lyly] found more effective patronage at the hands of the Earl of Oxford, who himself practised the dramatic art. By him Lyly was entrusted with the management of the troupe known as the 'Oxford Boys', which was under his protection. It is probable that the players who named their company after this nobleman publicly acted the plays written by their patron.

And further:

Side by side with the poets who earned their living by composing dramas we may observe a few members of the higher aristocracy engaged in the task of writing plays for the popular stage. . . . But the number of these high-born authors was very small. . . . Edward, Earl of Oxford, known chiefly as a lyric poet, is mentioned in Puttenham's *Art of English Poesy* [now attributed to Lord Lumley] as having earned, along with Edwards, the choir-master, the highest commendation for comedy and enterludes. Meres also praises him as being one of the best poets for comedy.

John Lyly (whom Gabriel Harvey sourly called 'The Minion Secretary'), when dedicating his *Euphues* to Oxford, says, 'I could not find one more noble at court than your honour,' and undoubtedly intended his hero to be understood as a portrait of de Vere. In Plato, Euphues is 'well-endowed with natural gifts, both physical and intellectual', and Lyly makes Euphues exalt in wit, wisdom, virtue, industry and learning.

Ebulus says to Euphues in the novel:

As thy birth doth shew the express and lively image of gentle blood
whilst Euphues himself says,

I was late in Italy.

In *Endymion*, an allegorical dramatic poem where the personality of the Queen is thinly veiled under the Moon Goddess Diana (see Plate VII), there is no doubt that Oxford is *Endymion* himself, since we have his own poem to corroborate it. After two verses bewailing his unrequited love, in the courtly manner intended to make Elizabeth forget his criticism of her singing, he wrote thus:

What worldly wight can hope for heavenly hire
 When only sighs must make his secret moan;
 A silent suit doth seld to grace aspire,
 My hapless hap doth roll the restless stone.
 Yet Phoebe fair disdained the heavens above
 To joy on earth her poor Endymion's love.

Now Sir Sidney Lee asserts that 'Shakespeare' shows indebtedness to two only of his fellow dramatists—Lyly and Marlowe.

Lyly's light dialogue of witty repartees is in the style of that used in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, though it falls short of both and never touches the heights of the incomparable vein in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

How much of Oxford's work—intentionally bestowed by its author, or surreptitiously filched by his secretary—went into Lyly's Six Comedies must for ever remain doubtful. But the 'songs possessing every lyrical charm' (Sir S. Lee) which were interspersed in the Comedies show a superiority that leaves little doubt that they were from another pen. Even the *Dictionary of National Biography* casts serious doubts on their being of Lyly's composition, and when we find that the Six Comedies were published several times in Lyly's lifetime *anonymously*, and *without* the lyrics, blanks being left to show the omissions, we can but assume that they were not Lyly's to print.

When, however, there was a general reprint of Lyly's work in 1632 (twenty-six years after his death) the lost lyrics (all but nine) reappeared; and Edward Blount the publisher (who, by the way, was also connected with the publishing of the First Folio of 'Shakespeare's works') said in his dedication that he had found the comedies, which had long lain forgotten, adding, 'but Oblivion shall not trample on a son of the Muses, and such a one as they call their Darling'.

Did the author of *Euphues*, or more particularly of the puerile *Pap with a Hatchet* (a reply to the Martin Mar-prelate Controversy), written after his severance with Lord Oxford, merit this praise? Gabriel Harvey, who visited Oxford and Lyly in the Savoy,¹ said later, with his usual ambiguity, 'Young Euphues hatched the eggs

that his elder friends laid.¹² Whatever he meant, we find that it was actually Lyly who was indebted to Shakespeare and not vice versa. The phrases 'Lyly is Shakespeare's only model' and 'Shakespeare imitates Lyly's grouping' can now be reversed, and the 'poverty of invention' noticed by Mr. R. Warwick Bond (1902) when referring to Lyly's *Euphues* is that of the author when working alone, while his 'immense merits and originality' in the plays are only obvious when he is working under the eye and hand of the master-mind. It was not for nothing that Gabriel Harvey dubbed him 'the fiddle-stick of Oxford'.

Were it not for the fact that Lyly's work was published *before* Shakespeare's no one would ever have doubted that he was indebted to Shakespeare for the originality and buoyancy of his dialogue, the invention of his plots and for the charm of his lyrics. This we now know to be a fact.

The lyric in *Endymion* (written 1585),

Pinch him, pinch him, black and blue,
Saucy mortals must not view,
What the Queen of Stars is doing.
Nor pry into our fairy wooing.

reappeared almost word for word in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, where the fairies sing:

Pinch him, fairies, mutually;
Pinch him for his villainy;
Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about,
Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out.

When 'Shakespeare's' work began to appear in 1594, Lyly's plays came to an end with *T/ze Woman in the Moon*, 1591, and it was at this period that Meres gave the first place to the name of de Vere as a writer of comedies.

To conclude with a paragraph from T. J. Looney:

Those who hold that William Shakspeare, who came to London and began to issue plays about the year 1592, studied carefully and modelled his work upon the published dramas of John Lyly, will find some difficulty in explaining how he could have modelled his work upon lyrics which were not published until 1632—or 16 years after his own death.

Lyly had hoped to be appointed Master of the Revels, but in 1603 this post was given to George Buck, who in his revels accounts has left us a tribute (unfortunately now mutilated) to de Vere:

For certainly this earl was magnificent and very learned and religious—worthy in every way—an opulent and friendly patron ... he was in deed as in name . . . Vere nobilis.

Richard Edwards,³ with whom Oxford associated in the running of the Blackfriars Theatre, and who is coupled with Oxford in Meres's list for comedy, wrote the following enchanting, but rather ambiguous, set of verses in an unusual metre:

Adon deftly masking thro'
 Stately tropes rich conceited
 Show'd he well deserved to
 Loves delight on him to gaze
 And had not love herself intreated
 Other nymphs had sent him baies.

Eke in purple robes destain'd
 Amids't the Centre of this Clime
 I have heard saie doth remain
 One whose power ffoweth far
 That should have bene of our rime
 The only object and the Star.

Well could his bewitching pen
 Done the Muses objects to us,
 Although he differs much from men
 Tilting under Frieries,
 Yet his golden art might woo us
 To have honoured him with baies.

[*My italics.*]

Mr. Charles Wisner Barrell of New York⁴ gives an interpretation of these verses which I will summarize.

Read the following with Edward de Vere in mind.

'Adon' refers, of course, to the author of *Venus and Adonis* which reached its seventh edition between 1593 and 1602. (Venus might be interpreted as Elizabeth, since we are told 'the queen woo'd him but he would not fall in'.)

De Vere was masquing at Court under 'Frieries', the Blackfriars Theatre having previously been a friary; through 'richly conceited tropes', or poetic plays. Everyone delighted to gaze on him and had not Love herself (the Queen) entreated his love, other nymphs (ladies of the Court) would have sent him bays. We have seen how various nymphs trailed 'willow garlands' when they heard of his marriage to Anne Cecil. The Queen and Burleigh forced him into a marriage where there was little love, and the Queen not only selfishly circumscribed his activities in military matters, but interfered in his affairs with other women, as witness his being sent to the Tower on account of Anne Vavasour. The poem refers to a man born to the 'purple', but this was now 'distained'; possibly an allusion to the Howard-Arundel fracas; or, as coming from a man of the theatre, it may

have meant his association with the players, which was considered derogatory.

Thus Ben Jonson in the *Poetaster*, 1601, puts these words into the mouth of Arsinius Lupus: 'These players are an idle generation and do much harm to the state, *corrupt young gentry very much*.'⁹

Burleigh's sagacious mind realized this when he referred to them as Oxford's 'lewd friends'.

And of course Oxford realized it himself. Sonnet 111 says:

Thence comes it that my name receives a brand;
And almost thence, my nature is subdu'd
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.

It is not possible that William Shakspeare, the butcher's apprentice, could think that either acting (his chosen livelihood) or play-writing (as ascribed to him) could brand his name or subdue his nature.

To return to Edwards's poem:

It intimates that but for the scandal that had stained 'pure noble blood' de Vere, being in the centre of the clime (or Court), should, with his far-flowing power, have been the only object of their verses—and the Star! With a *double entendre* on the last word, de Vere's device being the five-pointed star.

'Shine forth thou Starre of Poets,' said Ben Jonson in his introduction to Shakespeare's collected works.

Further, the poem said that his bewitching pen had drawn the Muses' wishes for them, and naturally, in every respect, he differed from the generality of men 'tilting' or 'acting' under the Blackfriars' roof, but his 'golden art' would woo us to honour him with bays.

Now try the same with William Shakspeare in mind, and I am afraid you will only draw a blank, as Miss Toulmin-Smith, part editor of the *Shakespeare Allusion Book*, found, concluding that 'one whose power floweth far' has not been identified.

In 1573 the cost of the Revels for the Court was about £1,500, but this gradually dwindled to £300 in less than three years, and it was never augmented during Elizabeth's lifetime. Not that the style of presentation had worsened; on the contrary, the shows grew yearly more lavish. The Office of Works may have taken over the erection of buildings, scenery and mechanical devices, and many of the actors were only part-time men, working elsewhere and only acting in their leisure hours to increase their incomes, but the chief expense undoubtedly fell on the shoulders of the supporting patron.

Lord Oxford, besides his company known as the 'Oxford Boys', maintained a company of choir-boys, who had been specially trained

in singing and acting by Richard Farrant. These are the child actors referred to by the 1st Player in *Hamlet* where he says:

There is, sir, an aery of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for: these are now the fashion.

In passing it may be noted that it is a song by Richard Edwards that Peter sings in *Romeo and Juliet*, commencing:

When gripping grief the heart doth wound
And doleful dumps the mind oppress
Music with her silver sound [etc.],

A new Queen's Company was formed in 1583, taking the best men from various other companies, and they made their first appearance at Court in December of that year.

On January 1st Oxford's men played in what was probably Lyly's *Campaspe*, since Lyly himself was payee. *Agamemnon* and *Ulysses* was played later, Henry Evans, also of the Blackfriars Theatre, being payee. There were introduced into these, performances of 'tumbling', presumably acrobatic turns.

Miss Eggar, in her pamphlet called *Shakespeare in his True Colours*, gives an interesting side-light on the expenses of the Blackfriars Children's performances. She says:

In 1592 a play presented before the Queen at the Archbishop's house at Croydon was one called 'Summer's Last Will' in which a mock trial of the four seasons is held, and the character of Spring is summoned by the name of 'lusty Ver' to come into court and there be indicted for extravagance and squandering his substance 'in tricking children out gay',

How was the Earl able to support such expense? The Manor of Rysing, whatever its rental value, cannot have compensated him for his continual expense in providing Court amusements. Here we come upon one of those astounding facts unearthed by the research of Capt. B. M. Ward.

On June 26th, 1586, the Queen signed a Privy Seal Warrant authorizing the payment of £1,000 a year to 'our well-beloved Cousin the Earl of Oxford'. No reason was given.

Why should the parsimonious Queen suddenly become open-handed and liberal to the extent of making Oxford an annuity of £1,000 (£10,000 today), unless it was to reimburse him for expenditures connected with the Court festivities, production of plays and 'devices'? He held no position at Court, such as Master of the Horse

or Master of the Posts, nor was he a Privy Councillor. Yet the Queen would not have doled out one of her largest pensions to a 'ne'er-do-well' courtier unless she was getting a suitable reward. Even so, the £1,000 a year fell short of the expenses incurred, as will be seen later.

Some have seen in the Earl's large annuity 'secret service' payments for the production of plays to bolster up the Queen's government; the last thing I can imagine de Vere doing. His outspokenness was more likely to bring him into conflict with the 'powers-that-be'. He had no use for sycophants.

Hamlet says sarcastically:

Let the candid tongue lick absurd pomp
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning.

Barely the kind of remark to get him a 'remuneration' of £1,000 a year. But an unceasing care of the amusement which banished the dull cold evenings, made the palace gay with song and laughter, and entertained the royal guests—might that not merit a 'guerdon'? True, there was the Earl of Sussex's company, and there was a Master of the Revels, Edmund Tilney, but these could not *write* the plays which were to be performed.

In the summer of 1585 there was a break in the production of plays by the Earl being suddenly sent overseas to Flanders, where English soldiers were massing on the coast of the Netherlands to support Prince Maurice, who had taken over command since his father, the Prince of Orange, had been murdered. But Oxford had not been out of England two months before the Earl of Leicester managed to get him superseded by his nephew Philip Sidney. Oxford was ordered home.

Thomas Doyley wrote to Leicester the following piece of news—

The Earl of Oxford sent his money, apparel, wine and venison by ship to England. The ship was captured off Dunkirk by the Spaniards on that day, and a letter from Lord Burleigh to Lord Oxford found by them on board. This letter appointed him to the command of the Horse.

Yet in November Sir Philip Sidney, with the rank of General of the Horse, took over the Governorship of Flushing. Obviously as soon as Oxford was out of England jealousy had been at work to undermine his position, and Elizabeth let her favourite have his own way. On the day after de Vere left Holland for England the Queen signed a commission for the Earl of Leicester to become Lieutenant-General of the English forces in the Low Countries,

De Vere's anger at this frustration of his hopes and wishes can be easily imagined, yet we cannot regret that the Queen recalled him. What a wealth of glorious poetry we should have lost had he met his end on a Dutch battlefield, as happened to Sir Philip Sidney eighteen months later.

Oxford had no choice but to return to his literary friends and pursuits. In *A Discourse of English Poetry* by William Webbe (1586) occurs the following paragraph:

I may not omit the deserved commendations of many honourable and noble Lords and Gentlemen in Her Majesty's court, which in the rare devices of poetry have been, and yet are, most skilful: among whom the Right Honourable the Earl of Oxford may challenge to himself the title of the most excellent among the rest.

Such encomiums could not be based on the few poems which have come down to us as by Oxford under his own name. Webbe must have seen manuscript work of the Earl's; or perhaps the explanation lies in a comment in *The Art of English Poetry* (1589):

. . . Very many notable gentlemen of the Court that have written commendably and suppressed it again, or else *suffered it to be published without their own name to //*; as if it were a discredit for a gentleman to seem learned, or to show himself amorous of any good work.

NOTES

1. Lord Oxford rented rooms in the Savoy, possibly as an office for himself and his secretary for the play-writing and devising of masques and interludes.
2. *Marginalia*.
3. To Richard Edwards is ascribed a play called *Damon and Pithias* performed by the boys of the Chapel Royal. Upon this Professor Wallace comments: This fine old tale out of Syracusan history with its tragic and comic elements happily mingled in a rising tide of suspense to the climax, formed the high water mark of Elizabethan drama to date.' I suggest that Edward de Vere, whose *metier* was just this type of drama mingling tragedy and comedy, was the author of this play which was written for his own boy players.
4. Charles Wisner Barrell, Late President of the American branch of the Shakespeare Fellowship, and editor of the *S.F. Quarterly*, a magazine devoted to the Shakespeare Authorship Problem, now unfortunately discontinued.

CHAPTER 12

A WRITER OF 'RIFFE RAFFE' BOOKS

THE year 1588 was a stirring one for England owing to the advent and dispersal of the Spanish Armada, and de Vere had an additional affliction in the death of his wife. Anne died shortly after the birth of her daughter, Susan, thus leaving three girls, who remained under the care of their grandfather, Lord Burleigh.

The Countess was buried with some pomp in Westminster Abbey, and Lord Burleigh had an extraordinary inscription engraved on the side of the tomb. It described the grief of her three daughters, and concluded, in reference to little Susan, 'It is not true to say she was left an orphan seeing that her father is living, and a most affectionate grandfather who acts as her painstaking guardian/ He meant posterity to know that *he* was at the expense and trouble of bringing up his grandchildren—and the poke in the ribs for Lord Oxford as 'still living' despite his mother-in-law's wishes that he were dead, cannot have sweetened de Vere's attitude towards him, yet, taken on the whole, the Earl's letters are humble and ingratiating. Here is one exception, obviously written under some stress and grievance, as the scribbling hand of the lower portion of the letter denotes (see Plate XI).

My Lord, This other day your man Stainer, told me you sent for Amis, my man, and if he were absent that Lyly should come unto you. I sent Amis, for he was in the way. And I think [it] very strange that your Lordship should enter into that course towards me, whereby I must learn that I knew not before, both of your opinion and good will towards me. But I pray, my Lord, leave that course, for I mean not to be your ward nor your child. / *serve her Majesty, and I am that I am*; and by alliance near to your Lordship but free; and scorn to be offered that injury to think I am so weak of government as to be ruled by my servants, or not able to govern myself . . . if that I may make account of your friendship, that you will leave that course as hurtful to us both.

It will be noticed that he uses the phrase 'I serve her Majesty', which presumably referred to his play-producing for the Court. 'I am that I am' shows his knowledge of his own powers and his intention to follow his 'fore-determined course', whether Burleigh approved it or not.

The following poem from Shakespeare's *Passionate Pilgrim* I believe to be de Vere's lament for the death of his wife:

Sweet rose, fair flower, untimely pluck'd soon vaded.
 Pluck'd in the bud and vaded in the spring.
 Bright orient pearl, alak, too timely shaded.
 Fair creature kilFd too soon by death's sharp sting.
 Like a green plum that hangs upon a tree
 And falls through wind before the fall should be.

I weep for thee, and yet no cause I have;
 For why thou left'st me nothing in thy will
 And yet thou left'st me more than I did crave
 For why I craved nothing of thee still.
 O, yes, dear friend, I pardon crave of thee
 Thy discontent thou didst bequeath to me.

The love is not very deep, but it is sincere and gentle. He had craved nothing of her—the marriage had not been of his seeking, but he realized she was young, pretty and innocent, and was a little hurt that in dying she had not remembered him in her will.

In August the Armada descended upon England. De Vere fitted out his ship, the *Edward Bonadventure*, at his own expense. We learn that he went to the Lord Admiral for his 'armour and furniture', and that he was 'most willing to hazard his life in this quarrel'. He saw some heavy fighting between Plymouth and the South Foreland about July 28th, and one verse of a ballad written as a reply to Spain's boasting of their victory, shows his stance on his ship.

De Vere, whose fame and loyalty hath pearst
 The Tuscan clime, and through the Belgike lands
 By winged Fame for valour is rehears't
 Like warlike Mars upon the hatches stands
 His tusked Boar 'gan foam for inward ire
 While Pallas filled his breast with warlike fire.

The poem is signed I. L. which was probably the initials of John Lyly who always signed himself Ihon Lyly. If so, he was possibly present on the *Edward Bonadventure*, and wrote as an eye-witness.

The 'Boar', of course, refers to the Oxford crest which Stowe records seeing as a *blue* boar, embroidered on his henchmen's liveries. It also formed the crest on the helmet and, painted in colour, with open and red mouth, would give the effect of 'foaming' ire.

The crest often supplied a nickname for him who bore it. Thus

we find Hatton, when convalescing on the Continent, writing to the Queen—

God bless you ever; the branch of the sweetest bush I will ever wear, and bear to my life's end: God witness I feign not.

It is a gracious favour most dear and welcome to me: reserve it to the *Sheep* [Elizabeth called him her 'Mutton'¹—a transposition of Hatton] he hath no tooth to bite, where the *Boar's* tusk may both raze and tear.

Hatton was jealous and afraid of de Vere's favour and influence with the Queen, and endeavoured to do him harm whenever the occasion offered. Probably his animosity towards Oxford was engendered by his including Hatton's amatory verses to 'Eleanor' in the *Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* and thus endangering his advancement.

John Clapham described Hatton as 'very passionate and being provoked a violent and implacable enemy'.

With the boar's head crest of de Vere's in mind let us look once more at Ben Jonson's *Every Man out of His Humour* at the point from Act III where I quoted Sogliardo's visit to the Herald's Office and his acquisition of a coat of arms, which was probably Jonson's fun at the expense of the newly acquired gentility of Shakspeare.

Puntarvolo [said: it was] A very faire coat, well charg'd and full of armourie.

Sogliardo [then asks]: How like you the *Crest*, sir?

Punt. I understand it not well—What is it?

Sog. Marry, sir—it is your Boar without a head, that's very rare.

Carlo. I. And rampant, too: truth, I commend the herald's wit, he hath deciphered him well. A swine without a head, without a brain, wit, anything indeed. Ramping to Gentility! You can blazon the rest Sig-nior, can you not?

Sog. O. I. I have it in writing, hereof purpose; it cost me 2 shillings the tricking.

Carlo. Lets hear—Lets hear.

Punto. It is the most vile foolish absurd, palpable and ridiculous escutcheon that ever eyes survised.

Sog. Gyrony of eight pieces. Azure and Gules between three plates a chev'ron engrailed cheeky or vert and Ermines on a chiefs argent between two Ann'lets Sables a Boar's head Proper.

Carlo. Hows that—on a chief argent?

Sog. On a chief argent a Boar's head Proper between two Ann'lets sables.

Carlo. Slud, its a Hog's Cheeke and puddings in a Pewter field.

Has he not 'deciphered him well' indeed? Shakspeare, the actor, 'mouthing words set down for him', whose name was appearing as the author of works he could not possibly have written (when the

boar's head was absent), being, 'without brain, wit or anything'—and ramping to gentility!

Jonson was not called 'honest Ben' for nothing.

