

# The Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter

APRIL 1950

## NOTICE

Members are reminded that the Quatercentenary Celebrations include a dinner, to be held at the English-Speaking Union's premises, 37 Charles Street, W.1, on Saturday, 22nd April, at 7 p.m. Evening dress optional. Charge, including coffee and tips, but not drinks, 10/-. Tickets can be obtained from the Hon. Sec. surer.

Amongst those who have accepted invitations are Marjorie Bowen and Collin Brooks, Editor of *Truth*.

## EDITORIAL NOTES

### THE QUATERCENTENARY

On 22nd April, 1950, the Shakespeare Fellowship will commemorate the fact that four hundred "courses of the sun" can be numbered since Edward de Vere, who, they think, was really entitled to "Shakespeare's crown," first saw the light of day. They salute the memory of the man who most pre-eminently was destined to a life beyond life, and of a quality no other has yet achieved. This mortal has indeed put on immortality; as Ben Jonson said, "he was not for an age but for all time."

The text for a discourse might well be: "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known." How the would-be orthodox writers assist in the unveiling! Dr. Leslie Hotson now wants to date the sonnets 1589, and thereby has a young and unknown man of 25 exploring a leading nobleman of England, as the writer in *The Times Literary Supplement* put it, "to beget an heir without delay." Sir Duff Cooper is at pains to show—in *Sergeant Shakespeare*—that the thus gratuitously commissioned Stratfordian fought in Flanders. It is a fact that de Vere did go there as a soldier in 1585.

One fact is unchallengeable. If the "Shakespeare" plays had come down to us anonymously, or under an admitted pseudonym, who would have thought of suggesting William Shaksperc as the author? If any misguided person had made the claim, it would have been submerged in ridicule, as was that of a certain Mr. Liggins to have been the author of George Eliot's early fiction.

There is still a difficulty in some minds to understand the need for concealment. Here it is ap-

propriate to quote Thomas Looney, the proto-Oxfordian:

"The man who thinks that any one living in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and James I would be as proud to acknowledge himself as the author of 'Shakespeare's' plays as any one living in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would be, has not understood the Shakespeare problem in its relationship to the age to which it belongs."

Milton wrote finely that kings for such a tomb would wish to die, but no monarch would then have thought that fame as a playwright would enhance nobility. Milton's king, Charles I, amongst worse offences, was accused of a liking for Shakespeare. If de Vere's secret had been divulged it would not have been a hanging matter, but some nobleman might have preferred the more honourable death by axe to a "wounded name" by loss of prestige. As Thomas Looney divined, de Vere was, by nature, rash and unconventional.

Viscount Simon, writing recently in *The Listener*, of Mediaeval England, said:

"In this early society poets recited their works to a listening audience, but did not expect their hearers to read them, and great men kept others to do their reading and writing for them, not so much perhaps because the mediaeval potentate could not read or write, as because these pursuits were beneath the level of the noble class."

Viscount Simon was referring to an earlier period, but something of the same feeling remained in Tudor times. Poets and dramatists were of the order of minstrels and fools: the aristocracy were to be entertained, and not themselves to be entertainers. John Selden, writing many years after de Vere's death, said: "'Tis ridiculous for a Lord to print verse—'tis well enough to make them to please himself, but to make them public is foolish."

Against this the orthodox cite one exception—as they think—*Gorbuduc*, written in part by Thomas Sackville, who became Earl of Dorset and Baron Buckhurst. They overlook the fact that, at the time of its composition, this assumed noble author was only a barrister and a member of Parliament. Moreover, who could imagine *Gorbuduc* being offered by the "common players" on the Bankside? The box office would have felt the draught!

It is interesting to note that de Vere's last descendant died in 1703, the year of the death of Samuel Pepys. That delightful diarist had noted the tepid interest in the Shakespeare drama in the latter part of the seventeenth century. If, coupled with this moderate admiration, no literary de Veres followed

the 17th Earl, is it surprising that, "deeper than did ever plummet sound," the great works were buried? Isaac D'Israeli, in *The Curiosities of Literature*, has the following passage:

"We have lost much valuable literature by the illiberal and malignant descendants of learned and ingenious persons. Many of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters have been destroyed, I am informed, by her daughter who imagined that the family honours were lowered by the addition of those of literature. Some of her best letters, recently published, were found buried in an old trunk. It would have mortified her ladyship's daughter to have heard that her mother was the Sévigné of Britain."

Lady Mary Montagu died 150 years after de Vere! Does it matter who wrote the plays? This is the painful cry of the orthodox defender, wounded by the shafts of the sceptic. Is it not a part of literary history? Does truth matter nothing to the muse of Clio? Most of us agree with Dr. Johnson, that on any subject knowledge is better than ignorance. This sort of laziness of mind would be fatal not only to literary acquisition, but to scientific research.

There have been orthodox attempts to find the man beneath the plays, but they have been absurdly indifferent to the incompatibility between the figure that has emerged and the man of Stratford. Of the latter, Taine, the French critic, wrote—referring to Shakspeare's return to Stratford:

"He settled down to an orderly, sensible, almost humdrum existence, engaged in business, provident of the future . . . He lent money, and cut a good figure in this little world. Strange close; one which at first sight resembles more that of a shop-keeper than of a poet."

