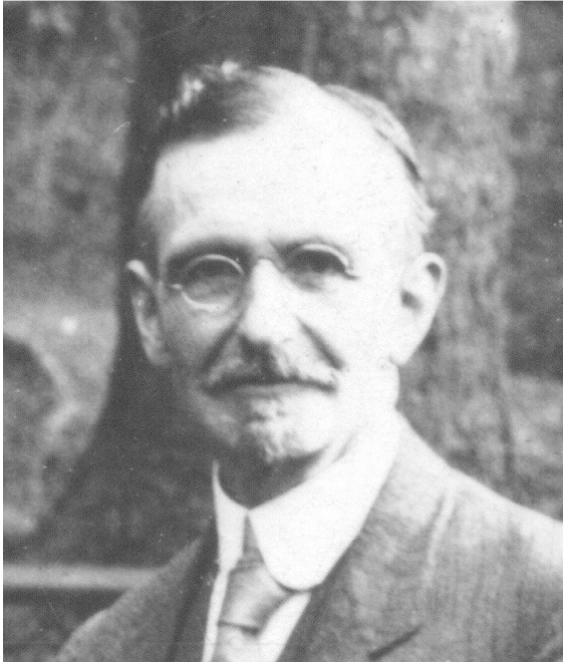


## 5. J. Thomas Looney Discovers Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford

1920

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J.T. Looney 1870-1944

J. Thomas Looney's *'Shakespeare' Identified in Edward De Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*. (London: C. Palmer, New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1920) is the founding document of the modern Oxfor-dian movement. While there is no ignoring the author's Manx name, and no conventional scholar ever does, it is no more wry than Freud (joy) or Newton (a fig) or Marilyn vos Savant (world's highest IQ).

Looney's story, 1870-1944, is well known. As a Shakespeare teacher he gradually became convinced, like Twain (No. 4, above), that the Works' traditional creation myth could not withstand examination. In 1922 he joined with Sir George Greenwood (also 4) to establish The Shakespeare Fellowship. Through it Looney acquired a number of fellow-travelers and supporters, among them Sigmund Freud himself.<sup>1</sup>

Two other supporters, Percy Allen and B. M. Ward, later developed the so-called "Prince Tudor" theory, which, in its most elaborate form claims that Oxford was "really" Queen Elizabeth I's secret son by Seymour, and that later he, meaning Oxford, had an incestuous relationship with her too. The result was Henry Wriothesley, or the "Mr W.H" of the sonnets (an unproved assertion rarely queried). In order to protect his son's life following his criminal involvement in the Essex rebellion of 1601, Oxford, that is, Shakespeare, agreed to have his authorship of the world's greatest dramatic poetry concealed forever.

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<sup>1</sup> Freud: "I no longer believe that William Shakespeare the actor from Stratford was the author of the works that have been ascribed to him."— *Autobiographical Study* (1927), 130. "It is undeniably painful to all of us that even now we do not know who was the author of the Comedies, Tragedies and Sonnets of Shakespeare, whether it was in fact the untutored son of the provincial citizen of Stratford, who attained a modest position as an actor in London"— Speech accepting the Goethe Prize, 1930. (Schoenbaum: *Shakespeare's Lives* (1970) 609.

Most Oxfordians reject this ridiculous and completely undocumented soap opera but its adherents persist, as they have a right to do. They point to the Sonnets which, if read their way, are not about homosexual feelings at all, but the love of a noble father protecting his son's claim to the throne. The notion was given some currency by the recent historically ludicrous movie, *Anonymous* (2012-13).

We may note that Looney himself was strongly opposed to the "Prince Tudor" notion. It was "extravagant & improbable" and "likely to bring the whole cause into ridicule." These observations have proved to be uncomfortably prophetic.

Looney's historic insight was that, given the evidence, the conclusion that the Stratford grain-dealer wrote the plays was a giant *non sequitur*, a syllogism desperately searching for real-world premises. The Works clearly implied a writer of uncommon intelligence, vast education and social experience. He was a continental traveler (especially in Italy), and a scholar of considerable classical learning (including much Latin and more Greek and even demotic French). A first-rate historian, he meticulously read the sources available to him, refracted through his evident familiarity with Elizabeth I's court and its politics. He appears experienced in aristocratic ways and pastimes, including war in all its shades, from cowardice and treachery to heroism. He knows all about settling an iron harness on ones back, and being hoist upon a charger, and shields, and weaponry, and tournaments, and trials by combat. He knows about aristocratic pastimes such as bowls, falconry, royal tennis and music played upon rare instruments. He has had some military experience on both land and sea, and knows the law like a professional. He was a recognized poet with connections to the drama.

Looney set Shaksper aside and looked for a contemporary candidate who fit these criteria. He found who was looking for in Edward de Vere, the seventeenth earl of Oxford.

The following extracts from '*Shakespeare' Identified* are Chapter IV, "The Author—Special Characteristics," Chapter VI, "The Conditions Fulfilled," and Chapter VIII, "Conclusion."



**Edward de Vere  
Seventeenth Earl of Oxford  
1550-1604**

## Chapter IV The Author—Special Characteristics

Our object in the last chapter being to form a conception of some of the broader features of the life and character of Shakespeare,<sup>2</sup> our present object must be to view the writings at closer quarters, and with greater attention to details so as to deduce, if possible, some of his more distinctive characteristics.