C. W. Scott-Giles, in his *Shakespeare's Heraldry*, makes a suggestion for the arms of Falstaff to be used upon the stage, saying that '... the indications point clearly to the *Boards Head* as Falstaff's proper emblem. Let his arms be Quarterly azure and gold, in the second quarter—a *boar's head azure*.' Of course he is quite right, despite his airy dismissal of the true owner of the '*boar's head azure*' as the inventor of his comic counterpart.

With the Armada dispersed and Spain's power crushed there was a thanksgiving service throughout England, and Lord Oxford as Lord Great Chamberlain, with the Earl of Shrewsbury, bore the canopy over the Queen when she was 'brought through the long West Aisle to her travers in the quire, the clergy singing the litany'.

There is a ballad of the time which describes the Queen's Royal Procession from Somerset Place to Paul's Church, giving to each noble his place. Amongst these we find:

The noble earl of Oxford then High Chamberlain of England
 Rode right before her Majesty his bonnet in his hand,
 And after by two noblemen along the Church was led
 With a golden canopy carried o'er her head.

.

The Earl of Oxford opening the windows for her grace.
 The Children of the Hospital she saw before her face.

It is established from the order and arrangements of the procession which are still in existence that the Lord Great Chamberlain (Oxford) and the Earl Marshal (Shrewsbury) were the two noblemen who carried the Golden Canopy on this magnificent and thrilling occasion.

A few years later, when life had saddened somewhat, the author of the Sonnets recalled this event, with a backward glance remembering great events and comparing them with his love:

Were't aught to me I bore the canopy
 With my extern the outward honouring.²

Very silly, meaningless words if written by the Stratford maltster and actor, but full of poignant reminiscence if written by de Vere.

It was in the year following the defeat of the Spanish Armada that there was published *The Arte of English Poesie*, probably written by Lord Lumley, cousin and friend of Oxford.

It contains, beside a paragraph already quoted, the following:

But in these days (although some learned Princes may take delight in Poets) yet universally it is not so. For as well Poets as Poesie are despised and the name become of honourable infamous, subject to scorn and derision and rather a reproach than a praise to any that useth it.

And further:

And in Her Majesty's time that now is are sprung up another crew of Courtly Makers [poets], Noblemen and Gentlemen of Her Majesty's own servants, who have written excellent 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 Edward, Earl of Oxford.

Is comment needed? Here we have a nobleman with every attribute for producing the greatest plays in the English language, but his 'doing' cannot be 'found out' and 'made public' because the name of poet is 'despised', become 'infamous', 'subject to scorn and derision', especially to one who aspired to military glory. And this, though poetry stood in better estimation than plays.

Sir Thomas Bodley, when he formed his famous library at Oxford, employed a certain Mr. James as librarian. In 1600, only a few years later than the date we are discussing, he wrote to him from London:³

Sir, I would you had forebore to catalogue our London books till I had bin privie to your purpose. There are many idle bookes, and riffe raffes among them which shall never come unto the Librarie and I fear that the litle which you have done already will raise scandal upon it, when it shall be given out, by such as would disgrace it, that I have made up a number with Almanackes, plaies and proclamacions; Of which I will have none, but such as are singular.

And further at a little later date:

I can see no good reason to alter my opinion for excluding such bookes as almanackes, plaies and an infinit number that are daily printed of very unworthy makers. [Note this word makers— 'courtly makers' as used by Lord Lumley.] Happily some plaies may be worthy of keeping, but hardly one in fortie. . . . Were it so again, that some little profit might be reaped (which God knows is very little) out of some of our play bookes, the benefit thereof will nothing nere countervail the hour that the scandal will bring unto the Librarie when it shall be givern out that we stuffe it full of baggage bookes.

And this when the bulk of 'Shakespeare's' best work was already on the market.

Could a nobleman, cousin to the Queen, advertise himself as the author of this 'riffle raffie' stuff—however good he knew it to be? As a patron of the highest order of serious literature—could he publicly claim these 'baggage bookes' as his?

What did he do? What thousands have done before and since—he published them under a false name.

What does the contemporary Robert Green say in his *Farewell to Folly!*

Others, if they come to write or publish anything in print, which, for their calling and gravity being loathe to have any profane pamphlets pass under their own names, get *some other to set his name* to the verses. Thus is the *ass made proud* by this underhand brokerage, and he that *cannot write true English without the aid of clerks of the parish churches* must needs make himself *father of interludes*.

One cannot but believe that Green—another of Oxford's Euphuists—had William Shakspeare in mind when he wrote these lines.

And listen to Nashe on the same theme:

Sundry sweet gentlemen have vaunted their pens in private devices and tricked up a company of *taffeta fools with their feathers*.

'Taffeta fools' were probably actors. Green (1592) calls them 'these painted monsters', and Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621, says,

In tricking themselves men go beyond women, men wear harlot's colours and do not walk but jet and daunce; *more like players*, Butterflies, Babones Apes, anticks than men. [*My italics throughout.*]

NOTES

1. Queen Elizabeth liked 'nick-names'. She called the French Ambassador, M. Simier, her 'Monkey', from 'simian', the monkey tribe. Similarly she called de Vere her Turk', which Mr. Ringland Robinson believed originated in the Gaelic *tore*, a wild boar. Admiral Holland consulted the *Encyclopædia Britannica* on Celtic literature and found a story dealing with Kilhwch Olwen, who has to perform the task of fetching the comb and scissors from between the ears of *Twrch Trwyth*, the King Boar. Admiral Holland pointed out that Trwyth is pronounced like truth, thus—*Trwyth the Boar*.
2. Sonnet 125.
3. Quoted by Fred. S. Boas in *Queen Elizabeth in Drama*.

CHAPTER 13

THE LITERARY EPOCH

THE last decade of the sixteenth century saw the retirement of the Earl of Oxford, and the corresponding high peak of Shakespearean output. Personal references to him became less frequent as more plays appeared with the pseudonym 'William Shake-speare'. Before dealing with his literary activities in the seclusion of a new abode, it is necessary to mention the turn of affairs that led up to this retirement.

Endeavouring to set his financial troubles at rest, de Vere, being the 'unthrift' that he was, tried to get his annuity of £1,000 commuted to £5,000 down, so that he might buy a small estate and retire.

This foolish suggestion he put to Lord Burleigh with the request that his father-in-law should approach the Queen on the subject, saying that the Queen would make 'no evil bargain'. But the careful old statesman, seeing that de Vere would suffer loss by the transaction, did nothing, or made it plain to the Queen that he disapproved. In any case, nothing came of the suggestion.

The fact is that at this date Oxford was thinking of re-marrying, and naturally wished to have a suitable home and income to offer his new wife, in addition to providing for his daughters. He wrote to his father-in-law,

I would be glad to have an equal care with your Lordship over my children, and if I may obtain this reasonable suit of her Majesty [the conversion of his annuity to a lump sum of £5,000] granting me nothing but what she has done to others, and nothing but what I shall pay for. . . .

So shall my children be provided for, myself at length settled in quiet, and I hope your Lordship contented, remaining no cause for you to think me an evil father, nor any doubt in me but that I may enjoy that friendship from your Lordship that so near a match and not fruitless may lawfully expect.

For to tell the truth, I am weary of an unsettled life—which is the very pestilence that happens unto courtiers, that propound unto themselves no end of their time therein.

This plea failing, de Vere alienated his ancestral home, Castle Hedingham, to his three daughters and Lord Burleigh. As far as we know, he had not lived there since the death of his four-day-old son.

The castle was in disrepair, particularly some of the outhouses, and he gave a warrant authorizing the demolition of the worst parts. His detractors accounted this to be spite towards Lord Burleigh, but for them he could do no right. For the rest, he was the darling of the Muses.

It was in this year, 1591, that Edmund Spenser, in his book of poems called *The Tears of the Muses*, introduced verses alluding to various eminent personages under assumed names.

In view of de Vere's retirement and concealment of his literary achievements it is more than probable that the following verse refers to him:

But that same gentle spirit from whose pen
Large streams of honey and sweet nectar flow,
Scorning the boldness of such base-born men
Which dare their follies forth so rashly show;
Doth rather choose to sit in idle cell,
Than so himself to mockery to sell.

This could not refer to Shakspeare, who in 1591 was only just getting a standing as an actor; Sidney was dead, and no one else had left the poetical field to 'sit in idle cell'.

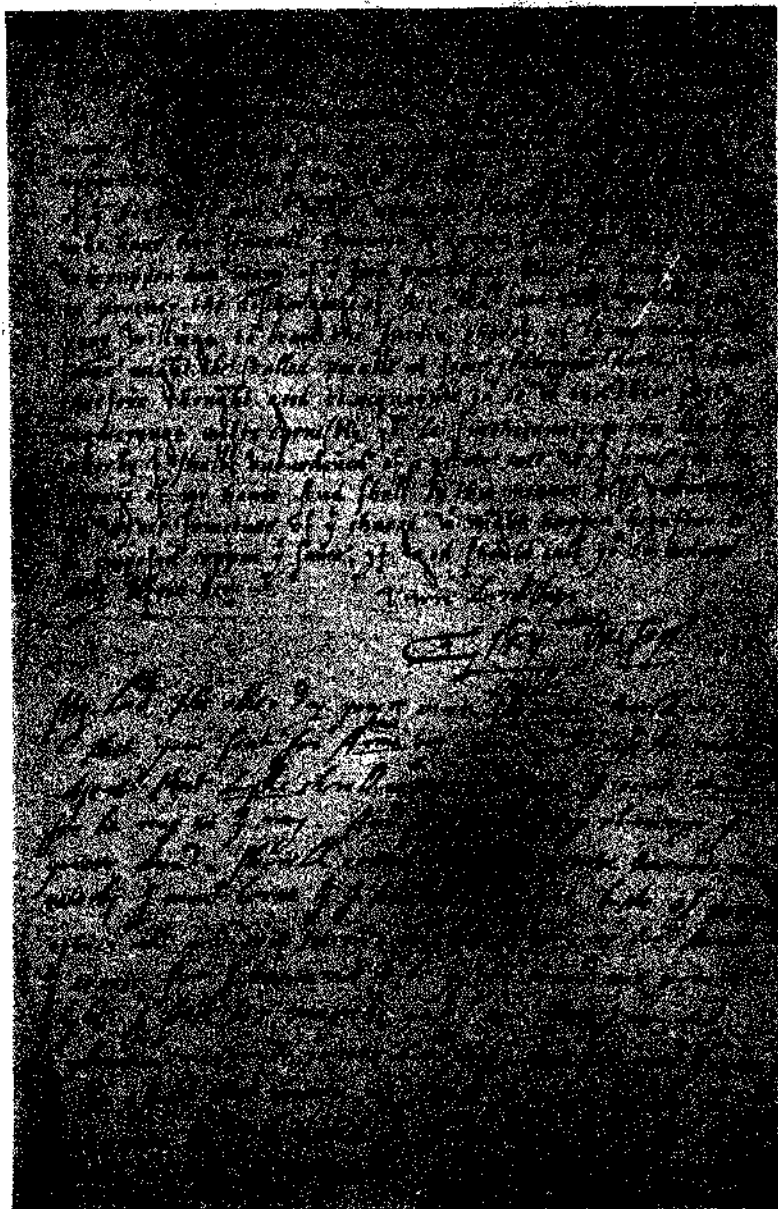
Here we are reminded of de Vere's own poem where he says:

I never am *less* idle, lo, than when I am alone.

That Spenser referred to Oxford is practically certain. In the previous year he had published the first books of the *Faerie Queene* and, in the dedicatory verses, had included one to Oxford:

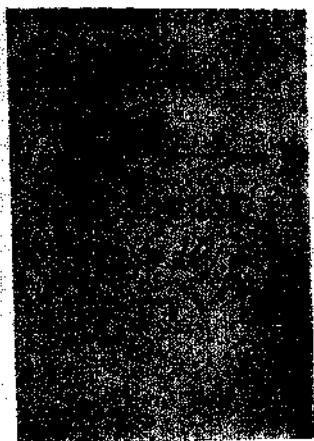
To the Right Honourable the Earl of Oxenford, Lord High Chamberlayne of England, etc:—

Receve, most noble lord, in gentle gree,
The unripe fruit of an unready wit;
Which by thy countenance doth crave to bee
Defended from foule Envy's poisonous bit.
Which so to doe may thee right well befit.
Sith th' antique glory of thine ancestry
Under a shady vele is therein writ,
And else thine own long living memory,
Succeeding them in true nobility;
And also for the love which thou dost beare
To th' Heliconian ymps, and they to thee;
They unto thee, and thee to them, most deare:
Dear as thou art unto thy self, so love
That loves and honours thee, as doth behove.

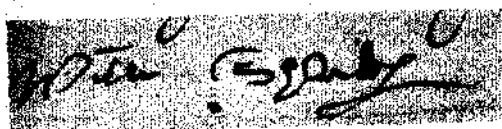


OXFORD'S LETTER TO LORD BURLEIGH
 Showing clear hand and scribbling hand below
 (British Museum)

PLATE XII



THE "BLACKFRIARS" SIGNATURE



THE "WALLACE" SIGNATURE



SHAKESPEARE'S THIRD WILL SIGNATURE
"By me William" in a clerk's hand

(Watson, it will be remembered, had written: 'enter the learned bookshelves of Vere, where the Muses have the place of honour'.)

The *Faerie Queene*, whilst exalting the virtues and condemning the vices under various allegorical guises, also prefigures some of the notabilities of the day under fancy names: Gloriana, Belpheobe and Britomart are all representations of the Queen as different aspects of the stories require: the Red Cross Knight is the Earl of Leicester, however little he may seem to us to merit the role; Sir Artegall is Sir Arthur Grey de Wilton, Spenser's particular patron; is it possible to find the counterpart of de Vere which the author says he has written under a 'shady veil'?

Oxford, because of his recent retirement, 'sitting in idle cell', is not so obvious: he is probably shown as a doughty knight in the three books now printed. But in Book VI, Canto V, he is quite plainly seen as he now appeared to Spenser. The story has to be understood:

The fair Serena has been attacked by the Blatant Beast (envy and malice) and her two protectors, one of whom is bitten by the beast's 'rusty iron teeth' in rescuing her, bring her across the plain to a Hermitage which they find in a fair grove decked with ivy. They enter and find the Hermit who is described thus:

... he toward them did pace
With stayed steps and grave *beseeming grace*;
For well it seemed that whilom he had beene
Some *goodly person*, and of *gentle race*.
That could his good to all, and well did weene
How each to entertane with curt'sie well becene.

And smoothly it was sayed by common fame,
So long as age enabled him thereto,
That he had been a man of mickle name
Renowned much in *arms of derring doe*;
But being aged now, and weary to
Of warres delight and world's contentious toyle,
The name of knighthood he did disavow
And hanging up his armes and warlike spoyle,
From all this world's encombraunce did himself assoyle [set free].

We have seen de Vere saying 'For to tell the truth, I am weary of an insettled life.'

The Hermit is called upon to cure the wounds inflicted by the 'rusty iron teeth' of envy—

No wound, which warlike hand of enemy
Inflicts with dint of sword, so sore doth light

As doeth the poysonous sting, *which infamy*
Infixeth in the name of noble wight;
 For by no art, nor any leech's might
 It ever can recured be againe;
 Nor all the skill, which that memorial spright
 Of Podalyrius did in it retain,
 Can remedy such hurts: *such hurts are hellish paine.*

[This last line echoes de Vere's own phrase.]

For he right well in leeches craft was seene;
 And through the long experience of his dayes,
 Which had in many fortunes tossed beene
 And past through many perillous assayes,
He knew the diverse went of mortal wayes.
And in the mindes of men had great insight;
 Which with sage counsell when they went astray,
 He could enforme, and thus reduce aright,
 And all the poisons heale that wound the weaker spright.
 For whylome he had been a doughty knight.
 As any one that lived in his days
And proved oft in many perillous fight.
Of which he grace and glory wonne alwaies.
And in all battels bore away the bales:
 But being now attacked with timely age,
 And weary of this world's unquiet wayes,
 He took him selfe unto this Hermitage,
 In which he lived alone, like careless bird in cage.

[Italics throughout are mine.]

De Vere himself had said he wished to 'be settled in quiet', but Spenser is remembering the days when in the gay and brave tournament the Earl 'bore away the baies' in the form of a diamond tablet.

It may be contested that Oxford was not so old as the hermit is figured, but it must not be forgotten that this is first and foremost a story to amuse the casual reader; the allegory is only for the initiated. De Vere was, in fact, a little over forty when Spenser was finishing his *Faerie Queene*; the last three books being published in 1594.

What does the writer of the Sonnets say?

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,
 And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
 Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,
 Will be a tatter'd weed of small worth held.¹

The Sonnets were written from the year 1590 onwards; in 1591 Shakspeare of Stratford was twenty-seven. Could he, even by a stretch

of a poet's licence, say—'as I am now, with time's injurious hand crush'd and o'er worn'?

The Earl of Oxford's second wife was one of the Queen's Maids of Honour, Mistress Elizabeth Trentham, who was reported as 'fair', and had certain monies of her own with which she eventually bought a large house in Hackney—Hunsdon House—better known as King's Place.

This was no runaway match or hidden marriage, as Leicester's had been when he wedded Lettice Knollys, also a Maid of Honour, and for which offence he was banished from the Court for many years. This match the Queen sanctioned and continued her lavish annuity to the bridegroom.

Of Elizabeth Trentham's personality we have no clue, for there are few contemporary records of her, and so far only one of her letters has been brought to light. We know, however, that she bought the beautiful King's Place, with its exquisitely proportioned reception room, its moulded ceiling bearing the swan insignia of its former owners, the Hunsdons, and its quiet garden where the old stone bench still² dreams in the sunshine. Here she made a home where Lord Edward 'settled in quiet' to continue his literary and dramatic writing within a very short distance of the Rose and Curtain Theatres.

Their first residence, however, was in the parish of Stoke Newington, and it was here, in 1593, that a son was born to them and christened Henry with the title of Viscount Bulbeck. The name Henry was a new one in the de Vere genealogy, and was probably chosen as a compliment to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, who, like de Vere, had been a Queen's ward under Burleigh's governance, and between whom and Oxford's eldest daughter Elizabeth, Oxford had proposed an alliance. Southampton may have been godfather to de Vere's son (see Plate XIII).

Burleigh favoured the match; so did the Countess of Southampton, Henry's mother, and Oxford pushed it for all he was worth. Indeed, it proved to be worth £5,000 to Lord Burleigh when the young man broke it off, as we read in the letter of a Jesuit priest, Henry Garnet. 'The young Earl of Southampton refusing the Lady Vere payeth £5,000 ready money.' (Foley's *English Jesuits*, IV. p. 49.)

As in the case of Oxford himself, Southampton was a royal ward and had to marry where his guardian Burleigh chose; failing to do so he was fined to the extent quoted above.

Thus we see in *The Concise Universal Biography*, under a picture showing Burleigh presiding in 'the Court of Wards' (Plate III), the

caption: The Mastership of which was one of the most important and remunerative posts, as it gave him much influence over the nobility and gentry.' [My italics.]

The first seventeen of Shakespeare's Sonnets are addressed by an elder man to one in his youth and beauty, begging him to marry, to beget children and so perpetuate his loveliness whilst there is yet time.

This recipient has always been thought, with every reason, to be the Earl of Southampton, to whom Shakespeare's two long poems were dedicated. At this date he was eighteen years of age; had large blue eyes, light hair falling on to his shoulders and tied with a love-knot; he was the feminine type of beauty that fully agrees with the poetic description (see Plate VIII).

Elizabeth de Vere was evidently a young lady who knew her own mind; she had nothing in common with the rather shallow, fantastic Earl of Southampton, and when her grandfather proposed the Earl of Northumberland she turned him down also.

Mary Harding wrote to the Countess of Rutland to tell her the latest gossip. 'Lord Burghley has tried to marry Elizabeth Vere to Lord Northumberland . . . she cannot fancy him.'

It is probable that Elizabeth was already in love with the man she married three years later, William Stanley, Earl of Derby, the richest nobleman in England. The wedding took place at Greenwich Palace, in the presence of the Queen and Court, 'with great solemnity and triumph', and for the festivities there was played *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

On August 7th Lord Oxford, staying with his daughter and son-in-law at Cannon Row, says: 'On my coming to Byfleet from Cannon Row the Earl of Derby was very earnest that he might assure £1,000 a year for my daughter, and marvelled that Sir Robert Cecil, her uncle, and I her father, were so slack to call upon it; so I desire something may be done herein.' This shows the ungrasping nature of de Vere, for he knew how rich the Derbys were.

The Earl of Derby, of whose career I will give a short resume in a later chapter, was also the author of plays, the patron of actors and supported a company of players since his brother's company had passed to the patronage of Lord Hunsdon, the Lord Chamberlain, when they were known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

George Fenner, a Catholic spy, whose letters were intercepted by Elizabeth's counter-espionage system, enumerated those of the nobility who were, in his estimation, still faithful and active in the Catholic cause and might be relied upon to help in a plot against Elizabeth. Of the Derbys, who were a Catholic family, he says:

'Therle of Derby is busyed only in penning comedies for the common players.'

No known example of the young Earl's dramatic work exists today, but it is obvious that this hobby of his would make a common bond of friendship between him and his literary father-in-law. In fact, we hear that in September 1596 Lord Oxford was staying with the Derbys; later, that Lady Oxford was being entertained by them at Isleworth, on which occasion William Stanley accompanied her back to her home at Hackney; and further, that in November 1599, after a few months at Cannon Row, William and Elizabeth were again staying with the Oxfords at King's Place.