It is hardly necessary to insist at the present day that Shakespeare has preserved for all time, in living human characters, much of what was best worth remembering and retaining in the social relationship of the Feudal order of the Middle Ages. Whatever conclusion we may have to come to about his religion, it is undeniable that, from the social and political point of view, Shakespeare is essentially a medievalist. The following sentence from Carlyle may be taken as representative of much that might be quoted from several writers bearing in the same direction:

As Dante the Italian man was sent into our world to embody musically the Religion of the Middle Ages, the Religion of our Modern Europe, its Inner Life; so Shakespeare we may say embodies for us the Outer Life of our Europe as developed then, its chivalries, courtesies, humours, ambitions, what practical way of thinking, acting, looking at the world, men then had.

When, therefore, we find that the great Shakespearean plays were written at a time when men were reveling in what they considered to be a newly-found liberation from Medievalism, it is evident that Shakespeare was one whose sympathies, and probably his antecedents, linked him on more closely to the old order than to the new: not the kind of man we should expect to rise from the lower middle-class population of the towns. Whether as a lord or a dependent we should expect to find him one who saw life habitually from the standpoint of Feudal relationships in which he had been born and bred: and in view of what has been said of his education it would, of course, be as lord rather than as a dependent that we should expect to meet him.

It might be, however, that he was only linked to Feudalism by cherished family traditions; a surviving representative, maybe, of some decayed family. A close inspection of his work, however, reveals a more intimate personal connection with aristocracy than would be furnished by mere family tradition. Kings and queens, earls and countesses, knights and ladies move on and off his stage "as to the manner born." They are no mere tinsel models representing mechanically the class to which they belong, but living men and women. It is rather his ordinary "citizens", that are the automata walking woodenly on to the stage to speak for their class. His "lower-orders" never display that virile dignity and largeness of character which poets like Burns, who know the class from within, portray in their writings. Even Scott comes much nearer to truth in this matter than does Shakespeare. It is, therefore, not merely his power of representing royalty and the nobility in vital, passionate characters, but his failure to do the same in respect to other classes that marks

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<sup>2</sup> Listed under fn 3 below.—Ed.

Shakespeare as a member of the higher aristocracy. The defects of the playwright become in this instance more illuminating and instructive than do his qualities. Genius may undoubtedly enable a man to represent with some fidelity classes to which he does not belong; it will hardly at the same time weaken his power of representing truly his own class. In a great dramatic artist we demand universality of power within his province; but he shows that catholicity, not by representing human society in all its forms and phases, but by depicting our common human nature in the entire range of its multiple and complex forces; and he does this best when he shows us that human nature at work in the classes with which he is most intimate. The suggestion of an aristocratic author for the plays is, therefore, the simple common sense of the situation, and is no more in opposition to modern democratic tendencies, as one writer loosely hints, than the belief that William Shakspeare was indebted to aristocratic patrons and participated in the enclosure of common lands.

An aristocratic outlook upon life marks the plays of other dramatists of the time besides Shakespeare. These were known, however, in most cases to have been university men, with a pronounced contempt for the particular class to which William Shakspeare of Stratford belonged. It is a curious fact, however, that a writer like Creizenach, who seems never to doubt the Stratfordian view, nevertheless recognizes that "Shakespeare" was more purely and truly aristocratic in his outlook than were the others. In a word, the plays which are recognized as having the most distinct marks of aristocracy about them, are supposed to have been produced by the playwright furthest removed from aristocracy in his origin and antecedents.

We feel entitled, therefore, to claim for Shakespeare high social rank, and even a close proximity to royalty itself.

Assuming him to have been an Englishman of the higher aristocracy, we turn now to these parts of his writings that may be said to deal with his own phase of life, namely, his English historical plays, to seek for distinctive traces of position and personality. Putting aside the greater part of the plays *Henry VI*, parts 1 and 2, as not being from Shakespeare's pen, and also the first acts of *Henry VI*, part 3, for the same reason, we may say that he deals mainly with the troubled period between the upheaval in the reign of Richard II and the ending of the Wars of the Roses by the downfall of Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth. The outstanding feature of this work is his pronounced sympathy with the Lancastrian cause. Even the play of *Richard II*, which shows a measure of sympathy with the king whom the Lancastrians ousted, is full of Lancastrian partialities.

"Shakespeare" had no sympathy with revolutionary movements and the overturning of established governments. Usurpation of sovereignty would, therefore, be repugnant to him, and his aversion is forcibly expressed in the play; but Henry of Lancaster is represented as merely concerned with claiming his rights, desiring to uphold the authority of the crown, but driven by the injustice and perversity of Richard into an antagonism he strove to avoid. Finally, it is the erratic willfulness of the king, coupled with Henry's belief that the king had voluntarily abdicated, that induces Bolingbroke to accept the throne. In a word, the play of *Richard II* is a kind of dramatic *apologia* for the Lancastrians. Then comes the glorification of Prince Hal, "Shakespeare's" historic hero. Henry VI is the victim of misfortunes and machinations, and is handled with great tenderness, and respect. The play of *Richard III* lays bare the internal discord of the Yorkist faction, the downfall and destruction of the Yorkist arch-villain, and the triumph of Henry Richmond, the representative of the House of Lancaster, who had received the nomination and benediction of

Henry VI. We might naturally expect, therefore, to find Shakespeare a member of some family with distinct Lancastrian leanings.

Having turned our attention to the different classes of plays, we are again faced with the question of his Italianism. Not only are we impressed by the large number of plays with an Italian setting or derived from Italian sources, but we feel that these plays carry us to Italy in a way that "Hamlet" never succeeds in carrying us to Denmark, nor his French plays in carrying us to France. Even in *Hamlet* he seems almost to go out of his way to drag in a reference to Italy. Those who know Italy and are familiar with the *Merchant of Venice* tell us that there are clear indications that Shakespeare knew Venice and Milan personally. However that may be, it is impossible for those who have had, at any time, an interest in nothing more than the language and literature of Italy, to resist the feeling that there is thrown about these plays an Italian atmosphere suggestive of one who knew and felt attracted towards the country. Everything bespeaks an Italian enthusiast.

Going still more closely into detail, it has often been observed that Shakespeare's interest in animals is seldom that of the naturalist, almost invariably that of the sportsman; and some of the supporters of the Stratfordian tradition have sought to establish a connection between this fact and the poaching of William Shakspeare. When, however, we look closely into the references, we are struck with his easy familiarity with all the terms relating to the chase. Take Shakespeare's entire sportsman's vocabulary, find out the precise significance of each unusual term, and the reader will probably get a more distinct vision of the sporting pastimes of the aristocracy of that day than he would get in any other way. Add to this all the varied vocabulary relating to hawks and falconry, observe the insistence with which similes, metaphors and illustrations drawn from the chase and hawking appear throughout his work, and it becomes, impossible to resist the belief that he was a man who had at one time found his recreation and delight in these aristocratic pastimes.

His keen susceptibility to the influence of music is another characteristic that frequently meets us; and most people will agree that the whole range of English literature may be searched in vain for passages that more accurately or more fittingly describe the charm and power of music than do certain lines in the pages of Shakespeare. The entire passage on music in the final act of *Merchant of Venice* beginning "Look how the floor of heaven," right on to the closing words, "Let no such man be trusted," is itself music, and is probably as grand pæon in honor of music as can be found in any language.

Nothing could well be clearer in itself, nor more at variance with what is known of the man William Shakspeare than the dramatist's attitude towards money. It is the man who lends money gratis, and so "pulls down the rate of usance" in Venice, that is the hero of the play just mentioned. His friend is the incorrigible spendthrift and borrower Bassanio, who has "disabled his estate by showing a more swelling port than his faint means would grant continuance," and who at last repairs his broken fortunes by marriage. Almost every reference to money and purses is of the loosest description, and, by implication, teach an improvidence that would soon involve any man's financial affairs in complete chaos. It is the arch-villain, Iago, who urges "put money in thy purse," and the contemptible politician, Polonius, who gives the careful advice "neither a borrower nor a lender be"; whilst the money-grubbing Shylock, hoist with his own petard, is the villain whose circumvention seems to fill the writer with an absolute joy.

It ought not to surprise us if the author himself turned out to be one who had felt the grip of the money-lender, rather than a man like the Stratford Shakspeare, who, after he had himself become prosperous, prosecuted others for the recovery of petty sums.

Of the Stratford man, Pope asserts that “Gain not glory winged his roving flight.” And Sir Sidney Lee amplifies this by saying that “his literary attainments and successes were chiefly valued as serving the prosaic end of providing permanently for himself and his daughters.” Yet in one of his early plays (*Henry IV*, part 2) “Shakespeare” expresses himself thus:

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.

From its setting the passage is evidently the expression of the writer's own thought rather than an element of the dramatization.

Finally we have, again in an early play, his great hero of tragic love, Romeo, exclaiming:

There is thy gold, worse poison to men's souls,  
 Doing more murders in this loathsome world  
 Than these poor compounds.

In a word, the Stratfordian view requires us to write our great dramatist down as a hypocrite. The attitude of William Shakspeare to money matters may have had about it all the “sobriety of personal aims and sanity of mental attitude” claimed for it. In which case, the more clearly he had represented his own attitude in his works the greater would have been their fidelity to objective fact. Money is a social institution, created by the genius of the human race to facilitate the conduct of life; and, under normal conditions, it is entitled to proper attention and respect. Under given conditions, however, it may so imperil the highest human interests, as to justify an intense reaction against it, and even to call for repudiation and contempt from those moral guides, amongst whom we include the great poets, who are concerned with the higher creations of man's intellectual and moral nature. Such, we judge, was the dramatist's attitude to money.

The points treated so far have been somewhat on the surface; and most, if not all, might be found adequately supported by other writers. There are, however, two other matters on which it would be well to have Shakespeare's attitude defined, if such were possible, before proceeding to the next stage of the enquiry. These are his mental attitude towards Woman, and his relation to Catholicism.

Ruskin's treatment of the former point in “Sesame and Lilies” is well known, but not altogether convincing. He, and others who adopt the same line of thought, seem not sufficiently to discriminate between what comes as a kind of aura from the medieval chivalries and what is distinctly personal. Moreover, the business of a dramatist being to represent every variety of human charac-

ter, it must be doubtful whether any characterization represents his views as a whole, or whether, indeed, it may not only represent a kind of utopian idealism. Some deference, too, must be paid by a playwright to the mind and requirements of his contemporary public; and the literature of the days of Queen Elizabeth does certainly attest a respectful treatment of Woman at that period. In quotations from Shakespeare on this theme, however, one is more frequently met with suggestions of Woman's frailty and changeableness. In his greatest play, *Hamlet*, there are but two women; one weak in character, the other weak in intellect, and Hamlet trusts neither.