Derby, from political exigency, and Oxford, from purely personal motives, were both 'lying low', but their time must have been fully occupied by their literary pursuits. They had also music as a common interest. In this last mentioned year, 1599, John Farmer dedicated his *First Set of English Madrigals* to Lord Oxford, saying: 'without flattery be it spoke, those that know your lordship know this, that using the science [music] as a recreation your lordship have overgone most of them that make it a profession'.

The Earl is known to have composed music for a 'galliard' and a 'march', and Derby a 'pavan'. If we imagine their cultured wives playing the virginals, and even portraying some of the characters for home entertainment, we should not be drawing the long bow. We know that in the early days of King James, Susan Vere acted in the masques which the Queen, Anne of Denmark, made popular.

Derby's players gave four performances at Court and are recorded as being on tour at various times until 1618.

The plays Lord Derby was 'penning' in 1599 were probably acted by his own men, but unfortunately we have no record of this, nor of the titles of the plays. Undoubtedly, he followed the lead of his father-in-law and assumed a nom-de-plume.

In 1600-1 Oxford's players presented two plays, *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall* (which sounds like a comedy) and *The History of George Scanderbeg*, the latter having been entered in the Stationer's Register and published anonymously.

In 1602 the companies of the Earls of Oxford and Worcester amalgamated and were officially granted their playing place at the 'Boar's Head' which 'is the place they especially have used and do best like of (under the aegis of the Master's crest!).

Later we hear of this united company playing at the Rose Theatre on Bankside when William Kempe was the leading man. And the Earl of Southampton is recorded as seeing plays every day, and making a collection of play-books.

All this activity adds up to a strong preoccupation in the theatre amongst those closely connected with Oxford—a preoccupation which lasted unabated until his death.

The Earl still had two unmarried daughters for whom suitable matches were sought by their grandfather. For Lady Bridget, now thirteen, William Herbert, the eldest son of the Earl and Countess of Pembroke, was suggested, but, as in the case of her sister and Southampton, this first assay at matrimony fell through. Oxford, as well as Lord and Lady Pembroke, and the girl's uncle Sir Robert Cecil, all gave it eager support, but probably the rather profligate young Herbert knew of 'metal more attractive' than the undeveloped thirteen-year-old schoolgirl, and was already dangling after Elizabeth Vernon.

It is to be noted in passing that Oxford, when writing to his brother-in-law, Robert Cecil, to assure him of his concurrence in the suggested match, adds,

I am sorry that I have not an able body which might have served to attend on her majesty in the place where she is, being especially there, whither, without any other occasion than to see your lordship I would always willingly go.

The exact nature of the Earl's disability is never given. He does not inform his correspondent because Cecil knew, but it may be surmised that the wound he received in the duel with Thomas Knyvett when, as Burleigh said, he was hurt 'to the danger of his life' had caused an injury from which he never entirely recovered—perhaps a severed tendon. And thus fall into place the Sonnet lines:

And strength by limping away disabled.

Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt.

The coward conquest of a wretch's knife.

This is not poetical imagery, it is 'cruel hard fact'—cruelly hard indeed to one who, as Spenser said, .

Had been a doughty knight
As any one that lived in his dayes.
And proved oft in many perilous fight
Of which he grace and glory wone alwayes
And in all battels bore away the bayes.

Eventually it was the third daughter who married into the Pembroke family, taking the second son, Philip, but this was not until 1605, after the death of her father.

In another letter from Lord Oxford we find a similar allusion to his inability to do as much as he would like:

By reasons of mine infirmity I cannot come among you as often as I wish, and by reason of my house is not so near that at every occasion I can be present as were fit, either I do not hear at all from you or at least write the latest; as this other day happened to me, receiving a letter at nine of the clock not to fail at eight of the same to be at Whitehall; which being impossible yet I hastened so much as I came to follow you into Ludgate, though through the press of people and horses I could not reach your company as I desired, but followed as I might.

By law he was allowed to nominate a deputy to perform his duty in the House of Lords and on two occasions he availed himself of this permit. Perhaps it was a good excuse to avoid the hustle and clamour of the city, and remain quietly at Hackney with his wife and son, devising new plays, revising old.

In 1600 de Vere again tried to augment his small revenue by applying for the appointment of Governor of the Isle of Jersey. His hopes were slight as he says in the preface of his plea to Sir Robert Cecil:

Although my bad success in former suits to Her Majesty have given me cause to bury my hopes in the deep abyss and bottom of despair, rather than now to attempt after so many trials made in vain and so many opportunities escaped, the effects of fair words or fruits of golden promises; yet for that I cannot believe but that there hath been always a true correspondence of word and intention in Her Majesty.

He says he has heard that the Queen already has suitors for the post, but that she *must* give it to someone, and how could she better discharge the debt of so many unfulfilled promises to him, than to bestow this Governorship upon him, and concludes with the half humorous, half bitter, reflection, that if she does not grant him this request at a time so fitting, when will she do so? 'Unless in the graves of men there were a time to receive benefits and good turns from Princes.'

Probably the Queen esteemed it necessary to appoint a man bodily fit; anyway, Sir Walter Raleigh got the appointment, and when in the following year Lord Oxford applied for the Presidency of Wales he was again quietly put aside in favour of Lord Zouche, and this although de Vere had reminded her through her Minister 'of my youth, time and fortune spent in her Court, and her favours and promises which drew me on without mistrust the more to presume in my own expenses'.

On what did he spend these immense sums of money, relying on

her promises of reimbursement, if not in providing her Court with lavish entertainment? Now he must have realized more keenly than ever the truth of his early verse line

Patience, perforce, is such a pinching pain.

In a second letter to his brother-in-law he writes with a phrase of Shakespearian ring: 'I will say no more, for words in faithful minds are tedious', echoing—'words, words, words' and 'these tedious old fools' of *Hamlet*.

In the Essex³ rising of 1601, of which John Clapham wrote, 'that dangerous attempt of the Earl of Essex, which, like a tragedy acted upon a stage, begun and ended in a manner both in one day', Lord Oxford took no part. He was, however, called upon to sit at the trial of the Earl of Essex, who was, by his twenty-five noble judges, proclaimed a traitor. Both Essex and Southampton were condemned, the former being executed, the latter confined to prison and his lands confiscated.

An anecdote comes down to us regarding the attitude of Oxford, Raleigh and the Queen on the day of Essex's death.

During the evening at Court the Queen was playing the virginals when news was brought that the sentence upon the Earl of Essex had been carried out. She continued playing without a break—causing Oxford to comment to Raleigh: 'When Jacks start-up, heads go down.' (Jacks were the name given to the separate notes on the instrument.)

This is generally believed to be Oxford's gibe at Raleigh for his part in bringing about the downfall of Essex, and referring to Raleigh as 'an upstart Jack*', but it may have been a comment on the Queen's equanimity on hearing of her late favourite's death. If she could be thus cool and collected when she heard of his execution, what hope was there for Southampton or other of their friends? Raleigh had been instrumental in getting Oxford reinstated at Court when he was out of favour; according to Aubrey, had been his second in a duel, and there was no known enmity between them.

Referring to the term 'Jacks', Shakespeare uses it thus in one of the few Sonnets addressed to a woman:

How oft, when thou, my music, music playst,
Upon that blessed wood whose rrtotion sounds
With thy sweet fingers, when thou gently sway'st
The very concord that mine ear confounds,
Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest reap,
At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand!

To be so tickled, they would change their state
 And situation with those dancing chips,
 O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,
 Making dead wood more blest than living lips.
 Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
 Give them thy fingers, me thy lips, to kiss.

I like to think that these lines were written to Elizabeth Trentham before their marriage—for they are undoubtedly of about that date—but I have no other reason for believing so. Suggestion that the Sonnet was written to Queen Elizabeth, in view of de Vere's scathing quip, is hardly likely.

Possibly the Queen did not hear his cutting 'aside' to Raleigh, for she was particularly gracious to him on this occasion of his attending her Court at Greenwich, and granted him the escheat of the lands of Sir Charles Danvers,⁴ who, as a supporter of Essex, had suffered the fate of his leader.

Unfortunately the settlement of the grant was so long before the judges that Oxford did not live to benefit by it.

It was the last chance the Queen had to redeem her many promises to the Earl for she died in March (1603). Her death came as a shock to de Vere; 'in this common shipwreck mine is above all the rest', he said, for despite her dilatoriness in providing a competent place or grant for him other than his annuity, he was undoubtedly attached to her, and more particularly to the regime, and he dreaded a break-up of the Court circle which he had known since a boy. He may have feared, too, that in this 'shipwreck' his annuity also would be sunk.

John Clapham, writing shortly after the death of the Queen, when he was one of the six clerks of Chantry, said, in his attack upon lawyers:

[They] have brought the matter to that pass that now the remedies of wrongs are no less offensive than the wrongs themselves, so much more safe is it for a man to sit down with certain loss of a part of his estate, being questionable by law, than with disquiet mind, waste of time, expense of money, long and unfruitful attendance, to make *shipwreck* of the whole.'

[A sixteenth-century illustration of *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce*.]

Surely Clapham had de Vere in his mind when he wrote thus, and we need not be surprised at the similarity in the terms used by both men, since Clapham was for seven years a clerk in Burleigh's service, living at Cecil House. They must have known each other intimately, and when Clapham referred to the Earl as 'a man more noble than fortunate' he knew what he was talking about.

That Oxford feared the advent of a new dynasty is patent from the fact that he made a tentative attempt to circumvent it.⁵

Apparently the Earl of Lincoln reported to Sir John Peyton, Lieutenant of the Tower, that he had been invited 'by a great Nobleman of Hackney' ('I might know hym there being onely but of that qualytye dwelling there') and that this 'nobleman had opened himself upon that poynt' (the succession). 'He was extraordinarily feasted, at which he much marvayled for that there was no great correspondence between them, this Noble man having Precedence of hym of Rancke' and 'after dinner retyred aparte from all companye, [he] began to discourse with hym, declaring that as Peers, they were bound to concern themselves with the succession to the Crown.' This nobleman then advised him to send for his nephew Lord Hastings, convey him to France, where he should find friends to make him a party, 'of which there was a precedent of former tymes. He also invayded much agaynst the Natyon of the Scotts.'

The Earl of Lincoln showed the nobleman he would not countenance such an idea and broke off his discourse.

The Lieutenant of the Tower pointed out to Lord Lincoln his folly in not letting the Earl of Oxford declare further of his intentions—but when Lincoln explained which nobleman he meant 'Sir John was relieved, for he knewe hym to be so weake of body, in friends, in abilytie, and all other means to rayse any combustyon in the State, as I never feared any danger to proseyed from so feeble a foundation.'

Harry, Lord Hastings, later Earl of Huntingdon, was the lineal heir of George Plantagenet, Duke of Clarence, and the grand-nephew by marriage of the Earl of Lincoln. De Vere's father, it will be remembered, had contracted for a marriage between his son, Edward, and Elizabeth or Mary, the sisters of the Earl of Huntingdon. Such a match would have brought Edward nearer the throne, but it was circumvented by the elder de Vere's death, and later by the Queen and Burleigh's wish that he should marry Anne Cecil.⁶

De Vere now showed his mind to Lord Lincoln that the young Henry Hastings should be raised to the throne in place of the son of Mary Queen of Scots, whose advent he feared. Actually, from a purely personal point of view, Oxford need not have worried. King James on his accession renewed the grant of £1,000 a year, gave him the custody of the Forest of Essex that had formerly been held by his grandfather, endorsed his rights to the Lord Great Chamberlainship, and made him a Privy Councillor.

'It is not for the King of England to revenge injuries done to the King of Scotland,' James had wittily said when Border Lieutenants had been presented to him.

Now look at Sonnet 107—one of the most enigmatical and ambiguous, if no key be held to reveal its meaning:

Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom.

When tyrant's crests and tombs of brass are spent.

Our Veres, since the first hour of Caesar to this present day of King James, never let their feet slip from the path of nobility, never knew a true eclipse of glory, never found declination from Virtue, never forsook this country being wounded, or their lawful King distressed.

Love's Labour's Lost was played at the house of the Earl of Southampton in 1604 and we find one William Cope writing:

Sir,

I have sent them all the morning hunting for players, juglers, and such kind of creatures, but fynde them hard to fynde, wherefore leaving notes for them to seek me out, Burbage is come and sayes there's no new playe that the Queen [Anne, the Danish wife of James] has not scene but they have Revyved an old one, cawled Loves Labor Lost, which for wytt and murthe he sayes will please her exceedingly. And this is appointed to be played to morrowe night at my Lord of Southampton's.

This play was not produced again on the stage until 1839. The reason is not hard to find. It contained too many Court quips and allusions and was undoubtedly 'caviare to the general', but Southampton and his friends would have loved it.

A writer of the early years of this century said it would be a brave producer who would put it on the stage nowadays, but the 1951 production at the New Theatre proves this to be a fallacy, and that *Love's Labour's Lost* still acts delightfully. Michael Redgrave was a magnificent Berowne, giving added lustre to the witticisms and portraying the young author in his gayest humour—even to looking like him. With the key to its history—the history of its writer—this production of *Love's Labour's Lost* was an 'historic' event.

This was possibly the last acted piece of the author's lifetime. In 1604 a revised and final edition of *Hamlet* was put on the market, and on June 24th de Vere died. Twelve days later he was buried in the Church of St. Augustine, Hackney.

As he, a nobleman, left no will, we may be sure his death was sudden and unlocked for, the 'infirmity' of lameness or kindred trouble under which he suffered for years being unlikely to cause death. Furthermore, we find in the Hackney parish registers against the entry recording his burial the words, in pencil, 'ye plague'; we may be sure that the virulent pestilence that again swept London in 1604 was the cause of his sudden death at the age of fifty-four. At intervals there had been repeated orders for the theatres to close, as the crowding together of many people tended to spread the contagion. De Vere undoubtedly mixed with the actors and audience at the theatres, the 'Curtain' being only a short distance from King's Place.

Alas, 'tis true I have gone here and there,
And made myself a motley to the view.

Sonnet 110

Though no tomb was erected we know that Lord Oxford was

interred at Hackney from the express wording of the Countess's will, left when she died in 1612, in which she desired

to be buried in the Church of Hackney, within the County of Middlesex, as near unto the body of my late dear and noble Lord and husband as may be; only I will that there by in the said Church erected for us a tomb fitting our degree.

Bridget de Vere, who had been suggested as a wife for William Herbert, had later married Francis, Lord Norris, and six days before his death Lord Oxford gave over to this son-in-law the custody of the Forest of Essex.

As I have said, de Vere left no will: his son Henry automatically succeeded to his title as 18th Earl of Oxford, whilst his brother-in-law, Francis Trentham, paid £10,000 in 1606 to clear the encumbrances on Hedingham Castle and estate, so that they might be enjoyed by his young nephew.

'A *Table of the honourable progeny of the Earles of Oxenford*' was drawn up by Persivall Golding,⁷ son of Arthur Golding the translator, and therefore Edward de Vere's first cousin). This states:

Anne, daughter of William Cecill; she lyeth buried by her mother Lady Mildred Burleigh at Westminster.

Edward de Vere: he died at his house at Hackney in the month of June, 1604, and *Lyeth buried at Westminster*.

Whether this means that the body of the Earl of Oxford was eventually (that is, before 1613) re-buried in Westminster Abbey beside his first wife,⁸ or whether it is an error on the part of the writer, Persivall Goulding (which is unlikely, seeing his close kinship), probably nothing short of investigation in the Abbey itself will ever determine.

Jonson 'the honest' says: Thou art a monument without a Tomb' and—'I loved the man, this side idolatory'.

Mr. William Basse (sometime retainer of Lord Wintman of Thame and a frequenter of Rycote, the home of Lord Norris, Viscount of Thame, and his wife Bridget de Vere) wrote:

Renowned Spenser lie a thought more nigh
To learned Beaumont, and rare Beaumont lie
A little nearer Chaucer to make roome
For Shakespeare in your threfold fourfold tomb
To lodge all four in one bed make shift
Until Domesday, for hardly will a fifth
Betwixt this day and that, by fate be slaen.

evidently believing 'Shakespeare' was buried in Westminster Abbey.

In answer to which Ben Jonson, in his preface to the First Folio, penned the following lines (1623):

My Shakespeare, rise; I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lye
A little further, to make thee a roome
Thou art a monument without a tomb.

Nothing now remains of St. Augustine's Church at Hackney, save the tower, but in 1721 John Strype, the author of the famous *Annals*, described a tomb in the church which may have been Oxford's.

On the north side of the chancel, first an ancient Table monument, with a fair grey marble. There were coats-of-arms on the sides but torn off. This monument is concealed by the school-master's pew.

In the Hackney Public Library there is the drawing of the tomb, made in 1712, showing where coats of arms, possibly those of Vere and Trentham, were originally affixed. This tomb, with the nave of the church, has been demolished.

Vandalism, always rife, may have stolen the brass to use again as a palimpsest; on the other hand, if the bodies of the Earl and his second wife were removed to Westminster Abbey in 1616, their escutcheons in Hackney Church would be, as a matter of course, taken off the old tomb. Unfortunately, there are no burial records for Westminster Abbey which go back as far as 1616.

Golding, in his *Table of Progeny*., concludes with what may be regarded as the Earl's epitaph:

Edward de Vere, only son of John, born 12th day of April, 1550, Earl of Oxenford, High Chamberlain, Lord Bolbec, Sandford, Badlesmere, Steward of the Forest of Essex, and of the Privy Council to the King's Majesty that now is. Of whom I will only speak what all men's voices confirm: he was a man in mind and body absolutely accomplished with honourable endowments.

NOTES

1. Sonnet 2.
2. When this was penned, King's Place, Hackney, now known as Brooke House, I thought to be in a fair state of preservation, as it was when I last saw it three years ago, and that it could be restored as a memorial to our greatest poet. But a visit made with other members of the Shakespeare Fellowship, and of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, prove it to have deteriorated to such an extent that little now remains but the outer walls and a pile of rubbish. Depredations by boys and lead thieves—the former of whom have caused a fire that has demolished the staircase in the Georgian

part of the building, and the latter of whom have removed lead from the roofs—have caused irreparable damage. The Tudor ceiling, showing the Hunsdon arms and initials, was sandbagged up in an endeavour to preserve it, but with the sagging of the roof I believe that even this has gone. Petitions for the repair of the house and to erect a plaque on St. Augustine's Church in memory of the Earl of Oxford have been courteously refused.

3. See *Elizabeth and Essex*, by L. Strachey.
4. John Aubrey recounts: 'Sir Charles Danvers was Beheaded on Tower Hill with Robert, Earl of Essex, Feb. 6th, 1600. His familiar acquaintances were the Earl of Oxon (Edward de Vere), Sir Francis and Sir Horace de Vere, Sir Walter Raleigh, etc., the heroes of those times.'
5. See *Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, and Shakespeare*, by W. Kittle.
6. We have only Lord Lincoln's word for this story; it is possible he tried to implicate Lord Oxford in an uprising that he never desired, and for this reason he would not give 'the nobleman's' name.
7. There is a facsimile of this *Table of Progeny*, given in W. Kittle's book alluded to in note 5 above.
8. Or more probably in the tomb of Francis and Horace de Vere in the Abbey.

CHAPTER 14

SHAKESPEARE'S DIARY

IN recounting as briefly as possible the essentials in the life of the Earl of Oxford, I have drawn attention in a few instances to analogies between incidents in his career and those recorded in the Sonnets of 'Shakespeare'.

I now go further and say that these Sonnets were the outpourings from personal experiences of the writer—in fact, Shakespeare's Diary.

'They are autobiographical,' says Masson,¹ 'distinctly, intensely, painfully autobiographic.'

Though they cover at most ten years, these years were intellectually the most important, for it was during this period that the bulk of the 'Shakespeare' plays were written, and earlier ones revised, even re-revised; the purpose being to make durable literature of what had been evanescent acting-pieces for the Court or public stage. The Sonnets, moreover, cover the most soul-searching period of the author's life, when, living more or less in retirement, out of touch with the turmoil of the Court, he needed a personal mental outlet.

The Sonnets, few of which fall below the standard of superb poetry, are more equal in their accomplishment than the plays, which had a greater degree of pressure brought to bear on their composition, such as the time and place in which they were to be shown, the temper and wit of the audience for whom they were written, and the haste in which occasionally they may have been thrown off.

On the other hand the Sonnets were written to suit the author's time and mood, from which indeed they were the offshoot, and for the eyes of a somewhat critical recipient for whom 'style' mattered more than subject.

Canon Kendall writes: 'On the track of William Shakspeare indefatigable research has drawn a blank; it has not shed a ray of light on any single line of reference in the Sonnets.'

To try and reconcile them with the life of William of Stratford is clearly impossible, as all investigators have found to their confusion and disappointment.

'How the sonnets came to be published no one knows,' wrote David Masson in 1914, 'but in the state in which they were published they have come down to us like a barred antique jewel chest which no key has been found to fit, and so long left aside that it has become covered in cobweb.'

Much research has been done since that was penned; we now have the key, and Pandora's chest is at last wide open for all unprejudiced readers to enjoy the contents with full understanding. Consider first the dedication:

TO. THE. ONLIE. BEGETTER. OF.
THESE. INSUING. SONNETS.
MR. W. H. ALL. HAPPINESS.
AND THAT. ETERNITIE.
PROMISED.
BY.
OUR. EVER-LIVING. POET.
WISHETH.
THE. WELL-WISHING.
ADVENTURER. IN.
SETTING.
FORTH. T. T.