Shakespeare, however, is a writer of other things besides dramas. He has left us a large number of sonnets, and the sonnet, possibly more than any other form of composition, has been the vehicle for the expression of the most intimate thoughts and feelings of poets. Almost infallibly, one might say, do a man's sonnets directly reveal his soul. The sonnets of "Shakespeare," especially, have a ring of reality about them quite inconsistent with the fanciful non-biographical interpretation which Stratfordianism would attach to them. Examining, then, these sonnets, we find that there are, in fact, two sets of them. By far the larger and more important set embracing no less than one hundred and twenty-six out of a total of one hundred and fifty-four, is addressed to a young man, and express a tenderness which is probably without parallel in the recorded expressions of [emotional attachment of one man to another. At the same time there occurs in this very set the following reference to woman:

A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted,  
Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion;  
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted  
With shifting change, as is false woman's fashion;  
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling.

The second set of sonnets, comprising only twenty-eight, as against one hundred and twenty-six in the first set, is probably the most painful for Shakespeare admirers to read, of all that "Shakespeare" has written. It is the expression of an intensely passionate love for some woman; but love of a kind which cannot be accurately described otherwise than as morbid emotion; a combination of affection and bitterness; tenderness, without a touch of faith or of true admiration.

Two loves I have of comfort and despair,  
Which, like two spirits, do suggest me still.  
The better angel is a man right fair.  
The worser spirit, a woman, coloured ill.

In loving thee (the woman) thou knowest I am foresworn, [...]  
And all my honest faith in thee is lost.

I have sworn thee fair and thought thee bright,  
Who art as black as hell and dark as night.

Whether this mistrust was constitutional or the outcome of unfortunate experiences is irrelevant to our present purpose. The fact of its existence is what matters. Whilst, then, we have comparatively so little bearing on the subject, and that little of such a nature, we shall not be guilty of over-statement if we say that though he was capable of great affection, and had a high sense of

the ideal in womanhood, his faith in the women with whom he was directly associated was weak, and his relationship towards them far from perfect.

To deduce the dramatist's religious point of view from his plays is perhaps the most difficult task of all. Taking the general religious conditions of his time into consideration, there are only two broad currents to be reckoned with. Puritanism had no doubt already assumed appreciable proportions as a further development of the Protestant idea; but, for our present purpose, the broader currents of Catholicism and Protestantism are all that need be considered. In view of the fact that Protestantism was at that time in the ascendant, whilst Catholicism was under a cloud, a writer of plays intended for immediate representation whose leanings were Protestant would be quite at liberty to expose his personal leanings, whilst a pronounced Roman Catholic would need to exercise greater personal restraint. Now it is impossible to detect in "Shakespeare" any Protestant bias or any support of those principles of individualism in which Protestantism has its roots. On the other hand, he seems as catholic as the circumstances of his times and the conditions under which he worked would allow him to be. Macaulay has the following interesting passage on the point:

The partiality of Shakespeare for Friars is well known. In *Hamlet* the ghost complains that he died without extreme unction, and, in defiance of the article which condemns the doctrine of purgatory, declares that he is

Confined to fast in fires,  
Till the foul crimes, done in his days of nature,  
Are burnt and purged away.

These lines, we suspect, would have raised a tremendous storm in the theatre at any time during the reign of Charles the Second. They were clearly not written by a zealous Protestant for zealous Protestants.

We may leave his attitude towards Catholicism at that; except to add that, if he was really a Catholic, the higher calls of his religion to devotion and to discipline probably met with only an indifferent response. It is necessary, moreover, to point out that Auguste Comte in his "Positive Polity" refers to "Shakespeare" as a skeptic.

To the nine points enumerated at the end of the last chapter<sup>3</sup> we may therefore add the following:

1. A man with Feudal connections.
2. A member of the higher aristocracy.
3. Connected with Lancastrian supporters.
4. An enthusiast for Italy.

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<sup>3</sup> 1. A matured man of recognized genius. 2. Apparently eccentric and mysterious. 3. Of intense sensibility—a man apart. 4. Unconventional. 5. Not adequately appreciated. 6. Of pronounced and known literary tastes. 7. An enthusiast in the world of drama. 8. A lyric poet of recognized talent. 9. Of superior education—classical—the habitual associate of educated people. (Looney's own summary, from the conclusion of Chapter III—Ed.)



5. A follower of sport (including falconry).
6. A lover of music.
7. Loose and improvident in money matters.
8. Doubtful and somewhat conflicting in his attitude to woman.
9. Of probable Catholic leanings, but touched with scepticism.

Such a characterization of Shakespeare as we have here presented was, of course, impossible so long as the Stratford tradition dominated the question; for there is scarcely a single point that is not more or less in contradiction to that tradition. Since, however, people have begun to throw off the dominance of the old theory in respect to the authorship of the plays, the most, if not all, of the points we have been urging have been pointed out at one time or other by different writers; as well, no doubt, as other important points of difference which we have overlooked. If, then, it be urged that there is not a single original observation in the whole of these two chapters, then so much the better for the argument; for such a criticism would but add authority to the delineation and we should, moreover, feel that the statement had been kept freer from the influence of subsequent discoveries than we can hope to be the case.

Although these subsequent discoveries have doubtless affected in some degree the manner in which the present statement is made, the several points, along with other] minor and more hypothetical matters, were roughly outlined before the search was begun; whilst the statement as here presented was written, substantially as it stands now, in the first days of the investigations: as soon, that is to say, as it seemed that the researches were going to prove fruitful. There are some of the above points which we should now be disposed to modify and others which we should like to develop. The appearance of others of them in the interpolated anti-Stratfordian chapter would under ordinary conditions have required their omission here. As, however, one of our objects is to represent something of the way in which the argument has developed almost spontaneously—in some respects one of the strongest evidences of its truth—we leave the statement, with what vulnerable points it contains, to remain as it is.

The various points are, indeed, the outcome of the labors and criticisms of many minds spread over a number of years, and it may be that the only thing original about the statement is the gathering together and tabulating of the various old points. So collected, these seem to demand such an aggregate and unusual combination of conditions that it is hardly probable that any man other than the actual author of the plays himself could possibly fulfill them all. When to this we add the further condition that the man answering to the description must also be situated, both in time and external circumstances, as to be consistent with the production of the work, we get the feeling that if such a man can be discovered it must be none other than the author himself.

With this we complete the first stage of our task which was to characterize the author from a consideration of the work.

## Chapter VI The Conditions Fulfilled

As it will be necessary to discuss the life and character of Edward de Vere from a totally different standpoint from that of Sir Sidney Lee's article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and also to add particulars derived from other sources, we shall, at present, in order to avoid as much unnecessary repetition as possible, merely point out the numerous instances in which the portraiture answers to the description of the man for whom we have been seeking.

Although we are not given much information as to what his "eccentricity" consisted in, beyond the squandering of his patrimony, the distinctiveness of his dress, and his preference for his Bohemian literary and play-acting associates, rather than the artificial and hypocritical atmosphere of a court frequented by ambitious self-seekers, it is clear that in those latter circles he had made for himself a reputation as an eccentric, and as a man apart. When, therefore, we are told that his eccentricities grew with his years, we may take it to imply that this preference became accentuated as he grew older, that he became less in touch with social conventionality, more deeply immersed in his special interests and in the companionship of those who were similarly occupied.

His impressionability is testified by his quickness to detect a slight and his readiness to resent it, whilst his evident susceptibility to perfumes and the elegancies of dress, involving, no doubt, colour sensitiveness, bespeak that keenness of the senses which contributes so largely to extreme general sensibility.

Connected with these traits is his undoubted fondness for, and a superior taste in, music. The matter is twice referred to. The first instance is in connection with his education, and from this reference it appears as if music had not formed part of the scheme of education which others had mapped out for him, and that his musical training was therefore the outcome of his own natural bent and choice. The second reference is the passage quoted in the last chapter, from which it appears that his musical taste was of so pronounced a character as to secure special mention in the records of him that have been handed down, notwithstanding their extreme meagerness.

His looseness in money matters and what appears like a complete indifference to material possessions, is undoubtedly one of the most marked features of his character. So long as he had money to spend or give away, or lands which he could sell to raise money, he seems to have squandered lavishly; much of it, evidently, on literary men and on dramatic enterprises. Consequently, from being one of the foremost and wealthiest of English noblemen he found himself ultimately in straitened circumstances.

His connection with play-actors and the drama was not the superficial and evanescent interest of a wealthy patron. It was a matter in which he was actively engaged for many years. He had his own company, with which he both toured in the provinces, and established himself for some years in London. It was quite understood that his company was performing plays which he was himself producing. It is evident, too, that he made a name for himself in the production of comedies and that the celebrity he enjoyed in this respect came not merely from the masses, but from the literary men of the time. On the other hand, we are informed in the article that "*no specimens of his*

*dramatic productions survive*” — a most mysterious circumstance in view of the vast mass of drama of all kinds and qualities that the Elizabethan age has bequeathed to us.

Of his family, we learn from the first series of articles on the De Veres, that it traced its descent in a direct line from the Norman Conquest and that for five and a half centuries the direct line of male descent had never, once been broken. As a boy, not only had he been a prominent figure about Elizabeth's court, but from the age of twelve he was a royal ward, and may be said to have been actually brought up at court near the person of the Queen herself. The irksomeness to him of court life seems to have manifested itself quite early in manhood and he made several efforts to escape from it.

His education was conducted first of all by private tutors among whom were celebrated classical scholars. He was a resident at Cambridge University and ultimately held degrees in both universities. We may add here, what is not mentioned in the article, that his poems are replete with classical allusions, which come to him as spontaneously as the figure of a field mouse, a daisy, or a haggis comes to Burns.

So keen was his desire for travel that when permission was refused him he set the authorities at defiance and ran away; only to be intercepted and brought back. When at last he obtained permission to go abroad he speedily made his way to Italy; and so permanent upon him was the effect of his stay there, that he was lampooned afterwards as an “Italionated Englishman.”

The article in the Dictionary of National Biography testifies therefore to the following points:

1. His high standing as a lyric poet.
2. His reputation for eccentricity.
3. His highly strung sensibility.
4. His being out of sympathetic relationship with conventional life.
5. His maturity (1590) and genius.
6. His literary tastes.
7. His practical enthusiasm for drama.
8. His classic education and association with the best educated men of his time.
9. His belonging to the higher aristocracy.
10. His feudal ancestry.
11. His interest in and direct personal knowledge of Italy.
12. His musical tastes.
13. His looseness in money matters.