The problem of this dedication has been solved, first by Mr. Cuming-Walters, then by Sir Sidney Lee, and finally by Col. B. R. Ward. The first suggested that 'Mr. W. H. (ALL) stood for Mr. William Hall (the 'all' of 'all-happiness' having been misplaced—probably on purpose—by the intervention of a full-stop) who was a procurer of manuscripts for publication. Sir Sidney Lee, seeing the feasibility of this suggestion, elaborated it with details of this William Hall's life as a hack-publisher until his final retirement to the almshouses of Ewelme Church, Bucks; and it was Col. B. R. Ward who finally discovered that this 'procurer of copy' for the press—the 'onlie begetter' he is called in the dedication—was married at Hackney Parish Church to one Margery Griffin on August 4th, 1608. He also suggests that Thomas Thorpe, the publisher, in recognition of the service done him in procuring the Sonnets, wished him 'all happiness', and dedicated them to him as suitable to a man married just nine months, and expecting to become a father. The Sonnets emerged from the press in May 1609.

From this we get the following tentative reconstruction. In 1608 the 'procurer' Hall obtained possession of the Sonnets, he being resident in Hackney, and it was at that date that the Countess of Oxford relinquished King's Place, retiring to Hedingham Castle, when her late husband's papers were dispersed.

The so-called problem whether 'Mr. W. H.' stood for William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, or Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, neither of whom were 'Misters', can be safely consigned to limbo.

It is quite plain [says Sir Sidney Lee] that no negotiation with the

author [by whom he means William of Stratford] preceded the formation of Thorpe's resolve to publish for the first time Shakespeare's Sonnets in 1609. Had Shakespeare associated himself with the enterprise the world would have fortunately been spared Thorpe's dedication to 'Mr. W. H.' T. TV place would have been filled with W. S.

The fact that Shakspeare of Stratford did *not* negotiate for the publication of these Sonnets, or intervene to *prevent* their publication, or to stop apocryphal plays being pushed on to the market under his name, goes further to prove that he had no interest in them whatsoever. The Earl of Southampton had (according to Aubrey) given him £1,000 to buy a little property that he had a mind to in Stratford, and he had retired quietly to enjoy it.

These self-revealing 'sugar'd' Sonnets would never have been parted with to a literary hack, to be given to the vulgar to gloat over, had the author been alive. They were kept in 'sure wards of trust' under lock and key when the author travelled abroad, and only shown to select and dear friends, but when that author was dead, his treasure chest was rifled and the Sonnets given to the world.

A second point that goes to prove that the author of the Sonnets was dead in 1609, when they were published, is the fact that Sonnet 126 has no concluding couplet, the printer having left a blank bracketed. If the author still lived surely he would have been asked to conclude the sonnet in conformity with the rest, for it is not tenable to imagine that he could not supply one couplet when he had written a hundred and fifty-four with the utmost felicity.

If, on the other hand, the whole bulk of the work was obtained in some backstairs manner, the author being dead, there was nothing for it but to leave a blank bracketed to show that the lines should have been there.

G. M. Shindler,² 1892, says, The printer has betrayed most completely the unauthorized character of his enterprise and his own want of faculty and was evidently much perplexed. A reference to the author would have reassured him, but it is evident this resource was not available.'

Having disposed of 'Mr. W. H.', we can with equal certainty be sure that the Sonnets were addressed to the dedicatee of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, the young nobleman who, in his youth and beauty, was suggested as a husband for the Earl of Oxford's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, as already stated. De Vere knew the limitations of being a Queen's ward; his sympathy would go out to the young Southampton who was placed as he had been eighteen years earlier.

Thus fall into reasonable place the first seventeen Sonnets which

urge the young man to marry and to reproduce his beauty before that beauty waned.

For never-resting time leads summer on
 To hideous winter, and confounds him there;
 Sap check'd with frost, and lusty leaves quite gone,
 Beauty o'ersnow'd, and bareness everywhere:
 Then, were not summer's distillation left,
 A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,
 Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,
 Nor it, nor no remembrance what it was;
 But flowers distill'd, though they with winter meet
 Leese but their show; their substance still lives sweet.³

This delightful imagery of perfume decanted to keep for use when the flowers themselves were faded, was perfectly natural to Oxford whose pleasure in 'sweet scents*' has been noted, and whose name became associated with a certain perfume.

From the line:

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,

we get Oxford's age at the time of writing the first Sonnets (1590). The opening seventeen verses are addressed throughout by an older man to one much younger; by one, indeed, who had seen the best life had to offer; noble birth, wealth, adventure, adulation, travel under blue skies, and some power; all of which had passed beneath a black cloud of adversity, misadventure, misunderstanding, calumny and age. The writer dwells on the scintillating past:

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
 I summon up remembrance of things past
 I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
 And with old woes new wail my dear time's loss.

.

But if a while I think on thee, dear friend,
 All losses are restor'd and sorrows end.

As the proposed bridegroom seemed coy, the Sonnets assumed more urgency; he was besought not to be 'self-willed, for thou art much too fair, to be death's conquest and make worms thy heir'. These seventeen 'procreation theme' verses are unique in English poetry. It has been suggested by Brandl (1922) that the idea may have originated in Plato's *Symposium*, but de Vere needed no literary motivation as it was at this time his dearest wish that his daughter should make a match with the brilliant young Earl.

To quote four more lines:

Or who is he so fond will be the tomb
Of his self-love, to stop posterity?
Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee
Calls back the lovely April of her prime.⁴

Henry Wriothesley, bom at Cowdray House, Sussex, lost his father when he was eight years old, and became a Queen's ward under the guardianship of Lord Burleigh. His mother, who had been a great beauty in her time, as de Vere, her contemporary, would know, showed eagerness for the match; thus it is entirely in keeping that the writer should remind the youth that his mother's beauty (both were auburn-haired and blue-eyed) glowed in him, and therefore it was incumbent on him to 'make another' to receive that 'imprint'.

Dowden (1881) rightly says: 'Were a *father* living it would be natural to mention him.'

At the risk of over-quoting, I must here give a few lines by Mr. Begley⁵ as applying to the question in hand.

What can Shakespeare [Shakspere] who has only been in London three or four years, and has hardly shaken off his dialect or the manners of the stable-yard,—what can he possibly have to do with such matters of high statecraft and political influence? Why should he, of all possible people, write a series of 'Procreation Sonnets' in order to induce a young nobleman of high prospects to marry the grand-daughter of the highest dignitary in the Kingdom? What was Burleigh to Will Shakespeare or he to Burleigh? How on earth could the Warwickshire husband of Anne Hathaway, as yet only a rising supernumerary among a company of actors, 'vagrants by law' . . . dare to make love to such a blooming scion of the aristocracy and dare to make such a seventeen-fold suggestion that he should marry at once and get a child 'for love of me'? [Sonnet 20.]

The supposition is ludicrous; but with the dismissal of the Shakspere authorship and substitution of the Oxford hypothesis everything becomes reasonable. How truly Logan Pearsall-Smith speaks in his *On Reading Shakespeare*, where he says:

When one of the most matter-of-fact of all hard-boiled critics, Sir Sidney Lee, says that the sole biographical influence deducible from the sonnets is that 'at one time in his career Shakespeare disdained no weapon of flattery in an endeavour to monopolize the bountiful patronage of a young man of rank' does he not rave, though in more prosaic accents as much as the maddest sentimentalist and blatherskite of them all?

Indeed, he does; but luckily he does not account for the 'eternal triangle' which develops in the course of the Sonnets, as being a trip

made by the young Earl of Southampton to Stratford-on-Avon and the seduction of the fifty-two-year-old Anne Shakspeare!

Regarding Sonnet 20 D. H. Grey⁶ says: 'It seems to me incredible that Shakespeare should have told either of these E^{ar}ls [Southampton or Pembroke] even in jest, that only sex stood in the way of his grace's marriage with an actor!' And similarly we find Reid⁷ more moderately commenting, 'This Sonnet is hardly the tone which Shakespeare the actor could address to a nobleman of rank.'

It is indeed Sonnet 20 that assures us that the love the author bears the young Earl is entirely free from vicious thoughts; he is for woman's pleasure but the author's affection. It must be remembered that the word 'lover' was then interchangeable with 'friend' and when he refers to the Earl as 'my Rose' he is making a delightful pun on the name Wriothesley, which was pronounced 'Rose-ley'.⁸ It is also symbolical of the 'best' in everything—the peer of flowers, and of highest rank and knightly honours.

In *Coriolanus* the Roman general says:

I tell thee, fellow,
Thy general is my lover. I have been
The book of his good act, whence men have read
His fame unparallel'd—haply amplified.

Michelangelo, the 'Shakespeare' of the sculpture world, wrote sonnets even more exaggerated in expression to the young noble, Pietro Cavallini, whose beauty he admired.

Southampton had many admirers who extolled his beauty. Thomas Nashe, when dedicating to him his *Life of Jack Wilton* in 1594, says he is 'a dear lover and cherisher as well as of the lovers of poets as of the poets themselves'.

Though the marriage theme died out after the first seventeen Sonnets owing to the Earl's reluctance to enter into the bonds of matrimony, the sonneteer continued his writing of them. Had it become a habit and a solace, as diary-writing always is?

Before passing to the Sonnets themselves mention must be made of Francis Meres's⁹ reference to them in his *Wit's Treasury* (1598) as 'Shakespeare's sugar'd sonnets among his private friends'. This proves that they were being shown to a few favoured persons, of whom the inspirer of them, the Earl of Southampton, would be the first. But how did Meres come to see them so that he knew they were 'sugar'd', and to be able to pass criticism upon them?

Upon investigation it has come to light that John Florio, the translator of *Montaigne's Essays*, was in the pay and patronage of the Earl of Southampton, and in 1594 was an inmate of the Titchfield

household. As a 'private friend' of the young Earl's he would be entitled to see the Sonnets sent or loaned to his benefactor. If we think that Florio may have shown these to his brother-in-law Meres, whom he knew would be interested, it is not such far-fetched reasoning.

Also we find prefixed to the *Second Fruits* of John Florio's composition an anonymous sonnet, which is either an authentic Shakespearean, or a good imitation by one who had his work in hand as well as by heart. Florio describes it as the work of a friend 'who loved better to be a poet, than to be called one', which, of course, is entirely true of de Vere.

Seven lines of the sonnet run thus:

Sweet friend, whose name agrees with thy increase
 How fit a rival art thou for the Spring,
 For when each branch hath left his flourishing
 And green-locked Summer's shady pleasures cease,
 She makes the winter's storms repose in peace.
 And spends her franchise on each living thing,
 The daisies sprout, the little birds do sing.

The poet who loved to *be* one, rather than to be *called* one, at a time when the name of poet was 'despised' and 'become infamous subject to scorn and derision' is definitely Oxford, and could not apply to Shakspeare, who was trying to make his way in the world and earn a substantial living.

Whilst dealing with anonymous or misappropriated verse, there is one poem which I think has been erroneously ascribed to Robert Southwell.

Four years before the publication of the Sonnets, the same William Hall, who procured them for Thomas Thorpe, procured also from some unknown cache a MS. which was printed as *A Four-folde Meditation* by Robert Southwell, which in like manner was published by Thomas Thorpe and printed by George Eld.

In Hall's own phrasing he says: 'Long have they lein hidden in obscuritie and haply had never seen the light had not a mere accident conveyed them to my hand.' That the manuscript had not the author's sanction is evident from the fact that the *Foure-foulde Meditation* is now generally ascribed to Philip, Earl of Arundel, first cousin of the Earl of Oxford, who died in the Tower whilst awaiting trial for Catholic conspiracies. May we not, with every good reason, assume that *A Four-foulde Meditation* came from King's Place, Hackney, having been found amongst Oxford's papers at the time of his death? We have seen that Oxford was the only noble of his quality living in

Hackney; probably, too, the only writer there whose works would be sought by a phoney publisher on the look-out for 'copy'.

Sir Sidney Lee supports my contention where he says: The two books, Southwell's *Fourte-fould Meditation* of 1606, and Shakespeare's Sonnets of 1609, have more in common than the appearance on the preliminary pages of the initials W. H. in a prominent place and the common form of dedicatory salutation.'

Now amongst poems attributed to Robert Southwell is one that, for style, imagery and feeling, I believe to be one of Lord Oxford's—a slip of paper culled from King's Place with other acquisitions.

This is not so improbable as might be thought, for as recently as December 1953 there was published in the *Daily Telegraph* some verses and epigrams by Hilaire Belloc who had recently died. A few days later several of these were queried and proved to be actually written by other pens, but were found amongst his papers and *thought* at first to be his. Surely we may concede even greater licence to the publishers of 350 years ago, when copyright was barely known and vulture-publishers were waiting to pounce upon any rare material for their printing-presses.

This is the poem, of which I will, for brevity's sake, quote only the first three verses:

1. When words are weak, and foes encountering strong,
 When mightier do assault than do defend,
 The feeble part puts up enforced wrong
 And silent, sees that speech would not amend.
 Yet higher powers must think, though they repine,
 When sun is set, the little stars will shine.

Compare this with the lines:

- The moon being clouded presently is miss'd,
 But little stars may hide, them when they list.
2. While pike doth range, the silly tench doth fly,
 And crouch in privy creeks with smaller fish,
 Yet pikes are caught when little fish go by
 These fleet afloat, while those do fill the dish.
 There is a time even for the worms to creep
 And suck the dew while all their foes do sleep.
 3. The merlin cannot ever soar on high,
 Nor greedy greyhound still pursue the chase,
 The tender lark will find a time to fly
 And fearful hare to run a quiet race.
 He that high growth on cedars did bestow
 Gave also lowly mushrooms leave to grow.

Compare verse already quoted from *Venus and Adonis*, *Lo, here the gentle lark', etc., concluding, That cedar tops and hills are burnished gold'. Then compare also de Vere's poem *Desire*, commencing 'The lively lark stretched forth her wing, The messenger of morning bright', and more particularly a verse from his dedication to *Cardanus Comforte* already quoted:

The swiftest hare unto the mastif slow
 Oftimes doth fall, to him as for a prey;
 The greyhound thereby doth miss his game we know
 For which he made such haste away.
 For he that beats the bush, the bird not gets,
 But who sits still and holdeth fast the nets.

De Vere's poems here quoted are those of his youth; the so-called Robert Southwell poem is the work of his later years, therefore more perfect.

R. Warwick Bond, when editing Lyly's works, attributed this poem to Lyly amongst some unauthenticated poems, but added an erratum to the effect that he had since discovered it to be by Robert Southwell. It shows that his first opinion was that it came from the Oxford-Lyly workshop, and I attribute it to Oxford.

Another anonymous poem, which Mr. Bond lists as Lyly's, I think should be given to Lyly's master. It was first published in C. Robinson's *Handful of Pleasant Delights* in 1584.

I smile to see how you devise
 New masking nets my eyes to blear!
 Yourself you cannot so disguise
 But as you are you must appear.

Your privy winks at t'oard I see,
 And how you set your roving mind;
 Yourself you cannot hide from me!
 Although I wink, I am not blind!

The secret sighs and feined cheer
 That oft doth pain thy careful breast,
 To me right plainly doth appear.
 I see in whom thy heart doth rest.

So thou, in change doth take delight!
 Full well I know thy slippery kind!
 In vain thou seem'st to dim thy sight;
 Thy rolling eyes bewray'th thy mind.

I see him smile, that doth possess
 Thy love, which once I honoured most.
 If he be wise; he well may guess,
 Thy love soon won, will soon be lost!

And sith thou canst no man entice,
 That he should still love thee alone;
 Thy beauty now hath lost her price!
 I see thy savoury scent is gone!

.

And keep thy friend that thou hast won!
 In truth to him, thy love supply!
 Lest he, at length, as I have done,
 Take off thy bells, and let thee fly!

The last two lines echoing the same thought as in his poem *Women*.

When the drama of *Troilus and Cressida* was first published in 1609, it bore a curious dedication:

A never writer to an ever reader.

What sense can be made of this unless 'ever' and 'never', as in the motto *Ever and Never* used as a pseudonym to certain lyrics in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, have a reference to E. Ver? 'A never writer' meant presumably that he was 'ne' or 'not' alive; a piece of amusing obscurity that may easily have come from the pen of Ben Jonson; or simply—*An E. Ver Writer*.

Sir Sidney Lee says:¹⁰ 'the dedication was by way of enhancing the value of what were obviously stolen wares. It was falsely added that the piece was new and unacted.'

'Never before staled or clapper-clawed by the palms of the vulgar', says the Tuff'.

It is obvious that the break-up of the Earl's home of retirement in 1609 let in the 'pirates' to procure these 'unconsidered trifles' for the press.

But to leave digression, and return to the Sonnets.

As these pile up in number there creeps into the theme of love a bitter disappointment; the beautiful youth has transgressed all canons of decent behaviour by stealing the affection of the writer's own loved one. The sonneteer dejectedly rings the changes on themes of trespass and broken troth, then forgives the trespass, condoning it for the beauty of the trespasser, and finally, by some illogical poetical thesis he shifts the blame to himself. He immolates himself on the altar of tyrannical friendship just as Antonio (de Vere) is prepared to do for Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Who the woman was who thus betrayed him, the 'dark lady' to whom the last and least of the Sonnets are addressed, we shall probably never know. There may have been many 'dark ladies' in de Vere's tempestuous life. The Anne Vavasour 'affaire' of his young courtier days, in which he disgraced himself to the annoyance of the jealous Queen, could not be the addressee of his elder years. She had become the mistress of Sir Henry Lee and the mother of Thomas Vavasour; in 1603 she married Sir R. Warburton, and was later indicted on a charge of bigamy from which accusation she somehow extricated herself.

That the 'dark lady*' was Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth, is equally untenable, since we know nothing whatsoever about her save the one letter already quoted in which she shows herself eager and anxious to forward his fortunes, and her will, in which she provided for her son and wished to be buried by her husband. She is recorded as being 'fair' but that may be in respect of her beauty rather than the colour of her hair and eyes.

Perhaps some documents may come to light to elucidate this point, but we may be certain at least that the 'dark lady' was not Anne Shakspeare!

Probably the most convincing proof that the Sonnets were written by a nobleman, and that that nobleman was Edward de Vere, is in the opening lines of Sonnet 125 to which I have already drawn attention:

Were't aught to me I bore the canopy,
With my extern the outward honouring?

No Stratfordian has satisfactorily explained this reference.

Adams¹² says: 'the Poet in order to provide a theme for a sonnet imagines that some critic has accused him of celebrating only the physical beauty of his friend. . . . Would it, he asks, be profitable for me to bear a canopy over (i.e. honour with my verse) merely the outward beauty of his person?'

This is nonsense, and in any case the reference is in *the past* tense—'Were't aught to me I *bore* the canopy'. The poet is not cogitating whether he will do it in the future. And we are glad to find Staunton admitting that it is an unmistakable allusion to an 'installation of some kind'. But he shifts the action from the writer to the addressee who was of sufficient eminence, he avers, to uphold such a ceremony. This is hedging egregiously. 7 is first person singular and indicated the writer, *not* the person written to.

All other critics, Brooke, G. H. Skipworth,¹² etc., make the phrase hypothetical. They just cannot see how Shakspeare *could* have carried

a canopy at any installation, because if one may be permitted an expressive modernism, they are barking up the wrong tree.

Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, was one of those who *did* carry the golden canopy over the Queen at the Armada celebrations, and the only one who at the same time *could* have written the Shakespeare Sonnets. He was the only one, moreover, whose position as a potential father-in-law of the recipient would have had the motive to urge the young man to marry.

It is not possible in this short summary of the Shakespeare authorship problem to give many of the close similarities between Oxford's experiences and those expressed in the Sonnets. For a complete working analogy Canon Kendall's *Shakespeare's Sonnets and Edward de Vere* should be read.

Something has already been mentioned of the author's comparing his love to the best things life had to offer, high birth, wealth, gay clothes, horses, hawks and hounds, and of how this list betrays the nobility of the owner of just such rich pleasures—pleasures not enjoyed by the merchant or actor. Would not the latter have listed rather, the audience's applause, a well-filled purse, a good dinner, and a pottle of sack at 'The Mermaid'?

There are, in fact, at least three references in the Sonnets that rule out the possibility of their author being an actor, and these are the references to his lameness, for a lame man would be useless as an actor!

Sonnet 64 raises another question:

When I have seen the hungry ocean gam
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the watery main
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store.

Had William Shakspeare ever seen the sea?

Sir Sidney Lee evidently thinks not, but that the poet got his ideas of it from Golding's *Metamorphoses*, for he says: 'Shakespeare had no scruple in claiming to "have seen" with his own eyes the phenomena of Ovid's narration.' So we are to believe that the Warwickshire man, who never travelled to our coasts and drew on Ovid for his Sonnet 64, 'When I have seen the hungry ocean gain——' etc., also wrote from imagination the following description of the cliffs of England:

How fearful
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air

Show scarce so gross as beetles; half way down
 Hangs one that gathers samfire—dreadful trade.
 Methinks he seems no bigger than his head;
 The fishermen, that walk upon the beach
 Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark
 Diminish'd to her cock,—her cock, a buoy
 Almost too small for sight; the murmuring surge
 That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes
 Cannot be heard so high—. I'll look no more;
 Lest my brain turn, and thro' deficient sight
 Topple down headlong.

King Lear, IV. 6

Who can doubt, indeed, that the writer had actually stood above Dover cliffs and looked down at the strand? Having no head for heights myself the picture it conjures up makes me dizzy; it was never imagined by an inlander with no knowledge of our shores. The little point of the man gathering samfire, a succulent umbelliferae used in salads, strikes an individual observer's note.

De Vere, crossing to the Continent, knew these very cliffs.

The sonneteer now begins to dread the intrusion of another and rival poet, who is also invoking the inspiration of the young Earl of Southampton's beauty to buoy up his verses. A great deal of this is sonneteering convention, but not all: the youthful peer who had a genuine interest in literature was undoubtedly encouraging another—probably younger—poet.

Many guesses have been made as to the identity of this 'rival poet'. Because the phrases, 'his compeers by night' and 'an affable jfamiliar ghost' gulling him with intelligence, have been thought to refer to Chapman's *The Shadow of Night*, the author of this work has been suggested. But Chapman's verse was not 'great' as the writer of the Sonnets avers in his protestation, until he made his translation of *Homer* in 1598, and the sonnet he then addressed to Southampton (one of sixteen addressed to other eminent noblemen) was far from gushing or obsequious.

Sir Sidney Lee's suggestion of the young Barnabe Barnes, who in 1593 published his *Parthenophil and Parthenope*, which was greeted with loud applause, and followed this with equal success by publishing *A Centurie of Spiritual Sonnets* in 1595, has much more to be said for it.

For instance, in Sonnet 85 Shakespeare himself applauds his rival's poems—

I think good thoughts, whilst others write good words,
 And, like unletter'd clerk, still cry 'Amen'
 To every hymn that able spirit affords.

When Barnes writes:

My fancy's ship tossed here and there by these
Still floats in danger raging to and fro
How fears my thoughts swift pinnace thy hard rock,

Shakespeare takes up the metaphor:

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse
Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you—

And further:

My saucy bark, inferior far to his,
On your broad main doth willfully appear
Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat
While he upon your soundless deep doth ride
Or, being wrack'd, I am a worthless boat,
He of tall-building and of goodly pride.

Barnes described Henry Wriothsley's eyes as 'the heavenly lamps that give the muses light'.

Those who hold the opinion that the plays of 'Shakespeare' were written by Lord Oxford will find additional evidence against the Chapman thesis, in that Chapman, when writing his *Bussy d'Ambois* Tragedies, penned therein the unfeigned tribute to the Earl already quoted, and undoubtedly formed his hero Clermoht on the pattern of de Vere. Hamlet is Oxford—Shakespeare's self-revelation, and W. L. Phelps likens Clermont to Hamlet where he says, 'He resembles the melancholy Dane not only in his powers of reflection, and in his innate good breeding but in his constant postponement of revenge'; *ergo*, Clermont is also Oxford. To substantiate this suggestion, read the following with de Vere in mind. It will be remembered that Clermont himself in the *Revenge* described the 'great and famous Earl of England' who was 'the Earl of Oxford'.

Guise replied: 'Tis spoken like the man you have described,' giving the hint which a few more lines from other characters will crystallize.

King Henry. But wherein is this Clermont such a rare one?

Guise. In his most gentle and unwearied mind.
Rightly to virtue framed, in very nature;
In his most firm inexorable spirit
To be removed from anything he chooseth
For worthiness; or bear the least persuasion
To what is base; or fitteth not to his object.
In his contempt of riches and greatness¹³
In estimation of th' idolatrous vulgar;
His scorn of all things servile and ignoble
Though they could gain him never such advancement.

*His liberal kind of speaking what is truth
 In spite of temporising; the great rising
 And learning of his soul, so much the more
 Against illfortune . . .
 His detestation of his special friends
 When he perceived their tyrannous will to do
 Any injustice that they could revenge.
 The flexibility of his most anger
 Even in the main career and fury of it
 When any object of desertful pity
 Offers itself to him: his sweet disposure
 As much abhorring to behold, as do
 Any unnatural and bloody action.
 Come fair or foul, whate'er chance can befall
 Fixed in himself, he still is one to all.*

[Italics mine.]

Every word of the above is borne out in Oxford's character, concluding with his own phrase 'I am that I am'. It must not be overlooked also that Chapman's first published work contains a poem narrating Sir Francis Vere's exploits in the Low Countries. He evidently admired the Veres, and it is unlikely that he would have incurred the displeasure or enmity of Lord Oxford by encroaching on his preserves.

Further in the play of the *Revenge* Guise echoes de Vere's motto, Truth is truth!', and Baligny says, 'Why? Is not all the world esteemed a stage?' as though Chapman had the whole of Shakespeare's work and life by heart.

Before closing this chapter, mention must be made of the so-called 'Will' Sonnets, in which the author puns upon the name 'Will' and its various meanings, usually framed in an erotic sense.

Sir Sidney Lee very appositely refers to them as the most 'artificial' and 'conceited' in the collection. In fact they ring so falsely that it is surprising it has not occurred to him that they are by a different hand. Of course, the name 'Will' immediately seems to tie them to the Stratford player, as the plays have been tied, but when we learn that 'William' was the second most popular name in England at the time, and every fourth man was a 'William', the tie begins to loosen. We have seen how the initials W. B. (William Basse and William Brown) confused the attribution of Basse's poem to Brown.

Personally, I think the 'Will' Sonnets are not from the pen of 'Shakespeare' at all. If you *listen* to them being read aloud, in comparison with the rest of the Sonnets, you will immediately notice that they are less 'subtle', more 'conceited' as Sir Sidney Lee contends, and that they are very inferior to the bulk of the poems.

In my own estimation they are the amateurish and very conceited efforts of 'William Stanley' (W. S.), Earl of Derby, who, trying to imitate his father-in-law's poems, and satisfied with the result of his punning devices, left them amongst the elder man's exquisite work, never foreseeing their publication or the confusion that would arise.

The suggestion made by Mr. Looney that Oxford was, in them, referring to his pseudonym and therefore put the name in italics, is possible, but not probable, because of the inferiority of the literary style. There is repeated silly punning in them but not an iota of the subtle and involved thought and expression that makes the earlier Sonnets such a joy to read. They are easy to imitate, as all second-rate art is. So in the *Herachie of Blessed Angels* (1635), we get:

Mellifluous Shakespeare, whose enchanting quill,
Commanded mirth or passion, was but *Will*.

In a curious publication called *Willoughby his Avis*, 1594, in which Henry Willoughby of Wiltshire is given advice by his friend W. S. on 'affaires of the heart', the narrator ends by claiming for his 'discourse' that it 'lively represented the unruly rage of unbridled fancy having the reins to rove at liberty with divers and sundry changes of affections and temptations, which *Will* set free from *Reason*, can devise'.

Evidently offence was taken by the publication, since there is a note in Stationer's Hall for June 4th, 1599, for '*Hall's Satires*' and '*Willobes Advise*' to be 'Called in', and added to a list of books to be burned.

It is amusing to notice in passing that de Vere's poem on *Women* as printed in the *Spenser Anthology* has a variant reading of the second verse:

To mark what choice they make, and how they change,
How leaving best, the worst they choose out still,
And how, like haggards wild, about they range,
Scorning after *Reason* to follow *Will*.

Probably the fact that Southampton was becoming more and more involved in Essex's plot, and that it was drawing the two men apart—though their loves were one their ideals were different—caused both the gradual dwindling of the Sonnets, and the bitterness that enters into the later ones, for the rupture caused suffering, at least to the writer. De Vere's retirement and saddened life is reflected in these later Sonnets, but we know of no disillusionment or disgrace in William Shakspeare's life, either in London or later in Stratford, that could account for the melancholy engendered in the author.

Messrs. Muir and O'Laughlin in *The Voyage to Illyria* give an

excellent build-up of the life of the dramatist, drawing their deductions from the works themselves, from the gay youth of *Much Ado*, through the frenzied unhappiness of *Lear* and *Timon*, to the tranquillity of *Antony and Cleopatra*, and for this deduction they draw also on the Sonnets; yet there is not one point where they fix that vivid, imaginative life to the maltster of Stratford, and, what is more, they are too wise to try.

To conclude. Whatever we may think of the Sonnets now, the promoters of the First Folio of Shakespeare's works chose to exclude them from the canon. Why? They had been published in 1609, when Shakespeare had not protested and Oxford was dead. There was no re-issue, and copies of the first issue were scarce; therefore it looks as though some interested person or persons desired to suppress them. These persons were undoubtedly de Vere's friends and relatives Ben Jonson (the collator and editor): the 'Incomparable Pair of Brethren, William, Earl of Pembroke, and Philip, Earl of Montgomery' (who were probably the financiers, as the two players, Heminge and Condell, could not have afforded to finance the stupendous work to which their names were Appended), and the wife of Montgomery, de Vere's youngest daughter, who with her sisters were the 'Grand Possessors' of their father's dramatic work. This group, with the encouragement of Mary, Dowager Countess of Pembroke, and Sir Francis Bacon, de Vere's cousin, were instrumental in launching the bulk of Shakespeare's great work, for which we can never be sufficiently grateful to them, but, out of love and respect for the dead, they decided to exclude the Sonnets, as too self-revealing and never intended for publication.

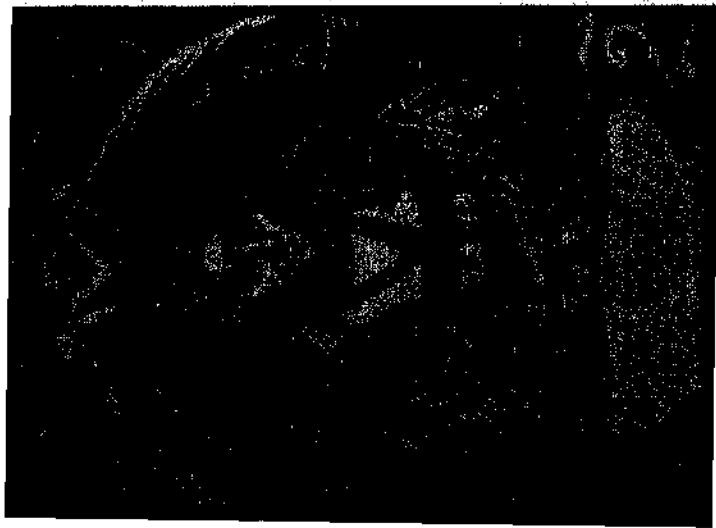
NOTES

1. David Masson (1822-1907). Wrote a life of William Drummond of Hawthornden.
2. See the *Shakespeare Allusion Book*.
3. Sonnet 5.
4. Sonnet 3.
5. In *Is it Shakespeare?*
6. See *Shakespeare Allusion Book*.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Meres was Rector and schoolmaster at Wing, Rutland.
10. Sir Sidney Lee, *Life of William Shakespeare*.
11. Editor of a volume of Shakespeare's works.
12. See *Shakespeare Allusion Book*.
13. See *Coriolanus* (II. 2):

'He looked upon things precious as they were
The common muck of the world.'

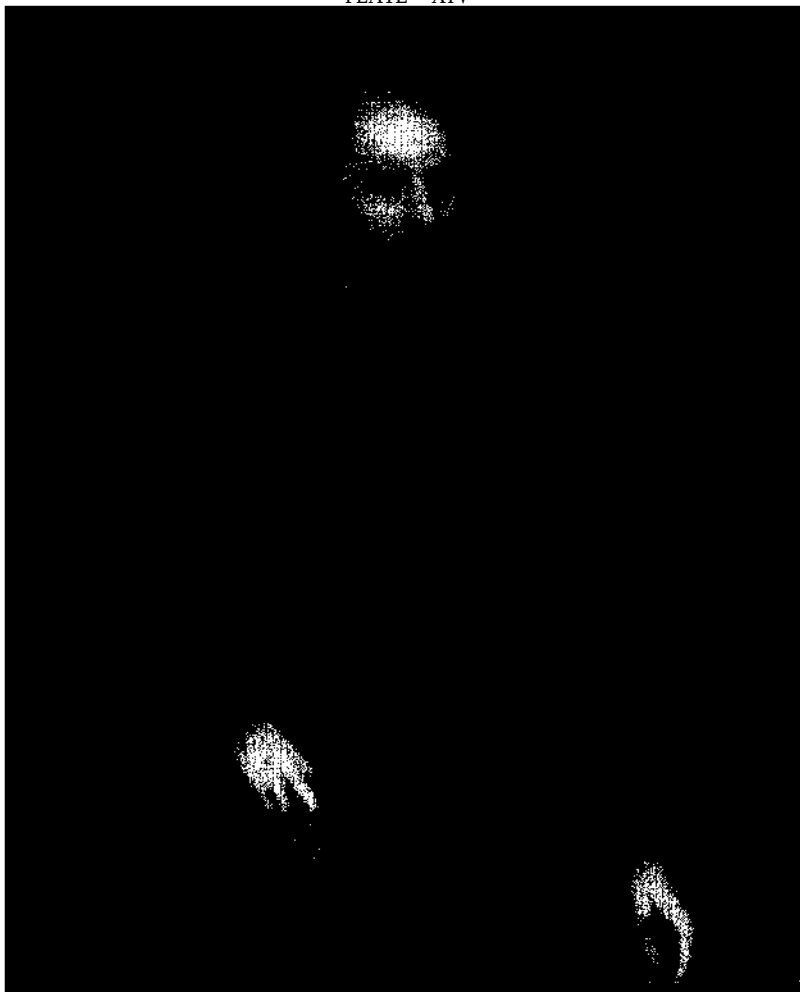


THE TWO NOBLE HENRIES,
EARLS OF OXFORD AND SOUTHAMPTON
(British Museum)



THE COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE
(By Van de Passe. British Museum)

PLATE XIV



THE " ASHBOURNE " PORTRAIT
(Folger Library, U.S.A.)

CHAPTER 15

THE PSEUDONYM

THE question naturally arises, why did Edward de Vere write under a pseudonym, assuming, *a priori*, that he, and not the man of Stratford-on-Avon, was the author of the 'Shakespeare' plays.

Well, he was not the first, nor will he be the last, to assume a nom-de-plume under which to publish his writings, and the reasons for any writer assuming anonymity are amazingly diverse. In the case of Lord Oxford it was imperative that he should not be known as the author of plays for public presentation, at least during his lifetime.

Why did George Eliot or George Sand assume those names? Presumably because they thought that their works would make more impression and sell better if the authors were believed to be men. But surely when William Sharp published his books under the pseudonym of Fiona Mcleod, and kept up the deception by addressing letters to himself under his feminine nom-de-plume, he could not have thought that they would make a greater appeal if the public imagined them to be the work of a woman. Why did Walter Scott remain anonymous for so many years? He had nothing to fear from the public or government—why did he keep up the deception? Perhaps only a whim.

With Edward de Vere circumstances were against publication, especially of plays. He was very near the Crown, one whom the Queen called 'cousin', a nobleman of England for whom only one career was looked upon with favour, the career of 'arms', prowess on the battlefield, as Gabriel Harve" was at great pains to remind him. Possibly a penurious scholar such as Harvey, who in middle age was still eating, but not paying for, twopenny dinners in his old college, would resent a rich nobleman taking the bread out of the writer's mouths. Be that as it may, he knew that the career for a nobleman of de Vere's eminence was not *writing*.

Unfortunately, the Queen debarred him from foreign service; she may have realized that he was temperamentally unfit. Did not he himself, under his nom-de-plume, say, To be tender-hearted does not become a sword?

In times of peace, strategy and statecraft were considered suitable to the nobility, with the domestic aggrandizement of building themselves palatial houses and running or ruining their estates. Real

intellectuality, as we know it today, was a new acquisition (except in isolated cases) amongst the English nobility which was started by Henry VIII and developed by his daughters.

In the reign of Elizabeth's grandfather John Skelton wrote:

But noble men born
To learne thay have a scorne,
But hunt and blow an home
Lepe over lakes and dykes;
Set nothing by politykes.

giving a good idea of the average 'Tony Lumpkin' of the upper ten.

The Renaissance amongst the nobility had come in with a rush, and they were still sufficiently self-conscious of their new-found 'humanism' as a foreign importation to keep what they wrote down for a small clique to read; not to be broadcast to the multitude. Nor would they enter the literary frays kept up by some of the scholars and hack-writers, which Harvey called 'Ten-scolding' and 'Taper-brabbling', such being beneath their dignity.

This was not only their own consensus of opinion, but that of the man in the street. John Selden (1584-1654), voicing general opinion in emphatic phrases, said, 'It is ridiculous for a lord to print verses. He may write them to please himself, but to publish them is foolish.' And who is he, standing in the fierce light that beats upon (and around) a throne, who wishes to appear 'ridiculous' and 'foolish'?

In Oxford's case there was an additional reason for anonymity. He was too out-spoken; 'he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary that he should be stopped', as Ben Jonson said of 'Shakespeare'.

He could not 'crook the pregnant knee'. Even when the Queen 'wooed him' he played Adonis and would not 'fall in'.

Abuses of any kind infuriated him and he let fly with bitter satire. His poem about the labourer who did not receive his due reward would not have found favour with the generality of landlords, nor Lear's wild outbursts please the politicians. I refer to such as this:

A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears; see how yond justice rails upon yond simple thief.

Hark in thine ear: change places, and, handy-dandy; which is the justice and which is the thief? . . .

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!

Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;

Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind

For which thou whipt her. The usurer hangs the cozener.

Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear,

Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold
 And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks off;
 Arm it with rags, a pigmy's straw doth pierce it.
 . . . Get thee glass eyes;
 And, like a scurvy politician, seem to see the things thou dost not.

Moreover such diatribes must have been 'caviare to the general' audiences at the 'Rose' or 'Curtain', who would have preferred *a jig or a tale of bawdry'.

Dr. Boas asks, 'But what did the audiences of the Globe or Blackfriars make of it all? It is to me a constant enigma.' It is indeed, and therefore it is not surprising to find that in his own time Shakespeare's plays were far from popular—that is, with the general public, which infinitely preferred *Bartholomew Fair* or *Eastward Ho!*

To his contemporaries Shakespeare was chiefly known as a writer of love-poems 'full of languishment'.

Til worship Sweet Mr. Shakespeare, and lay his Venus and Adonis under my pillow,' says a contemporary.

The Queen may have countenanced these 'home truths' as a king would listen to his jester's sugared pills of reproof and criticism. Indeed, it is more than probable that de Vere played the part of a 'licensed fool' until his candid tongue got even his licence curtailed.

Frank Harris² believes that Shakespeare identified himself with many of his characters (despite F. D. Losey's statement that 'the dramatist, presumably at least, never speaks in his own person, . . . and left no explanation of himself or his work'). 'In *Hamlet*,' says Frank Harris, 'Shakespeare discovered *too much* of himself.' 'Brutus is an *idealized portrait* of himself.' 'Edgar is peculiarly *Shakespeare's mouthpiece*.' 'It can hardly be denied Shakespeare *identified himself* as far as he could with Henry V.'

Upon these points of contention T. H. Looney comments: 'In every one of these cases we have a man hiding a superior nature under a cloak of folly.'

Dr. Boas thinks Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida*, whose 'amazingly nimble wit and unsurpassable command of Billingsgate makes him an avowed fool', is the author's mouthpiece.

Shakespeare says:

There is no slander in an avowed fool
 Though he do nothing but rail.

Again, to quote Dr. Boas: 'He [Thersites] becomes a mouthpiece of Shakespeare's disillusionment, due, perhaps, as Sir E. Chambers has suggested, to mental and physical shame which had its climax in Timon of Athens.'

Dr. Boas and Sir E. Chambers are, of course, referring to the man player of Stratford, who, if not ashamed of pursuing a debt for £7 5s. Od. against the debtor's security, when he had well-filled coffers in New Place, would not be ashamed of anything. They know perfectly well, and in this I include Muir and O'Laughlin, that the life they find for-Shakespeare in the plays will not fit the placid, prosperous business-man of Stratford, but they know also that their contention is right. It is only when Edward de Vere is substituted for the Stratford maltster that we have confirmation of the 'mental and physical shame' theory, and find that facts support hypothesis.

Timon has much of Oxford in his composition—the Oxford of his latest Hackney days.

The Poet, visiting Timon in the woods, says:

Sir,
 Having often of your open bounty tasted
 Hearing you were retired, your friends fallen off—

[Call to mind Lord Lincoln's report that the Earl was then 'so weak in body, in friends and ability'.]

What to you [the Poet continues],
 Whose star-like nobleness gave life and influence
 To their whole being! I am rapt and cannot cover
 The monstrous bulk of this ingratitude
 With any size of words.

Why star-like nobleness? Sun-like would be much more splendid; save that the star device was the one that would come into the mind of the writer who bore it on his shield, as the symbol of the highest form of nobleness.

But outspokenness, though tolerated by the Queen, because she had a sneaking regard both for the man and the truth, could not be thrown to the groundlings in the theatre or inn yard; consequently all plays were censored.

Every play had to pass a board of censors, of which Edmund Tilney was the head, and the Archbishop of Canterbury a member, before it could be shown in any public place. Tilney was granted a patent in which the following was set down:

to warne ... all and every plaier or plaieres with their playmakers, either belonging to any noble man, or otherwise bearing the name or names of using the facultie of playmakers or plaiers of Comedies, Tragedies, Enterludes—to appear before him with all such plaies, whom we authorize to order and reforme, authorize and put downe.