Four points insufficiently supported in the article are:

1. His interest in sport.
2. His Lancastrian sympathies.
3. His distinctive bearing towards woman.
4. His attitude towards Catholicism.

The eighteenth point—inadequate appreciation—needs no special treatment, being involved in the problem itself and in any proposed solution to it.

Before proceeding to the next step in the investigation we shall finish this section by adducing other evidence and authority for the four points mentioned above.

1. In relation to sport we notice—and this is really the point that matters — that his poems, few as they are, bear decided witness to the same interest. The haggard hawk, the stricken deer, the hare, the greyhound, the mastiff, the fowling nets and bush-beating are all figures that appear in his lyric verses. In addition to this we notice that his father, John de Vere, 16th Earl of Oxford, who died when Edward was twelve years of age, had quite a reputation as a sportsman, and until his death Edward was, of course, living with him. The article from which we first quoted mentions his interest in learning to shoot and to ride, so that there is abundant evidence of his familiarity with those sporting pastimes which Shakespeare's works so amply illustrate.

2. Though no statement of his actual sympathies with the Lancastrian cause has been found, we are assured by several writers that he was proud of his ancient lineage, which, taken along with the following passage on the relationship of the De Veres to the Lancastrian cause, may be accepted as conclusive on the subject:

“John the 12th Earl (of Oxford) was attainted and beheaded in 1461, suffering for his loyalty to the Lancastrian line. His son John was restored to the dignity in 1464, but was himself attainted in 1474 in consequence of the active part he had taken on the Lancastrian side during the temporary restoration of Henry VI in 1470. . . . (He) distinguished himself as the last of the supporters of the cause of the red rose, which he maintained in the castle of St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall for many months after the rest of the kingdom had submitted to Edward IV. . . . Having been mainly instrumental in bringing Henry (VII) to the throne he was immediately restored to the Earldom of Oxford, and also to the office of Lord Chamberlain which he enjoyed until his death in 1513. (*Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 9, 1852, p. 24.)

3. So far as his attitude towards woman is concerned, the poem already quoted in full is sufficient evidence of that deficiency of faith which we have pointed out as marking the Shakespeare sonnets; the very terms employed being as nearly identical as Shakespeare ever allowed himself in two separate utterances on one topic. Then that capacity for intense affection combined with weakness of faith which is one of the peculiarities of Shakespeare's mind, has not, so far as we are aware, so close a parallel anywhere in literature as in the poems of Edward de Vere. It is not merely in an occasional line, but is the keynote of much of his poetry. Indeed we may say that it probably lies at the root of a great part of the misfortune and mystery in which his life was involved, and may indeed afford an explanation for the very existence of the Shakespeare mystery.

Only when these poems shall have become as accessible as Shakespeare's sonnets will this mental correspondence be fully appreciated. Meanwhile we give a few lines each from a separate poem:

“For she thou (himself) lovest is sure thy mortal foe.”

“O cruel hap and hard estate that forceth me to love my foe.”

“The more I sought the less I found / Yet mine she meant to be.”  
 “That I do waste, with others, love / That hath myself in hate.”  
 “Love is worse than hate and eke more harm hath done.”

With these lines in mind all that is necessary is to read the last dozen of Shakespeare's sonnets, in order to appreciate the spiritual identity of the author or authors in this particular connection.

4. So far as the last point, his attitude to Catholicism, is concerned, the quotation we have already given from Green's "Short History" is all that is really necessary. The fact that his name appears at the head of a list of noblemen who professed to be reconciled to the old faith shows his leanings sufficiently well for us to say of him, as Macaulay says of Shakespeare, that he was not a zealous Protestant writing for zealous Protestants. When, further, we find that his father had professed Catholicism, it is not unlikely that on certain sentimental grounds his leaning was that way. Roman Catholicism would, moreover, be the openly professed religion of his home life during his first eight years. There is also evidence in the State Papers of the time that the English Catholics abroad were at one crisis looking to him and to the Earl of Southampton for support. At the same time it is not improbable that intellectually he was touched with the skepticism which appears to have been current in dramatic circles at that time, for amongst the charges made against him by one adversary was that of irreligion: the name "atheist" being given him by another (State papers). Classic paganism, medievalism and skepticism, in spite of the contradiction the combination seems to imply, can certainly all be more easily traced in him than can Protestantism; and in this there is a general correspondence between his mind and that of "Shakespeare."

On all the points then which we set before ourselves in entering upon the search, we find that Edward de Vere fulfils the conditions, and the general feeling with which we finish this stage of our enquiry is this, that if we have not actually discovered the author of Shakespeare's works we have at any rate alighted upon a most exceptional set of resemblances.

We have thus, in a general way, carried the enquiry successfully through four of its stages, and completed the *a posteriori* section of our argument.

#### Note

In the contemporary State Papers of Rome there is a list of English nobility, classified as (i) Catholics, (ii) of Catholic leanings, (iii) Protestants. Oxford's name appears in the second group.

## Chapter XVIII Conclusion

We called Dante the melodious Priest of Middle-Age Catholicism. May we not call Shakespeare the still more melodious Priest of a true Catholicism, the Universal Church of the Future and of all times.

—Carlyle, *Heroes*

We may now bring our labors to a close with a review of the course our investigations have taken and a summary of their results. Having examined both the internal and external conditions of the old theory of Shakespearean authorship, we found that the whole presented such an accumulation

and combination of anomalies as to render it no longer tenable. We therefore undertook the solution of problem of authorship thus presented.

Beginning with a characterization of Shakespeare drawn from a consideration of his writings, a characterization embracing no less than eighteen points and involving a most unusual combination, we proceeded to look for the dramatist. Using the form of the "Venus and Adonis" stanza as a guide, we selected one Elizabethan poem in this form, which seemed to bear the greatest resemblance to Shakespeare's workmanship. The author of this poem, Edward de Vere, was found to fulfill in all essentials the delineation of Shakespeare with which we set out.

We next found that competent literary authorities, in testifying to the distinctive qualities of his work, spoke of his poems in terms appropriate to "Shakespeare." An examination of his position in the history of Elizabethan poetry showed him to be a possible source of the Shakespeare literature, whilst an examination of his lyrics revealed a most remarkable correspondence both in general qualities and in important details with the other literary work which we now attribute to him. Turning next to the records of his life and of his family we found that these were fully reflected in the dramas: the contents of which bear pronounced marks of all the outstanding incidents and personal relationships of his career, whilst the special conditions of his life at the time when these plays were being produced were just such as accorded with the issuing of the works.

His death, we found, was followed by an immediate arrest of Shakespearean publication, and by a number of other striking evidences of the removal of the great dramatist, whilst a temporary revival of publication a few years later was of such a character as to give additional support to the view that the author was then dead. Finally, we have shown that the sonnets are now made intelligible for the first time since their appearance, and that the great dramatic *tour de force* of the author is nothing less than an idealized portraiture of himself.

Summed up we have:

1. The evidence of the poetry.
2. The general biographical evidence.
3. The chronological evidence.
4. The posthumous evidence.
5. The special arguments:
  - (a) The "All's Well" argument.
  - (b) The "Love's Labor's Lost" argument.
  - (c) The "Othello" argument.
  - (d) The Sonnets argument.
  - (e) The "Hamlet" argument.

It is the perfect harmony, consistency and convergence of all the various lines of argument employed, and the overwhelming mass of coincidences that they involve, that give to our results the appearance of a case fully and, we believe, unimpeachably proven.

We have by no means exhausted the subject, however. Not only does much remain to be said, but it may be that in taking so decisive a step, involving the readjustment of more than one long-

established conception, some statements have been made that later will have to be modified or withdrawn. Working, too, amongst a mass of details, in what was previously an unfamiliar domain, it is possible that serious errors have slipped in. In arguments like the present, however, whole lines of subsidiary evidence may break down and yet leave the central contention firmly and unassailably established.

It would not in the least surprise us, moreover, if particular items of evidence much more conclusive than any single argument we have offered, should be forthcoming, or even if it should be pointed out that we have blunderingly overlooked some vital matter. From experience in the course of our enquiries we have no fear that any such oversight will appreciably affect the validity of the argument as a whole. For the detection of oversights hitherto has but brought additional strength to our position; and so frequently has this occurred in the past that it is difficult to think of its, having any other effect in the future. Only one conclusion then seems possible; namely, that the problem of the authorship of Shakespeare's plays has been solved, and that all future enquiry is destined to furnish but an accumulating support to the solution here proposed.

It will be seen that only in a general way has it been possible to adhere, in our last chapters, to the plan of investigation outlined at the start. In tracing indications of the life and personality of Edward de Vere in the writings of Shakespeare, much of the ground mapped out for separate succeeding stages of the enquiry has been covered. The sixth stage was to gather together "corroborative evidence," and this is largely furnished by the last two chapters in which the poetic and the dramatic self-revelation of the poet are respectively dealt with. The seventh stage, to develop personal connections, if possible, between the new author and the old authorship, including the man William Shakspeare, is covered by those biographical chapters which treat of Arthur Golding, the translator of Ovid; Anthony Munday, the playwright; Lyly, Oxford's private secretary and "Shakespeare's only model in Comedy"; and lastly Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, to whom the Shakespeare poems are dedicated, who is known as the munificent friend of William Shakspeare, and in whom the Earl of Oxford manifested a special interest.

The task which we set out to accomplish has therefore been performed in sufficient accordance with the original plan. However unworthy of so great a theme the manner of presenting the case may be, it is impossible not to feel gratified at the good fortune that has attended our excursion into a department that is not specially our own. In the brief moment of conscious existence which lies between the two immensities Destiny has honored us with this particular task, and though it may not be the work we could have wished to do, we are glad to have been able to do so much.

The matter must now pass out of our hands, and the case must be tried in public by means of a discussion in which expert opinion must play a large part in the formation of a definitive judgment. Whether such discussion be immediate or deferred, we have no doubt that it must come at some time or other, and that, when it does come, the ultimate verdict will be to proclaim Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, as the real author of the greatest masterpieces in English literature.

We venture, therefore, to make an earnest appeal first of all to the thoughtful sections of all classes of the British public, and not merely of the literary classes, to examine, and even to insist upon an authoritative examination, of the evidence adduced. The matter belongs, of course, to the

world at large. But England must bear the greater part of the responsibility; and her honor is involved in seeing that a question of the name and fame of one of the most illustrious of her immortal dead, the one name which England has stamped most unquestionably upon the intellectual life of the human race, is not given over to mere literary contentiousness. We are bound, however, to make a special appeal to those whose intellectual equipment and opportunities fit them for the examination of the argument to approach the problem in an impartial spirit. It will not be an easy thing for Stratfordians or Baconians of many years' standing to admit that they were wrong, and that the problem has at last solved itself in a way contrary to all their former views. To sincere admirers of "Shakespeare," however, those who have caught something of his largeness of intellectual vision and fidelity to fact, the difficulty of recognizing and admitting an error will not prove insuperable, whilst their power of thus aiding in a great act of justice will be immense.