And further we read that

none should meddle in matters of religion or in governance of the commonwealth under penalty of arrest.

So we find the sonneteer lamenting his dissatisfaction with the existing regime, among the many ills of the time, in Sonnet 66, where he says:

And art made tongue-tied by authority.

It was this authority that caused John Clapham to publish (1692) anonymously under the name of Thilomathes' his *History of England, the First Book, Declaring the Estate of the Isle of Britannie, under the Roman Empire* because history was likely to be misconstrued, or taken as an attack upon the existing government. As an example, Shakespeare's *Richard II*, one of the popular plays, on being revived during the days leading up to the Essex rebellion, was taken as an intent to incite the people to depose their lawful Queen. Much questioning was put to the prisoners regarding the play, and Sir Gilly Merrick and Henry Cuffe were hanged, drawn and quartered. No one arrested the supposed playwright, William Shakspeare, despite the law that no one should meddle in the governance of the commonwealth under penalty of arrest. Yet when Marston, Chapman and Jonson were supposed to have made fun of James II's accent in *Eastward Ho!* they were all clapped in jail. Why? Because the name of 'Shakespeare' was the nom-de-plume for one 'whose power floweth far'.

It may have been Hesketh, a lawyer, who suggested anonymity to Clapham because Thomas Heyward, his friend, had suffered imprisonment for his Histories of Henry IV. This was the Heyward whom Chettle mentions as intimating that 'Shakespeare' protested against the piracy of his verses by the publisher of *The Passionate Pilgrim*; the only sign of irritation the concealed poet could allow himself.

Who list complain of wronged faith or fame
When he may shift it to another name?³

Another instance of a contemporary of de Vere using an alias is that of Dr. Dee's skryer, Mr. (afterwards Sir) Edward Kelley. When Dee first met the young man he was told that his name was Talbot, and it was as Talbot of Ireland that he was entered at Gloucester Hall, Oxford; now we do not know which was the alias. Likewise the grandson of Sir Thomas Lucy (of 'lowsie' fame) when publishing his two volumes of *Observations* assumed the nom-de-plume of

'Master Pike' from the 'luces' or 'pikes' in his coat of arms. Instances are legion, and I verily believe that not one of them had such good reasons for desiring to remain anonymous as the Earl of Oxford when he assumed the pen-name of 'William Shake-speare', devised from the Bulbeck crest of a lion shaking a broken spear, and/or from Harvey's reference to him as a spear-shaker.

This mask may have been covered by the name of one of the players in the Chamberlain's Company, who could have acted as a go-between for the Earl and his publishers, but such a contention is purely suppositional as no connection has yet been found between the Earl and the player. It has been said that William Shakspeare lodged at*the gatehouse of Hedingham Castle, but the assertion has yet to be investigated.

It need not surprise the reader when he discovers that Meres's list of celebrated poets and playwrights, in which he asserts that Edward de Vere is the best for comedy, also includes the name of Shakespeare. Meres knew the name from the title-pages of the quartos, but there is no evidence that he knew the man of Stratford personally in any way. And, of course, through his brother-in-law Florio, and Southampton, he may have been in the secret.

But however eager de Vere was to remain a concealed author, covering his tracks by having 'fair copies' made of at least the earlier plays, so that Heminge and Condell, or Ben Jonson on their behalf, could say that they received Shakespeare's papers with never a blot on them, he must have wished nevertheless that posterity should give him his due commendation. It is a form of human egotism to wish future ages to acknowledge work well done; why else did Samuel Pepys put the cypher of the shorthand he used along with his diaries?

De Vere used a simpler method. In the play in which 'the author discovered too much of himself he closed the last scene with a special request to his cousin Horace de Vere (see Plate X):

'Horatio, I am dead,
Thou livst; report me and my cause aright to the unsatisfied.
O, God, Horatio, what a wounded name
Things standing thus unknown shall live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story——

Thus for posterity. But for himself:

The rest is silence!

Henry Peacham in 1622 began 'telling his story'.

In the time of our late Queen Elizabeth which was truly a Golden Age (for such a world of fine wits and excellent spirits it produced, whose like are hardly to be hoped for in any succeeding age) above others who honoured Poesie with their pens and practice (to omit her Majestic, who had a singular gift herein) were Edward, Earl of Oxford, the Lord Buckhurst, Henry, Lord Paget, our Phoenix the noble Sir Philip Sidney, M. Edward Dyer, M. Edmund Spenser, M. Samuel Daniel, with sondry others.

No mention of Shakespeare, but to have listed first the name of the Earl of Oxford, in a catalogue wherein the name of Spenser appears, shows that more of de Vere's work must have been known to Peacham than the few verses that have found their way into anthologies.

Further proof of this is a verse of Peacham's, printed under the device of a closed helmet (the beaver being down, the wearer is concealed):

For best desert, still liveth out of view,
Or soon by Envie is commanded downe,
Nor can his heaven-bred spirit lowly sue
Though t'were *to gaine a kingdom and a crowne*;
Beside it tells us, that the valliant heart
Can live content, though *wanteth his dessert*.

NOTES

1. Marginalia.
2. *The Man Shakespeare and his Tragic Life Story*.
3. Joseph Hall in *Biting Satires*, 1598; a book listed to be 'called in' in 1599.

CHAPTER 16

DISCUSSION

THROUGHOUT the foregoing chapters I have endeavoured to show how entirely impossible it is that the nearly illiterate 'wittawer' of Stratford should have written the greatest plays of all time, owing to his lack of education, travel, contact with the high-born; from his character, judging by the little we know of his life, and particularly from the absence of middle- and lower-class characterization in those plays to portray his own milieu. Moreover, that no juvenilia, save *Lucy is Lousie*, preceded the delightful *Venus and Adonis*, and that after his retirement to Stratford until his death, though he occupied himself with the purchase of small plots of land in the neighbourhood and carried on various law-suits, he neither wrote any more nor cared for the work he is supposed to have written.

In dying he left no letters, library or documents other than his will, and did not mention upwards of twenty plays not published (some not finished), but made a number of petty bequests, assuring them to their legatees or their progeny through several generations; inasmuch as he left the bulk of his property to Susanna Hall and her heirs 'for ever'.

'For ever'—his Stratford property, but not a word about sixteen unpublished plays, presumably lying in his desk or in manager's offices; his 'sugar'd sonnets' which were to perpetuate his friend's beauty even 'till the judgment', or his presumed valuable library!

Dr. Boas says with very reasonable despondency—'How helpful it would have been had he mentioned some of his books in his will.'!

No one who knew him personally has left a letter or other comment upon him as a writer, until works in the name 'Shake-speare' appeared in print, and then they praise the work, but never connect it with the maltster and actor of Stratford-on-Avon, or give any hint that they were acquainted with his person or his home town.

In giving the details of Shakspeare's life I have purposely avoided reference to the so-called 'evidence' that William Shakspeare the player was also the dramatist in the ambiguous tirade called *Green's Groatsworth of Wit, bought with a Million of Repentance*, because I do not consider it 'evidence' at all.

Even Sir Sidney Lee describes it as 'a miscellany of euphuistic

*fiction** before proceeding to quote the passage which he imagines refers to Shakspeare.

Let me re-quote it, but first note this is not *A Groatsworth of Wit* by Robert Green, but *Green's Groatsworth of Wit* written by a third party. Later, after Green's death, Harvey wrote *Green's Memorial*, a collection of sonnets.

The *Groatsworth of Wit* was published in 1596 and addressed thus:

To those Gentlemen his Quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making Plaies, R. G. wisheth a better exercise, and wisdom to prevent his extremities. [Your guess is as good as mine as to who these anonymous playwrights were. Fleay suggests Marlowe, Peele and Lodge. Not Nashe, because Nashe was suspected of being the actual author of the *Groatsworth of Wit*.] Baseminded men al three of you if by my miserie ye be not warned; for unto none of you, like me, sought those burres to cleave; those puppets, I meane, that speak from our mouths, those antiks garnisht in our colours. Is it not strange that I, to whom they al have beene beholding, ... be ... forsaken? Yea trust them not; for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that, with his Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide, supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blaïike verse as the best of you; and being an absolute Johannes Factotum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country, . . . while ye may, seeke you better maisters, for it is a pittie men of such rare wits should be subject to the pleasures of such rude groomes.

The contention is that *Shake-scene* means *Shakspeare* and *bumbasting out a blanke verse* means writing plays by an actor, and that the line *Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide* is an adaptation of the Duke of York's vituperative tirade against Queen Margaret in the old quarto play of *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York and the Death of good King Henry VI*, which formed the first two parts of what was later *Henry VI*, where the line in question runs—0, *tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide*.

But the whole contention falls to pieces when examined.

1. We have no proof who wrote the *Groatsworth of Wit*, it may be a satire the point of which is lost to us.

2. 'Shake-scene' is a term for an 'out-going termagant' of an actor, one who 'struts and bellows', a 'robustious periwig-pated fellow that tears a passion to tatters'; it is not necessarily anything to do with the particular actor 'Shakspeare', any more than the murderous villain 'Shakebag' in *Michael Arden of Faversham* is a libel on Shakspeare's character. We have also 'Shake-shaft' and 'Shake-rag' in contemporary literature. And what explanation can be offered of Gabriel Harvey's furious attack upon Thomas Nashe—wherein he calls him 'a second Shackerly Rashswash'?

Shakspere was pronounced 'Shack' (like an old hut)—as it is phonetically written by the clerk in his will—but never 'Shake'. Mr. Begley points this out. 'The Stratford man never had a "Shake" in his name, nor yet his ancestors; and as to having a *hyphen* in the middle, all his people would have stared with amazement.'

3. To 'bumbast out a blank verse' conveys the same idea as 'shake-scene', the actor 'mouthing lines that better wits have framed' and even mouthing 'more than is set down for him', gagging 'to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh'. There is no suggestion of the actor *writing* the blank verse—it is a question of acting.

4. As to the reference to *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*, we have here a bad case of anachronism to imagine it quoted, in 1591, from a play not published until 1595—and not published as by *William Shakespeare* until 1619, when Green had been dead *twenty-seven* years! Moreover at the time the *Groatsworth of Wit* was published 'Shakespeare' had not published *anything whatsoever*; the 'first heir of his invention' (a love poem, not a play) not appearing until 1593.

As I see in this no allusion to 'Shacksper' as a writer I will not bother the reader with Chettle's apology for publishing the *Groatsworth* which, he understood, had offended some unnamed persons, for he, again, makes no allusion to Shakspere by name, though some untrustworthy writers like to slip his name in between brackets, as though it was in the text, to deceive the unsuspecting reader.

Lord Oxford, who knew the literary hacks very well, wrote: 'But the world is so cunning, as of a *shadow* they can make a *substance* and of a *likelihood* a *truth*.'

To return to William of Stratford and our discussion.

Ben Jonson made so many contradictory remarks (if the talks with Drummond of Hawthornden are authentic and not a seventeenth-century forgery as suggested by Mr. Stainer) that it is difficult to find the truth. But it must never be forgotten that Ben was, first and foremost, a humorist—not of Shakespeare's vein of humour, but a lower-class type, as may be seen by comparing *Twelfth Night* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with *Eastward Ho!*—a rollicking, bawdy humour that enjoyed practical jokes as much as verbal.

Ben had a room reserved for him at Wilton Place, the home of the Countess of Pembroke, and he and Adrian Gilbert, the Countess's 'artificer' and a 'great buffoon', must have kept the household in a glorious uproar.

The Countess, and her two sons, William, Earl of Pembroke, and Philip, Earl of Montgomery, who had married Oxford's daughter Susan, were responsible for the collecting together of 'Shakespeare's

plays (sixteen were included which had never before been printed) which in 1623 were published as the First Folio. When Jonson wrote his dedicatory verses as an introduction, and penned the preface 'to the Reader', for Heminge and Condell, he was enjoying himself in his own particular vein, and at the same time obliging his patrons. If you doubt this read his dedication to *Tom Coryatt's Crudities*.

Thomas Coryatt was a great traveller who had an amusing way of recounting his travels abroad, in the course of which he had walked 1,975 miles in one pair of shoes which, he assured his readers, were only soled once, and these he hung up in the church at Odcombe, his home-town in Somerset.

When his book of travels appeared in print more than sixty writers contributed verses, vying with each other to produce ridiculous mock-heroic stanzas in Greek, Latin, Italian, French and even an idiotic gibberish called Utopian. Ben Jonson was one of these jokers, who included Michael Drayton, John Donne and Thomas Campion, and his verse concluded:

Take, Reader, with a laughing look
This Odcombe, new-come, wellcome book!

In all this there is nothing spiteful, only 'leg-pulling', and when he said to William Drummond (enjoying mystifying the prim Scotsman), 'He redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more on him to be prayed than to be pardoned,' he was referring to the Stratford player whom he had just accused of bungling his words in *Julius Ccesar*, and *not* to the author of those plays which he was then collecting and collating for the press. We can sympathize when he said, 'Would he had blotted a thousand' lines, when it came to selecting the best in a revised MS. with its myriad interlineations.

Before leaving the vexed question of Jonson's references to Shakspeare we must look at his epigram on the '*Poet-ape*' which appeared in print in 1616, the date of Shakspeare's death.

Poor Poet-ape, that would be thought our chief,
Whose works are e'en the frippery of wit,
From brokerage is become so bold a thief,
As we, the robb'd, leave rage, and pity it.
At first he made low shifts, would pick and glean,
Buy the revision of old plays, now grown
To little wealth, and credit in the scene,
He takes up all, makes each man's wit his own,
And told of this he slights it. Tut, such crimes
The sluggish, gaping auditor devours;

He marks not whose 'twas first, and aftertimes
 May judge it to be his, as well as ours.
 Fool! as if half-eyes will not know a fleece
 From locks of wool, or shreds from the whole piece.

Well, no name is appended to this—it refers to an unknown poet-imitator—or ape.

If it refers to Shakspeare the actor, what does it tell us? That he put forward the writings of others as though they were his own; in fact, that he was an impostor. He Takes up all, makes each man's wit his own', and does it with such *eclat* that the 'auditors' (that is, the listeners) are deceived, and he finally fancies 'it to be his as well as ours'. Just the situation Ben Jonson would know to be a fact, and, as the epigram was dedicated to the Earl of Pembroke, he knew that his patron (who gave him £20 a year to buy books, and procured for him the post of the Court Revels at a pension of £100 a year) would also apprehend and enjoy the joke.

To leave Ben Jonson and quote Emerson:

Shakespeare was a popular player . . . nobody suspected he was the poet of the human race: and the secret was kept faithfully from poets and intellectual men as from courtiers and frivolous people,

except, of course, from de Vere's nearest and dearest friends and relations.

In passing, William of Stratford did not leave even a memorial ring to his friend Ben Jonson! Nor did Ben Jonson—who 'Loved the man this side idolatory'—include in the list he made of the great men of his acquaintance the name of William Shakspeare!

" Camden, Ben Jonson's patron to whom he admitted his indebtedness, visited the town of Stratford and did not mention its 'chiefest ornament'.

' Edmund Spenser—a poet's poet if ever there was one—completely ignored him.

Although the company with which his name as an actor is, associated toured the provinceSj and left many references to their activities, not one has been discovered that mentions William Shakspeare.

Henslowe, proprietor of the Rose Theatre, and author of the famous diary jottings where he recorded money paid to playwrights—evidently never paid *anything* to William Shakspeare.

According to contemporary records William Shakspeare only played in one Shakespeare play, *Julius Ccesar*, when he bungled his words; and, from traditional hearsay, 'the Ghost' in *Hamlet*.

When Richard Burbage died in 1618 London wept. 'Sorrow for

his loss seems to have made men forget to show the sorrow due to the queen's [Anne of Denmark's] death. The city and stage were clothed in gloom.'²

Lord Pembroke himself penned a tribute. Might not Shakspeare, even as a well-known actor, have had his sonneteer to honour him, as G. B. Sheridan had Lord Byron to lament his passing, or, as just related, Burbage had Lord Pembroke to sing his praises?

The Earl of Southampton, who is recorded at one time as seeing plays every day, and who received the 'poet's' heart delivered to him on a metaphorical platter of Sonnets, gave not a word or sigh by letter or verse that he cared that this man who had loved him so devotedly had died.

Obviously 'Shakespeare', whom we exalt to the skies, who also knew his own value—'countless voices yet unborn shall read'—was unknown to his contemporaries.

Now see how two 'Stratfordians' contradict each other.

Sir Sidney Lee (*The Times*, January 8th, 1902):

Patient investigation which has been in progress for more than 200 years has brought together a mass of biographical detail which far exceeds that accessible in the case of any poet contemporary with Shakespeare.

Sir Edmund Chambers:

... after all careful scrutiny of clues and all the patient balancing of possibilities the last word for a self-respecting scholarship can only be that of nescience.

'Nescience', says C. W. Barrell of New York, 'is only the sixty-four dollar synonym for ignorance.'

From the little we know of Shakespeare's personality he was a hard business-man, keen on litigation, probably a hard worker, a hard drinker, and when in his cups a pursuer of women, or apt to create shindies; his whole record does not evince one single admirable or noble word or deed, and his contact with culture is denied by his life story. Could this man have been a writer of peerless poetry, philosophy and refined thought?

According to the 'Stratfordian' thesis his life may be divided into three distinct epochs. The first twenty-five to twenty-eight years passed at Stratford-on-Avon in coarse unintellectual circumstances; the middle period of, at most, ten years spent in London, during which he produced works of unsurpassed quality; and finally the retirement to Stratford and intellectual obscurity for about twelve years. As Lord Penzance said: 'To be sure the grub turns into the

butterfly and is not long about it. But whoever heard of the butterfly turning back again into a grub? ... If it was difficult to believe in William Shakspeare's transformation, it is harder still to give credit to his relapse.'

Upon this T. J. Looney³ comments forcefully:

Having it is supposed by virtue of an immeasurable genius forced himself out of an unrefined and illiterate milieu into the very forefront of the literary and intellectual world, he returns whilst still in his prime, ... to his original surroundings. For the last eighteen years of his life he has himself described as 'William Shakspeare, of Stratford-on-Avon'; yet, with so prolonged a residence there, such intellectual gifts as he is supposed to have possessed, such force of character as would have been necessary' to raise him in the first instance, he passes his life among a mere handful of people without leaving the slightest impress of his eminent powers or the most trifling fruits of his attainments and educational emancipation upon any one or anything at Stratford.

According to this plan of life—writing plays in London, and conducting extensive business in Stratford at the same time—Shakspeare would have had to carry on a deal of correspondence, writing to give orders and opinions from London concerning Stratford negotiations, or from Stratford as to engagements for acting parts or the production of plays, settlement of payment, etc.: yet not one such letter exists!

Only six deplorable signatures.

Three of these appear on his will, one on each separate page, and of these Sir E. Maunde-Thompson, in his work on *Shakespeare's Penmanship*, says that if they were on three entirely separate documents we should be justified as crediting them to three different hands.

A man who had written upwards of 200,000 lines of verse and prose (not counting the revisions!) had a signature that is barely decipherable! So deplorable, in fact, are the laborious squiggles that they look like the work of a man trying, with the aid of a copy, to pen his name. So little do they look like the work of a man used to writing that excuses have had to be invented—paralysis, palsy, nervousness, or as a last resource, 'wilful perversity', despite the testator's declaration (in the hand of the lawyer's clerk) that he was in 'perfect health and memory', and paradoxically enough he produced three deplorable signatures with paralytic hands, but none in his youth or heyday.

Three other signatures appear on documents connected with the Blackfriars property in 1613, and on a mortgage deed which is now in the British Museum and may be a forgery.

In the Blackfriars signature the actor wrote 'W. Shakspe', and Sir E. Maunde-Thompson thinks he abbreviated his name so that it should fit on to the tab that held the seal. Queer that the writer of plays containing so much legal knowledge should not know where to sign his name, and that it could run over on to the parchment proper; more queer that the lawyers or scriveners did not inform him if he was ignorant, and still queerer that the dramatist had no seal, despite his crest and coat of arms, and had to borrow one of the scrivener's clerk. Obviously he was a man to whom the implements of the writer's craft were foreign.

On the other hand

Lord Oxford left between thirty and forty letters, now in the British Museum or in Lord Salisbury's collection at Hatfield House, all written in a clear legible hand, 'the sweet Roman hand' of *Twelfth Night*. If anything, the letters improve in legibility rather than otherwise as Oxford grew older, a fact which seems to suggest that at the close of his life he was accustomed to write for the press and had to consider the question of making every letter clear and unmistakable in the eyes of an unintelligent compositor.⁴

After Shakspeare's death his son-in-law Dr. Hall never referred to him as a great man, or recorded the cause of his demise, and when a certain surgeon, Dr. James Cook, came to New Place in 1642 Susanna showed him her husband's MSS. but nothing of her father's.

If Southampton ever made the gift of £1,000 to the man of Stratford it must have been for the onerous role of 'dummy' to hide the real author, which he fulfilled with honourable thoroughness.

By replacing this 'dummy' with the keenly alive, very versatile Edward de Vere, the lyric poet of outstanding charm and ability, the 'best for comedy' in his youth, we get a personality and a background from which the plays could have emerged. Plays written by a man soaked in the history of his country and in the practice of play-producing from his childhood; a man whose sensitivity was like the 'wiry concord' of the virginals he loved; keenly receptive, prone to exaggerate his own feelings and reactions, as in the Sonnets, where, as in his youthful poems, floods of tears discharge his debt to unhappiness. A man who, from a buoyant youth, through misfortune, calumny and some waywardness, relapsed into a saddened and disappointed maturity. All really sensitive natures are disappointed in the end, their aims having been so far beyond their achievements. A man, moreover, who whilst writing such a side-splitting comedy as *Twelfth Night* was breaking his heart over a lost friendship; bewailing his loneliness and unworthiness. Thus it does

not surprise us when he tells us in one of his charming little verses:

I am not as I seem to be
For when I smile I am not glad;
A thrall, although you count me free,
/, most in mirth, most pensive sad.

Speaking of youthful poems; it has been suggested that de Vere's early verse (for which no one has claimed more than originality and charm as the juvenilia of a great poet) shows an imperfectly trained ear in its alliteration; such as:

Patience, perforce, is such a pinching pain.

Alliteration did 'service as rhyme with many early songsters, and the Euphuists revived it. As the leader of the Euphuistic movement de Vere used it in his work, but this does not exclude him from Shakespearian honours.

To make him curse this cursed, crimeful night', wrote the great Shakespeare—not in his best vein—in his second long poem *Lucrece* de Vere could not out-alliterate that.

In *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* we get:

The wight of which wounds thy wandering will is he
or Pistol mockingly in *Henry IV*, Part 2:

Let grievous ghastly gaping wounds
Untwine the sisters three.

Shakespeare himself knew its limitations and absurdities, as he showed when he travestied it in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the lines given to Pyramus and Thisbe.

I think that de Vere had that gift which Burns desired of God for everyone, to see himself as others saw him, to laugh at that self and enjoy the joke.

Much has been discussed about Shakespeare's dialect, and although there must have been more difference between the speech of the courtier and the peasant than there is today, very little of it appears in the pages of Shakespeare. It always amuses me when producers make their funny men speak with a cockney accent, omit their A's, or assume some dialect to give weight to their characterization quite at variance with the text.

With every available intercourse, travel, films and radio, one has to go no further than Newbury in Berkshire to hear a young farm-hand asking for his hoe—'give 'e to F. How much more acute must have been the difference between London aristocracy and country

folk—isolated by bad roads and lack of communication—at the end of the sixteenth century, as Coleridge says:

How the young countryman could have acquired the speech of Gods when even Country gentlemen spoke the dialect of clowns; how he could have acquired the book-learning which is conspicuous in the play [*Love's Labour's Lost*] when even the country clergy, according to Macauley, found the utmost difficulty in procuring books.

Yet Shakespeare gives us surprisingly little country accent, and none at all, I venture to assert, that is peculiar to Warwickshire. Edgar, when assuming madness, uses—of all things—a Kentish accent! But this can be accounted for by the fact that John Lyly, for ten years de Vere's secretary, was a Kentish man.

Then the leader of the artisans in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a weaver, as he would be in towns with a pronounced weaving industry, and this we have in Essex and particularly at Lavenham where Edward de Vere was Lord of the Manor, and where his grandfather had, with the rich staplers of the town, built a magnificent church and Guildhall.

In *Henry VI* Cade abuses Lord Say with the words

Thou Say\ thou *sergel* Nay, thou *Buckram* lord.

Say was finer, serge coarser cloth manufactured in Essex. Buckram was a tougher material used for linings.

Oxford also had an estate on the Avon—so the 'Sweet Swan' (that ridiculous metaphor of Ben Jonson's, considering that swans are *mute*) can have applied to him as surely as to William of Stratford. This estate was Bilton Manor near Rugby. Here the guide will show you a 'Shakespeare's bedroom' where, he will tell you, the Bard slept, and where he wrote *As You Like It*. Why? Because it is only twenty-five miles from Stratford and near to the forest of Arden! And they really would like you to believe that the maltster of Stratford who consorted with the Sippers and Topers of Bidford would, like Christopher Sly, be given the best bedroom in Lord Oxford's country seat. How much more reasonable is the thesis that Lord Oxford, when out of favour at Court—say 1581-3—should retire to his country manor, and 'being never less idle than when he was alone', employ his time writing the country idyll of *Court* versus the *Wood*, as delineated in *As You Like It* and foreshadowed in his youthful poem:⁶

Faction that ever dwells
In court, where wit excells,
Hath set defiance;

Fortune and love have sworn,
That they were never born
Of one alliance.

This discord it begot
Atheists that honour not.
Nature thought good,
Fortune should ever dwell
In court, where wits excell;
Love keep the wood.

So to the wood went I,
With love to live and lie,
Fortune's forlorn.
Experience of my youth,
Made me think humble Truth
In deserts born.

From As You Like It:

Nay now thou goest from Fortune's office to Nature's. Fortune reigns in gifts of the world, not in the linements of Nature.

And again—as spoken by the Duke:

Are not these woods more free from peril than the envious court?

(A phrase intended to spite the Court, not to praise the wood.) So it is possible the tradition of *As You Like It* being written at Bilton Manor may have had foundation in fact.

Speaking of the 'Wood' or 'Forest of Arden' brings me to the oft-repeated assertion that Shakespeare, as a Warwickshire-born man, remembered and introduced into his plays a countryman's love and knowledge of the countryside: this is far from the truth, as Mr. Greenwood in his *Shakespeare Problem Re-stated* is at pains to point out. Shakespeare never introduces any of the country scenes or festivities for their own sake. There is no mention of the village forge with children at the door; no harvest-home, no mumming or country-town traditional rites. Sir Sidney Lee, for some unaccountable reason, says that the countryside and town of Stratford are to be seen in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*! Why? Surely if there is one play in which Shakespeare has made no doubt of his topography it is the *Merry Wives*. He mentions the stile from Frogmore, the Park and 'Hearne the Hunter', which is not a tradition of Charlecote but of Windsor, and talks of the adjacent towns of Reading, Maidenhead and Colnebrook; of losses at the Garter Inn. He knew the chapel and the castle galleries. I have never heard that Shakspeare

visited Windsor; he *may* have done, but we do know that Lord Oxford was there on several occasions, the first time in his teens when he lay ill, and the physicians rooked him so egregiously.

Host of the Garter. Shall I lose my doctor? No, he gives me the potions and the motions!

During convalescence he would have had leisure to stroll round the town and castle and ride abroad to adjacent villages, and so become thoroughly conversant with the history, traditions and lay-out of the neighbourhood. The play could have been called 'The Merry Wives of *Stratford*' had that town been intended. Why not?

But Shakespeare's nature-lore is of the scantiest and often incorrect. I may seem to contradict myself when I say this, having quoted the exquisite verses from *Venus and Adonis* depicting the hunted hare, but that was the observation of the huntsman, not of the countryman. Whatever he writes about he gilds with his own magic. He talks of a 'desert' with a 'palm tree' in *As You Like It*, and a critic is inspired to say 'We hear the wind rustling in the fragrant leaves of the fairyland of Arden.' Many of his phrases come direct from Ovid, and his 'nightingale on a pomegranate tree' never existed off the embroidered cushion in his lady's boudoir. The 'dive-dipper' mentioned in *Venus and Adonis* is not, as Sir George Greenwood suggests, a sea-bird but a small passerine of the upper reaches of wild tumbling rivers with boulders forming waterfalls, and 'peering through a wave' would be correct for this frequenter of foaming, tossing waters. Whether in the sixteenth century the Avon was a more turbulent river than it is now, and the habitat of this little bird, I cannot say; but at Richmond-on-Thames salmon fishing was one of the main incomes of the inhabitants in the sixteenth century, and there would be no salmon unless the river had occasional rough places. Here the bird might have been seen, and here came Oxford on many occasions to Richmond Palace with the Queen and her Court.

There is an amusing remark in *King John* which is quite enigmatical until the key is supplied.

The Bastard Philip Falconbridge, having been acknowledged by King John as the illegitimate son of Richard Coeur de Lion, and knighted as 'Sir Richard', is confronted by his irate mother and her steward:

Bastard. James Gurney, wilt thou give us leave awhile? [He wishes to speak to his mother alone].

Gurney. Good leave, good Philip.

Bastard. Philip?—sparrow!—James.

The word 'sparrow' is equivalent to 'pish' because Gurney had called him 'Philip'—when he was by then 'Sir Richard'—and the reason is found in a little poem in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, called, 'Philip, my sparrow, is all my love.' This anthology de Vere edited, if he did not actually write the poem itself.

To speak of a 'Shakespeare Group', or what Ivor Brown calls 'the Shakespeare gang', is to me fantastic. Whoever heard of anything poetic or really great emanating from a Board of Directors?

Those who see various hands in the Shakespeare plays may be assured that such emendations were made after the author's death, or were managers' adaptations for the theatre which found their way into the Quartos.

The board of directors were those who published the First Folio—Jonson, the Herberts, Oxford's daughter, and perhaps Lord Bacon; and it is a pity their discussions and notes regarding what, or what not, to include in the canon have not been preserved. They would probably form another Northumberland Manuscript with the doodlings of the chairman left to bemuse posterity.

The roughed-out work of a dead master may be finished by friends, relatives or pupils, and during his lifetime an author might incorporate a scene suggested by a producer, or delete at the request of a principal actor something that dragged. But that one hand and brain produced the bulk of the canon I have no doubt. Apocryphal works such as *Locrine* or *The Two Noble Kinsmen* may have been passed off under his pseudonym or initials by name-thieving publishers who thought a cuckoo's egg would never be detected in this nest, and that the name of 'Shakespeare' now represented something superior; but that the plays were the work of a 'Group' of writers I refuse to believe.

Anthony d Wood⁶ understood the publishers' tricks in this respect, as can be seen in his notes on Philip Sidney's works.

Almanzor and Almanzaida a Novel, London, Oct. 1678. This Book coming out so late, it is to be enquired whether Sir Philip Sidney's name is not set to it for Sale's sake being a usual thing in these days to set a great name to a Book or Books, by sharking Book-sellers or snivelling writers to get Bread!

Then there are those who would give to Edward de Vere the authorship of nearly all dramas and most poems of the Elizabethan era, in reverse ratio of J. M. Robertson⁷ who carved up the canon and divided it amongst those 'deserving men', the hack-writers of the day.

Enthusiasm must not lead to distortion.

Moreover let us leave our dramatist some honour of *invention*. There are some critics who make him collect his plot from an old romance or an *Ur-Hamlet*, then draw on one, two or three contemporary episodes, side by side, or superimposed to make up a drama, whereby 'invention' is ruled out. But it must not be forgotten that he was, as Mr. F. D. Losey⁸ says, 'the Prince of Story Tellers', for how perfectly in character each one of his people speak.

I do not deny that the plays show definite autobiographical hints, in fact, I have written in favour of this at some length, pointing to clues; nor do I deny that contemporary references have crept in, often by the fools 'speaking more than is set down for them'; but that a character should, beside its own place in the dramatic story, represent, say, Philip II of Spain, and at the same time Alençon or Bothwell (with a side-line in autobiography), is obviously ridiculous.

Let us leave our dramatist his creator's nimbus.

The dating of the plays has ever been problematical, resting chiefly on the year of publication, or mention of the date when first known to have been performed, but this only proves that they must have been written *before* that date, but not how long before. Meres's list of 1594 includes *Titus Andronicus*, which is thought by some to be a spurious play.⁹

As Shakspeare of Stratford did not come to London until, say, 1584-6, and produced the 'first heir of his invention' in 1593, most Stratfordians date the plays from 1593 onwards. Thus they make the author draw on an *Ur-Hamlet* for the foundation of his great tragedy because they cannot fix in the date to fit the writing of this early version of *Hamlet* himself. The same applies to *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*—the basis of *Henry VI*. Oxford would have been of an age and aptitude to have written the first draft for acting, and revised it later; but not the man of Stratford. With this reassessment of dates and attribution of the plays it soon becomes obvious that there were practically no historical plays until de Vere, out of the love and reverence he bore his ancestors and the great days of England's past, began to set them forth for the public stage.¹⁰

The Two Gentlemen of Verona, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *All's Well* must have come from his pen (at least in their acting version) in the 70's, being youthful in style and bearing so many autobiographical hints. I have appended to this thesis Admiral H. H. Holland's list of dates, drawn from the many topical allusions he has found in the plays, together with the orthodox list for comparison. From this list the Admiral has omitted *The Tempest*

and I am in entire accord with him in believing that this is not a true *Shakespeare' play. Oxford may have roughed out the idea many years before but not continued with it because of the feebleness of the plot and the indistinctness of the characters. Much praise has been lavished on this play, but I think its merit lies in being so nebulous that the reader can read into it whatever his fancy suggests. The characters are shadowy, not at all true to life as is 'Shakespeare's' way, and the lovers are so w/z-loving that *Fond Desire* must indeed have been dead in the author!

There are those who believe that in *The Tempest* 'Shakespeare' is saying farewell to his work, that Ariel represents his genius and Caliban his baser nature, but such persons read into the play a host of meanings for which there is no more warrant than there is for the Church Fathers finding allusions to Christ and the Church in Solomon's *Song of Songs*. Dramatically *The Tempest* is a poor play, couched in a language that is neither prose nor blank verse, but prose chopped up into lengths to look like blank verse, with a carry-over of the sentence on to the next line with not even a comma. The philosophy is that of a fatalist, 'we are such stuff as dreams are made on', and has not the true Shakespearian ring.

If *The Tempest* was commenced by Shakespeare then he must have thought the theme not worthy of his pen and thrown it aside. I conjecture that it may have been found by his son-in-law, the Earl of Derby, who finished it and tried to make it stage-worthy. Any tentative thought by the great master may have seemed to contain something too good to destroy, just as at present we treasure sketches that Turner intended for the waste-paper basket.

The Tempest was performed at Court by the King's Men in 1611, when the 'dummy' had retired to Stratfordian obscurity, and it was not published until the Folio appeared in 1623. Karl Elze¹¹ gives the probable date of writing as 1604, the year de Vere died and his papers passed into the hands of his relatives.

The delightful little lyric *Where the bee sucks* may have been a contribution by the Countess of Pembroke.

To conclude with a question. Were the plays written with a definitely propagandist purpose? I consider it most unlikely. They concentrated on 'state' rather than 'church' as the old morality plays had done, but the patriotism that is in them is the out-flowing of the truly patriotic nature which was the Earl's.

In his trueness to himself he kept to the principle inculcated by his uncle, to be a 'pattern, leader and guide', to fight against the wrong use of power, whether civil, military or ecclesiastical. His nobility, which by lineage placed him even above his Queen, made

him bold to speak his mind, even to her and her councillors, whilst to the groundlings he showed, in living pictures, the futility of wars, revolts and bickerings.

This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror
But when it first did help to wound itself.

Thus far are the plays propaganda—to show the world its ills and their cure—but he was no fee'd propagandist of the state.

Invest me in my motley; give me leave
To speak my mind, and I will through and through
Cleanse the fould body of th' infected world
If they will patiently receive my medicine.

That was Oxford's mission. That was the great spirit behind the 'Shakespeare' plays.

What I have written here might have been in the near past 'caviare to the general', but the proofs of its truth are accumulating so fast that the day is at hand when even a 'Flat Earther' must capitulate, when, indeed, even the most die-hard Stratfordians 'will out of their burrows like conies after rain'.

NOTES

1. William Cartwright, actor (son of William Cartwright, also an actor and friend of Heminge, Condell and Alleyn), left books and pictures to Dulwich College. Shakespeare does not mention a single book.
2. Mrs. Carmichael Stopes.
3. *Shakespeare Identified*.
4. Gilbert Standen in *Shakespeare Author ship , A Summary of Evidence*.
5. Published in Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, 1591.
6. *Athence Oxonensis*.
7. *The Genuine in Shakespeare*.
8. Introduction to The Kingsway Edition of Shakespeare's Works, 1932.
9. See excellent discussion on this play in George Greenwood's *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*.
10. See A. S. Cairncross in *The Problem of Hamlet*—also Admiral Holland's *Shakespeare, Oxford and Elizabethan Times*. Also List in Appendix.
11. *The Supposed Travels of Shakespeare*. Translated by Dora Schmidt.

CHAPTER 17

CONCLUSION

IN the space at my disposal I cannot give in detail the theories held in favour of other claimants for Shakespearian honours, but for those who are anxious to pursue theories other than the Oxfordian I cannot do better than recommend Gilbert Slater's book, *Seven Shakespeares*, in which he sets out the comparative claims of each nominee. But I must warn the reader that his final conclusion is that the hypothesis for the Earl of Oxford has never been refuted.

To mention those sixteenth-century poets whose merits have seemed to their upholders to be of the Shakespearian order, I have to go back to Horace Walpole, who in his *Royal and Noble Authors* suggested Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, Earl of Dorset, in the following paragraph:

Tiptoft and Rivers set the example of borrowing light from other countries, and patronized the importer of printing, Caxton. The Earls of Oxford and Dorset struck out new lights for the drama, without making the multitude weep at ridiculous representations of Scripture. To the two former we *owe printing*; to the two latter, *taste*;—what do we not owe perhaps to the last of the four! Our historic plays are allowed to have been founded on the heroic narratives in the Mirror for Magistrates; to that plan, and to the boldness of Lord Buckhurst's new scenes, perhaps we owe SHAKESPEARE.

How near he came then, two hundred and fifty years ago, to solving the problem! No one now seriously considers the author of *Gorboduc* as a possible claimant for Shakespearian honours, since his style, and the details of his well-known life, rule this out; but had Walpole really considered the potentiality of his first choice for the Haste' which 'struck out new lights for the drama' and investigated his theory, we might now have no Shakespeare Problem.

Next in order of selection was, of course, Lord Bacon, but his supporters claim so much for him, even *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the pseudonyms of 'Spenser', 'Greene' and 'Marlowe' in addition to 'Shakespeare', that they make of him a 'raree show'. Moreover any keen investigation the theory would have prompted was drowned in Ignatius Donnelly's *Cryptogram*, and when one comes to Alfred Dodd (author of *The Uncrowned King*) who, reading down the side of a

poem (few Baconians seem to read the poems themselves), discovers this phrase:

Frances Tudor tastes fate's titty bottle,

one wonders if he has any sense of the ridiculous or has ever read *Romeo and Juliet* where he would have discovered that the sixteenth-century method of feeding babies was by a wet nurse.

The Northumberland Manuscript (a collection of sixteenth-century MSS. under one cover) was discovered at Northumberland House in 1867, and because a clerk has 'doodled' over the page, writing the names of Francis Bacon and Shakespeare in close proximity (one version of Ffrauncis Bacon is written upside down), it is taken as evidence that they are the same man.

Dr. T. J. Furnivall says 'his [Shakespeare's] name would naturally present itself to an idle penman in wanting something to use his pen upon'.

Could the man who betrayed Essex and sought the destruction of Southampton be the same man who wrote the Sonnets?

Joseph Greenstreet (1891) was the first to put forward the Earl of Derby as a possible 'Shakespeare' under the title *A Hitherto Unknown Author of Elizabethan Comedies*. He was probably spurred towards this theory by finding a sixteenth-century letter from a Catholic spy, George Fenner, to Balthazar Gybels of Antwerp which said: 'Therle of Derby is busyed only in penning comedies for the common players.' The writer's intent was to inform the recipient of the letter that the young Earl, although a Catholic, was not to be drawn into plots against England or Elizabeth.

I have shown how Derby, as a son-in-law of the Earl of Oxford, shared the elder man's enthusiasm for the drama, and I believe that he was the author of *Locrine*, *The Puritan* and *The Life and Death of Thomas, Lord Cromwell*, three plays published under the initials W. S. which stood for William Stanley. There was no call for protest on the part of the actor Shakspeare, or the dramatist Oxford; only the public were gulled into thinking these plays were by the more famous and delectable writer 'William Shake-speare'.

The Earl of Derby had travelled on the Continent and visited the cities in France and Northern Italy with which many of the Shakespeare plots are concerned, so that he would have first-hand knowledge upon which to draw.

Professor Abel Lefranc in *Sous le Masque de William Shakespeare, William Stanley, 6me Comte de Derby*, has gone into details of these travels and drawn many convincing conclusions, but most of them fit the Earl of Oxford equally well.

Closely connected by family ties and literary interests, Derby, I believe, put the finishing touches to plays which Oxford left incomplete; also that he wrote light comedies of his own, and was, in the main, the author of *The Tempest*.

Whatever theories have been brought forward to bolster up the claim of Derby are, however, nullified by the two following contentions.

For the last thirty-odd years of his life he did no more play-writing; with the death of Oxford in 1604, the impetus died out. It is obvious that the man who left plays unfinished so that they were botched up by inferior hands, died at the height of his powers. He did not retire into literary silence as did both Shakspeare of Stratford and the Earl of Derby.

The second point is a clue from the Sonnets. Would Derby have written those poems to his friend Southampton, begging him to marry, when he knew that the proposed lady was Elizabeth de Vere, whom he himself wished to—and eventually did—espouse?

Mr. Claud Sykes in *Alias William Shakespeare* has written an engaging book on the theory that Roger Manners, 5th Earl of Rutland (de Vere's cousin), is the poet we seek. His demolition of the Stratfordian thesis is devastating, but his nomination of Rutland fails because Rutland was born too late—being in fact only seventeen when *Venus and Adonis* was published. His claim seems to rest chiefly upon his visit to the Court at Elsinore in Denmark, and to the fact that whilst studying at the university at Padua he had two comrades whose names were Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

The claims for Raleigh are too slight to merit inclusion here. He was a poet of charm, and a friend of Oxford's if there be truth in Aubrey's account, so that descriptions of cannibals and 'deserts idle' which appear in *Othello* may well have been Oxford's retention of the great traveller's tales.