In addition to securing the recognition of Edward de Vere as the author of Shakespeare's works, much remains to be done in the way of lifting the load of disrepute from his memory, and winning for his name the honor that is his by right. "That gentle spirit," as we believe Spenser to have described him and as his own verses reveal him (according so well as the expression does with our "Gentle Shakespeare"), has remained for too many years under the "unlifted shadow."

Whatever his faults may have been, we have in him a soul awake at every point to all that touches human life. All high aspiration and endeavor find their encouragement in his work, and no phase of human suffering or weakness but meets in him a kindly and sympathetic treatment, even when his mockery is most trenchant. "The man whom Nature's self had made, to mock herself and truth to imitate with kindly counter under mimic shade"—the terms in which we have shown Spenser speaks of De Vere, and which so accurately describe "Shakespeare"—could be no profligate. The irregularities to which the Shakespearean sonnets bear witness are beyond question rooted in sincerity of character and tenderness of heart. We do not condone such, but we are bound to draw a very marked distinction between this and mere dissoluteness. All that Shakespeare has written, and every line of De Vere, bespeaks a man who, even in the lowest depths of pessimism and in his moments of bitterest cynicism, had kept alive the highest faculties of his mind and heart. No man of persistently loose life can do this; and, therefore, the establishing of the identity of Edward de Vere with "Shakespeare" demands the relinquishing of all those superficial judgments that might have been allowed to pass unchallenged so long as Edward de Vere was supposed to be a person of no particular moment in the history of his country or the world.

Until now the world has moreover seen and known in him only the eccentricity and turbulence of Hamlet. The real Hamlet, tender-hearted and passionate, whose deep and melancholy soul broods affectionately upon the great tragedy of human life, and who yet preserves the light of intellect and humor, whose "noble heart" breaks at last but who carries on his fight to the last moment of life, when the pen, not the sword, drops from his fingers, is the Hamlet which we must now see in Edward de Vere, as he stands before the world as "Shakespeare." The fret and trouble of his objective life in the Elizabethan age have hung around his memory for over three hundred years. All this, we believe, is about to end; and, the period of his purgation passed, we may confidently hope that, entering into the full possession of his honors, a time of still richer spiritual influence awaits his continued existence in the hearts and lives of men.

"The fatness of these pury times," against which his whole career was a protest, has settled more than ever upon the life of mankind, and the culminating product of this modern materialism is the



world war that was raging whilst the most of these pages were being penned - a war which has been the most insane gamble for material power that the undisciplined instinct of domination has ever inflicted upon a suffering humanity; threatening the complete submergence of the soul of civilized man. Yet amongst the projects of "after the war" reconstruction that were being set afoot, even whilst it was in progress, materialistic purposes everywhere prevailed. In education, for example, where especially spiritual aims should have dominated, commercial and industrial objects were chiefly considered. And now that the conflict is over the entire disruption of social existence is threatened by material "interests" and antagonisms.

Against this the spirit of "Shakespeare" again protests. His "prophetic soul," still "dreaming on things to come," points to a future in which the human *spirit*, and its accessory instruments and institutions, must become the supreme concern of man. The squandering of his own material resources, though unwise in itself, was the soul's reaction against the growing Mammon worship of his day: and the fidelity with which he represents in his plays the chivalries of feudalism is the expression of an affection for those social relationships, which minister to the finer spirit in man. He stands, then, for an enlarged and enriched conception of spiritual things: a conception embracing the entire range of man's mental and moral faculties, from gayest laughter and subtle playfulness to profoundest thought and tragic earnestness of purpose. He stands for these things, and he stands for their supremacy in human life, involving the subordination of every other human concern to these spiritual forces and interests.

More than ever in the coming years shall we need the spirit of "Shakespeare" to assist in the work of holding the "politician" and the materialist, ever maneuvering for ascendancy in human affairs, to their secondary position in subordination to, and under the discipline of, the spiritual elements of society. We cannot, of course, go back to "Shakespeare's" medievalism, but we shall need to incorporate into modern life what was best in the social order and social spirit of the Middle Ages. "The prophetic soul of the wide world" fills its vision, not with a state of more intense material competition and increased luxury, but with a social order in which the human heart and mind will have larger facilities for expansion; in which poetry, music, the drama, and art in all its forms will throw an additional charm over a life of human harmony and mutual helpfulness; in which, therefore, "Shakespeare," "our ever-living poet," will be an intimate personal influence when the heroes of our late Titanic struggle will be either forgotten or will only appear dimly in the pages of history.

His works do not, and can never, supply all that the human soul requires. To satisfy the deepest needs of mankind the Shakespearean scriptures must be supplemented by the other great scriptures of our race; and all together they will only meet our full demands in so far as they succeed in putting before us the guiding image of a divine Humanity. In this work, however, "Shakespeare" will always retain a foremost place. Speaking no longer from behind a mask or from under a pseudonym, but in his, own honored name, Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, will ever call mankind to the worship of truth, reality, the infinite wonder of human nature and the eternal greatness of Man.