Christopher Marlowe's claim seems to have originated in his having 'shuffled off this mortal coil' at the precise date that the 'Shakespeare' poems began to appear—1593.

He was, by the testimony of a jury of sixteen men, declared to have met his death at the hands of one Abraham Frizer, who stabbed him in self-defence. This fray occurred in an inn at Deptford. The suggestion is that in fact he fled to France, leaving his companions to foist the corpse of an unknown man upon the jury for examination. Whilst in France he wrote the Shakespeare plays. This is the

stuff for a 'thriller', and, to those who see strains of Marlowe in Shakespeare, may prove attractive—but there is too much to explain away.

That a woman should have the 'honour thrust upon her' will come as a surprise to some, but the claims of the poet Countess of Pembroke are not to be dismissed without consideration. The late Sir Henry Lawrence was a great advocate of hers, and jokingly referred to her as 'Wilhelmina Shakespeare', but he probably thought of her chiefly as an inspiration to the poet who was Shakespeare rather than the prime author herself.

Gabriel Harvey in *Piercers Superrogation* said: 'And what if she [Lady Pembroke] can publish more works in a month than Nash had published in his whole life; or the pregnantist of our inspired Heliconists can equal?' What did he mean?

Did he imagine, as others have done since, that she was the authoress of *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, published as by her brother, Sir Philip Sidney? Or something even greater?

Sidney admitted that by some mischance he had 'slipped into the title of a poet' and there is no doubt that he found versifying difficult. So much of his work is imitation of other writers, for he says himself:

Oft turning others' leaves to see if there would flow,
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburned brain,

whilst he relied on near translations or parodies when stuck for ideas. How much was he helped by his clever and learned sister?

We know that the Countess wrote a pastoral dialogue in honour of Queen Elizabeth (*Astrea*), and a metrical version of the Psalms; also an elegy on the death of Philip which was first published in Spenser's *Astrophel* and called *The Doleful Lay of Clorinda*.

Lady Pembroke was a great patroness of learned men, and surrounded herself with the best writers, poets and dramatists of the day. Ben Jonson, Michael Drayton, Thomas Howell and Samuel Daniel were constant visitors at Wilton, whilst Adrian Gilbert, brother of Humphrey Gilbert the navigator, of Marldon Castle, Devon, was a permanent resident as the Countess's 'artificer'. The Countess of Pembroke was a great admirer of Raleigh, and at one time won his reprieve from James I. It is possible that the description of Sun Worshippers found its way into the tragedy of *Othello* through her intervention. *Othello* was not published until 1622, and the points from Raleigh's travels may have been a late interpolation.

In *All's Well* there are references to Indians as sun-worshippers, which is how the natives of Guiana are described by Raleigh.

There is no doubt that the Countess Mary was associated with her two sons, William and Philip Herbert, in editing and publishing Shakespeare's works in folio form, though she did not live to see it through the press. Where had the hitherto unpublished, even unacted, plays of Shakespeare lain until they saw the light in 1623? Not at Stratford-on-Avon, surely. Then who were the 'grand possessors' from whom Heminge and Condell are supposed to have obtained the MSS. to publish? Not the illiterate daughter of William Shakspeare, who had no autograph papers of her father's to show, nor the 'bucram gentlemen' of the stage, but the two daughters, Bridget and Susan, of the author-earl; the first of whom had been betrothed to William Herbert, and the second of whom eventually married his younger brother, and became Countess of Montgomery.

Wilton House stands at the crux of the Wiltshire Avon and its tributary the Nadder. Did Ben Jonson, the humorist, call the Countess (his patroness for many years) his 'beloved the author* and 'Sweet Swan of Avon'? (See Plate XIII, and note the swans on the lace collar the Countess wears; a motif not known or used in any other contemporary lace.)

Close association between the Countess of Pembroke and the Earl of Oxford, other than the marriage of her son to his daughter, has yet to be established, but if and when it is established, new vistas of collaboration may emerge out of the mist.

A second woman has been suggested with much less reason, and that is *Anne Whatley*, in a book of that name by William Ross. Anne Whatley, it will be remembered, is the name that appears in Bishop Whitgift's register as being affianced to William Shakspeare on the day before William Shagsbere married Anne Hathwey. The probability that she was a real person from Temple Grafton, and not a clerk's error, is borne out by there being Whatleys living in Stratford even to this day. Nothing whatever is known about her, but the surmise is that she loved the youth Shakspeare, was unable to marry him because the parents of Anne Hathwey insisted on their daughter being made 'an honest woman'; that she wrote the Sonnets to 'Will', and he had them printed in his name. Finally that she became a nun in an order of Clares. It is amusing to read such a wild speculation as Mr. Ross sets out, but when one comes to his disciple in a book called *Shakespeare's Other Anne*, where the author goes to the absurdity of taking a portrait of Girolamo Cassio the poet, painted by Boltraffio a century earlier, and calling it 'Anne Whatley', one ceases to be even

amused. One feels like Mr. Logan Pearsall-Smith that one 'will just sit down and quietly go mad'.

To conclude with a few words on the subject of 'Shakespeare' portraiture.

In the opening chapter of this book I spoke of the two earliest portraits of 'Shakespeare'—the Droeshout engraving and the Stratford bust. Both were executed by poor craftsmen from a verbal description, for neither ever saw the original. Droeshout was little more than an apprentice of eighteen when the First Folio was produced, and he may have been primed to engrave the mask-like face, and the suit bearing two left sleeves, to heighten the anonymity of the author. On the other hand he may have been merely incompetent. The Flemish sculptor of the monument was an artisan turning out such mortuary busts for a living. No one, except Ben Jonson, has ever had a good word for them, and we have no idea who chose the artists or paid their fees.

A portrait in oils very similar to the Droeshout engraving, and now known as the 'Flower' portrait, was discovered and pronounced to be, the life-painting from which the engraving was made. This opinion is now reversed, and the picture believed to be a copy, somewhat improved, from the engraving.

Mr. Flower of Stratford-on-Avon bought the picture, which now perpetuates his name, from a Mr. C. Clements, and presented it to the Memorial Picture Gallery of Stratford-on-Avon. In the corner in cursive characters is the inscription, 'Willm Shakespeare 1609', which straight away condemns it as a 'counterfeit presentment', for the method of inscribing names on pictures at that date was in capitals. It is as though a coin, pretending to be of Caesar's era, bore the date 55 B.C.!

Sir Charles Robinson, of the Victoria and Albert Museum, says, in reference to the 'Flower' portrait,

It was immediately perceived that the picture was of precisely the same class as the majority of the other soi-disant Shakespeare portraits, that is to say, it was substantially an ancient 16th or 17th century portrait, painted in oil on panel which had been fraudulently vamped up in various ways—metamorphosed, in fact, into a portrait of the great dramatist probably towards the end of the last or beginning of the present century. Apparently the original was that of a *lady*, for the leading forms and details of the work could still be discerned in many places by the practised eye piercing through the fraudulent envelope. There was, moreover, one other damning circumstance, the picture was painted in a substantial white-wood panel put together in the Italian

manner, an almost certain indication that the original work was that of an Italian master.

It is obviously an eighteenth-century fake, painted from the Droeshout portrait as the only presentment in the flat available to the artist.

As the 'Shakespeare Legend' grew, those who loved the works desired also to know what the 'master' looked like; they wanted something more in harmony with their conception of the man who wrote such incomparable poetry and philosophy. Is it possible that an authentic life-like portrait existed?

A character in a play of Ben Jonson's says 'I will hang sweet Mr. Shakespeare's portrait in my room at court', which may point to there having been extant a portrait called 'Shakespeare' earlier than the 1623 Droeshout engraving. On the other hand this foolish piece of dialogue may have had no foundation in fact.

Now see what Mr. John Corbin says in his book *A New Portrait of Shakespeare*.

Towards the end of the 18th century, as is well known, the national interest in Shakespeare became feverish, and broke out in forgeries, of which those of the notorious Ireland are the most memorable. One* of the plague sores of this unwholesome time was the manufacture of portraits of 'Shakespere', 'mock originals' as their fabricators called them, which bade fair to become one of the permanent products of England. Literally dozens of them are known to have been circulated. In the case of one Lincke and one Holder, the method of manufacture is laid bare. Any old painting from a junk shop; an antique dancing master, an elderly lady in cap and blue ribbons, a Dutch admiral, was bought for a few shillings, and deftly furnished with a new set of features ostensibly those of the poet. These were, of course, painted over the original portrait in a manner more or less archaic, and artificially blackened with smoke, so as to seem part of the original painting. Very often a story was concocted connecting the original with Shakespeare's family, and pasted on the back in pseudo-Elizabethan script. Life portraits thus manufactured sold to the delighted purchaser for prices from three to six pounds. Both Lincke and Holder, when suffering from lapses into honesty found the utmost difficulty in convincing the purchaser that there was a shadow of a doubt as to the authenticity of the 'original'. The old lady became the property of the French actor Talma, who enshrined it in a costly frame and displayed it to his admiring friends. Charles Lamb, it is said—and one scarce knows whether to laugh or weep—fell down on his knees and kissed it. The story of the Dutch admiral which is preserved in the written confession of the forger, is pure farce. Having picked the portrait up for five shillings, Holder repainted it, and sold it to a print-seller for four pounds ten shillings. Dunford, waxing enthusiastic over his find, induced literally hundreds of

'connoisseurs' to inspect it and they all seemed to have acknowledged its great value. Dunford himself sold it for one hundred guineas. 'Afterwards made another Shakespeare worth a score of such as the above', Holder boasted.

Now the extraordinary thing about all this is not that great artists like Lawrence and West were deceived; have we not seen an even more flagrant deception by the Dutch artist Van Meegeren in our own time, where museums, prompted by experts, bought and exhibited the fakes. What is remarkable is that when these fakes have been detected and exposed, as in the 'Flower' portrait, they should still be shown to the public as portraits of Shakespeare. When the British Museum discovered that the so-called Etruscan sarcophagus was a fraud made by an Italian forger, the authorities removed it, that the public should not be misled. Unfortunately the Stratfordians cling to any pseudo-relic of the Bard; the fact that it is known to be a fraud notwithstanding.

Now let us look at the so-called 'Ashbourne' portrait of 'Shakespeare', thought by some to be a portrait of Edward de Vere, over-painted (see Plate XIV).

It represents an elderly, courtly gentleman, dressed in black silk, three-quarter length, standing beside a table on which rests a skull, and upon which his arm leans. In his right hand he holds a book with his first finger thrust between the pages to keep his place; obviously a man used to reading.

It was first recognized as a portrait of merit by a schoolmaster in 1847 when it hung in Ashbourne Grammar School, and by him sold to Mr. Eustace Conway as a portrait of Shakespeare. It should be mentioned in passing that the schoolmaster was an amateur painter in his spare time. Except for the unnaturally high forehead and bushy hair on either side of the face it bears no resemblance to the 'Shakespeare' bust or to the Droeshout engraving.

In 1930 the Rev. Father C. S. de Vere Beauclerk (descendant of the de Veres by the second branch) examined the picture in comparison with the Welbeck portrait of the Earl of Oxford. He came to the conclusion that the portrait represented the 17th Earl of Oxford at the age of forty-seven, but had been badly over-painted, especially the high forehead and ruff. He believed that the date 1611 under the inscription 'AETATIS SUÆ 47' had been added at a later date to correspond with the age of the dramatist.

In 1935 Mr. Charles Wisner Barrell of New York asked for permission to X-ray the portrait, with extraordinary results. The space under the inscription was found to have borne a coat of arms—three heads of griffins—which is that of the Trenthams. Thus the picture

must have belonged to the Earl of Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, for whom de Vere would have had the portrait painted. Also revealed were the initials C. K. in monogram, which were those of the Dutch artist Cornelius Ketel, who is known to have painted a portrait of the Earl of Oxford as well as of Queen Elizabeth.

On the finger of the left hand the sitter wears a signet ring, which according to Mr. BarrelPs description of the X-ray plate revealed a boar's head, conclusive evidence that it was a portrait of the 17th Earl of Oxford.

This portrait, if all the findings are positive, must have remained in the care of de Vere's widow, who sold King's Place to Sir Fulke Greville, and went to live at Rocester Abbey, the family seat of the Trenthams.

When it was first thought of as presenting a picture of 'William Shakespeare', and touched up to give the necessary likeness, it is difficult to determine, but probably, as Mr. J. Corbin said, 'in the latter end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century when the national interest in Shakespeare became feverish and broke out in forgeries'.

Elizabeth de Vere, Countess of Oxford, died in 1612, and Rocester was held by her brother, Sir Francis Trentham, who lived until 1644, leaving one daughter, also an 'Elizabeth'. She lost a case of entail on Rocester Abbey to a relative, Sir Christopher Trentham, who, with his brother, died within a few years, and in 1651 Elizabeth again came into possession of the Abbey.

Five miles from Rocester is the little village of Ashbourne where the picture was eventually 'discovered'. Sir Thomas Cokayne of Ashbourne Hall founded the Grammar School in 1585. A descendant supported King Charles, and was raised to the peerage as Viscount Cullen. Brian, 2nd Viscount Cullen, married Elizabeth Trentham of Rocester. She was a great beauty and Lely painted her portrait in the guise of Venus.

The old Cornelius Ketel portrait, passing to Viscount Cullen, probably hung at Ashbourne Hall before being transferred to the Grammar School which his ancestor had established. The alterations would have been of a later date, when all knowledge of artist and sitter were forgotten.

The Hampton Court 'Shakespeare', now removed from the walls as unauthentic, shows a strong likeness to the Droeshout engraving and its derivatives in colour, and is interesting because the sitter has two swords, one in his baldrick at his left-hand side and the second a 'Sword of State' held in his right hand. Edward de Vere as Lord Great Chamberlain carried the Sword of State before the Queen.

The portrait however has only a very superficial resemblance to the Welbeck likeness of Oxford.

The 'Grafton' picture has not been retouched but bears no resemblance either to the bust, the engraving, or to pictures of de Vere. Why the attribution was made it is difficult to conjecture.

The Welbeck portrait of the Earl of Oxford is well authenticated, having passed from his cousin Horace de Vere and thence direct to the Earls of Clare and Dukes of Portland.

It is a commanding portrait; full of poise and grace, handsome and noble; in fact it fulfils Ben Jonson's description of a perfect man:

I would have him, if I could,
Noble; or of greater blood;
Titles, I confess, do take me.

French to boot, at least in fashion
And his manners of that nation.
Young I'd have him too, and fair,
Yet a man; with crisped hair,
Cast in thousand snares and rings,
For Love's fingers, and his wings;
Chestnut colour, or more slack,
Gold, upon a ground of black,
Venus and Minerva's eyes
For he must look wanton-wise.

Eyebrows bent like Cupid's bow,
Front, an ample field of snow;
Even nose and cheek withal,
Smooth as is a billiard-ball.

And his lip should kissing teach
Well he should his clothes, too wear,
Yet no tailor help to make him.

Valiant he should be as fire
Bounteous as the clouds to earth
And as honest as his birth.
And from baseness to be free
As he durst love *Truth* and me.

Such a man, with every part
I could give my very heart.

And did he not, 'this side idolatory'?

To conclude with the words of Anthony Munday in his dedication of his work to Lord Oxford:

'My noble master—farewell. May your desires, which are dear to us all, prevail. Earnestly do I pray for your welfare and success in the struggle. To the guardianship of Christ I commit you and yours, till the days when, as Conquerors, we may peacefully resume our delightful literary discussions.'

THE END

APPENDIX

No. 1

The Histoires Tragiques of the Italian writer, Bandello, were published in Paris in 1559, the second volume containing twelve additional tales by Francois de Belle-Forest. And from this edition an otherwise unknown poet, Arthur Brooke, produced a metrical version of the Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet. It was published by Richard Tottill in 1562 under the title *The Tragical! Històrye of Romeus and Juliet, written first in Italian by Bandell, and now in Englishe by Ar. Br.*

In 1562, when the Tragical History was being written, Edward de Vere was twelve years of age and being tutored by his uncle, Arthur Golding, who had been working for some years on (and eventually, in 1565, published) his famous work, the translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into English fourteeners.

In this style of versification Golding was more than proficient, and his pupil must have been soaked in it, for after a time it becomes almost a tune in one's head. *Romeus and Juliet*, a charming but rather feeble poem of great length, is in this metre. It has been suggested ' that it is a youthful poem of de Vere's, assisted by his tutor, and that when it was published in 1562 as by Arthur Brooke, the 'Arthur' stood for Arthur Golding and the 'Brook' for the Ford in Oxford, and was a composite poem from the pens of tutor and pupil. It was reprinted in 1582.

It is from this poem that Shakespeare is supposed to have drawn the story for his play of *Romeo and Juliet*, but it is much more likely that the poem was the author's first assay at rendering it into English and the play his final word on the subject. His visit to Verona and the neighbourhood would have revived his interest in the classic story.

The original (and The New Shakespeare Society's reprint in 1875) concludes with the sign (f.) which is to be found and understood by the initiated, under the title and at the end of *A Hundreth Sundrie Floures* with the publication of which Oxford was without doubt associated, and also at the conclusion of that other mysterious publication *Willabie his Avis*.

' By Miss Katharine Eggar.

No. 2

CHRONOLOGY OF 'OXFORD' PLAYS 1573-1600

listed by Admiral Holland from his book
Shakespeare, Oxford and Elizabethan Times
 (Double date means the winter of those two years)

Date	Orthodox date	Court plays	Number of topical allusions
1573	1595	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> (Cairncross, 1593)	21
1576-7	1594	<i>Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>	8
1577-8	1596	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	22
1578-9	1594	<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>	24
1579-80	1602	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>	26
1580		<i>Agamemnon and Ulysses</i> (later <i>Troilus and Cressida</i>)	6
1580-1		<i>Taming of the Shrew</i>	19
Nov. -Dec. 1581	1598	<i>Much Ado about Nothing</i>	51
May 1582	1594	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	36
1582-3	1595	<i>King Richard II</i>	24
1583	1597	<i>King Henry IV</i>	22
1583-4	1601	<i>Hamlet</i> (Cairncross, 1588)	81
1584-5	1610	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	22
In 1585& 1586		Oxford. 'An idle cell' as far as plays are concerned. Probably writing <i>Venus and Adonis</i> and <i>Rape of Lucrece</i> at this time	
1587-8	1599	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	51
1588	1604	<i>Measure for Measure</i>	35
1588-9	1604	<i>Othello</i>	35
1589-90	1599	<i>As You Like It</i>	33
(1591 & 1592		Two plague years. Theatres closed. Commencement of Sonnets)	
Dec. 1593	1600	<i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i>	38
		'Public Theatre' plays *	
1595-6		<i>2 King Henry IV</i>	14
1596-7		<i>Henry V</i>	6
1597-8	1606	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	3
1598	1606	<i>Cymbeline</i>	3
1598-9	1605	<i>King Lear</i> (Cairncross, 1590)	5
1599	1599	<i>Julius Ccesar</i>	2
1599-1600	1605	<i>Macbeth</i>	6

Grand total 593

Average for 25 plays 24

About ten times the orthodox average.

' Allusions that amused a Court audience would not appeal to the ordinary London audience, so they are very largely discontinued after 1595.

No. 3

Affirming that William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon never left the English shores, various critics have assumed that he showed topographical ignorance of Northern Italy when he made Proteus and Launce travel from Verona to Milan by boat, because Milan is not a coast town. Shakespeare never inferred that it was, for Launce particularly says, *Why, man, if the river were dry, I am able to fill it with my tears; if the wind were down, I could drive the boat with my sighs.' It is now well known that in North Italy during the middle ages the method of travelling, for those desiring comfort, was by the rivers and canals-

See Julia Cartwright's *Isabella d'Este*, Sir Edward Sullivan's article in the *Nineteenth Century*, August 1908, *Shakespeare and the Waterways of Northern Italy*, and *The Marriage at Ferrara* by G. Harcourt Smith. In the latter we read that Lucrezia Borgia, travelling from Rome to Ferrara to yarry the Duke, accomplished a great many miles of the journey by boat, thus:

It had been arranged for her to travel by water; an intricate system of canals linked up the Po and its affluents to provide the Emilian plain with perhaps the finest system of communications extant in Europe at that time. A barge on a water-way provided the most agreeable means of travel which Lucrezia would favour for the rest of her life.

The barges were towed by horses. At the town of Malbergo Isabella d'Este met the bride in her 'bucintoro' and took her into the state cabin with the French and Venetian ambassador.

In 1520 Carlo Pagnano wrote: 'Milan, far as it was from the sea, might easily be taken for a seaport town.'

For the *Naviglio Grande* joined the Adda to the Ticino at Parvia and so continued northwards to Milan.

Only a traveller in these parts is likely to have known these details.

For further refutation of the carping critics, see the appendix to Mr. Claude Sykes's book, *Alias William Shakespeare*.

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THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP

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The object of the Shakespeare Fellowship is the investigation of the problem of Shakespearean authorship. It was founded in 1922 as a result of the publication of SHAKESPEARE IDENTIFIED by Thomas J. Looney, the first work in which the plays and poems were attributed to Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.

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Meetings are held in London once a month from November to April, to which visitors are welcome.

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