Lord Penzance, who, as a Baconian, had less regard for the traditional authorship, said most happily:

"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 the grub? Yet, nothing less than this is offered to our belief. From the moment he got back to Stratford he dropped his butterfly wings—tilling his own land, wholly occupied in the making and selling of malt and other agricultural pursuits. If it was difficult to believe in William Shakspeare's transformation, it is harder still to give credit to his relapse."

Yet modern writers, like Clifford Bax and Ivor Brown, follow Churton Collins and Sir Leslie Stephen, in asserting the aristocratic outlook of the plays. Ivor Brown said—at a lecture to the *National Book League*, not in his book—Shakespeare "had an admiration for wild lavishness. He moved in a splendid world." This is just the characterisation of de Vere to be found in Edmund Bohun's *Character of Queen Elizabeth*, published in 1693, when the last Earl of Oxford of de Vere's line was living.

We Oxfordians are glad to have a Shakespeare of flesh and blood—not a fantasy unrelated to Stratford fact. The plays breathe with new life when they are fitted to a real man, even as raiment is better displayed on a woman than on a dummy. He was a

man, not the incredible saint the Baconians offer. The more saintly he was, the less likely is it that Bacon was Shakespeare. De Vere had his faults—and did not escape whipping—some of it deserved, but this brings him closer to the fine delineation of Matthew Arnold, as one who seemed to embody in his own walk on earth the lot of all mankind.

"All pains the immortal spirit must endure,  
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,  
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow."

Victorious because, as Arnold would have said, he looked at the worst that life can bring unflinchingly; he saw it steadily and saw it whole.

So, four hundred years after his birth, we rejoice that "the foiled searching of mortality" has ceased, and that we can say in Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, we have the real Shakespeare—the most gifted, as he was the most vocal, of the joys and sorrows, the pains and pleasures of our human life.

### LOONEY AGAIN

It is most appropriate that, at this time of celebration, there has appeared in America another issue of Thomas Looney's *Shakespeare Identified*, first published in 1920. With the exception of the omission of a few passages which the honest author would have wished omitted—as the result of further investigations—his text is the same as before. There are "After-words" by C. W. Barrell, the able secretary of the American Branch of the Shakespeare Fellowship, and an Introduction by William McFee, an English novelist now resident in U.S.A. The latter trenchantly dismisses the Stratfordian in favour of the Oxfordian theory. He writes:

"'Shakespeare,' however, has long ceased to be a 'writer' in the ordinary sense for the British. It would not be an exaggeration to say that at present he occupies, in the conventional Englishman's mind, a position midway between a tutelary deity and a solar myth. To question the Bard's work, or to cast doubt on his credentials is bad form, akin to eating peas with a knife or wearing brown shoes with a morning coat. It isn't done. It is not necessary to read 'Shakespeare.' It is obligatory to revere him. And Stratford-on-Avon has the same sanctity for the English as Lourdes for the faithful. It is a national shrine. The correct attitude towards a shrine is not criticism but faith."

The book (priced Five Dollars) is handsomely produced by Duell, Sloane & Pearce of New York. It is hoped before long to have copies on sale in this country.

### STILL THEY RUN!

Not the mice after the farmer's wife, but the Stratford professors when there are heretics about! The Editor had an engagement to speak on Dickens at Birmingham on 26th February. He therefore wrote to the Chief Librarian and the Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham University, offering to debate, on another evening, on the issue of Shakespeare authorship. He pointed out that no expense would be

incurred for fares, and offered a contribution towards the cost of hiring a hall. He received courteous replies from both. The Chief Librarian had made a serious effort to find a protagonist for Stratford, but had failed. The Vice-Chancellor regretted that his English staff was very busy. The Editor assured the latter that it was not lack of time that was the trouble, but lack of courage. It was certain that the said professors would find time to visit the Stratford shrine in April! The rest was silence. Members of the Shakespeare Fellowship will recall that a similar challenge from the Editor, published in the leading organ of Stratford-on-Avon, met with no better response. So they can rub it in to their orthodox friends that neither the alleged "birthplace" nor the largest city in "Shakespeare's county" can put up a defender—when there is any shooting about.

Apparently the same craven attitude is found in U.S.A., Rudolph Elie, in the *Boston Herald*, referring to the new edition of Looney's book:

"At a cocktail party, I encountered one of our most respected and honoured Shakespearean scholars; a man of immense attainment in the field. I told him of it and asked . . . what was wrong with it. He examined me with the repugnance of a man looking at an apple out of which he fears he has just bitten a worm. 'I decline to reply to such an absurd question,' he snapped icily, moving away from me in majestic distaste for my presence. 'I'll get you yet,' I muttered under my Martinied breath, and with Mr. Looney behind me maybe I will."

In the same column, Mr. Elie said the book has "been keeping me up at all hours of the night for the last fortnight, and I cannot for my life find the flaws in Mr. Looney's case . . . His presentation of the case far exceeds in narrative excitement, any detective story I ever read." This sounds very much like John Galsworthy, but the professors, "continual plodders" seeking "base authority" from other professors' books, have no time for literary detection, except that of Dr. Leslie Hotson, who is always on the wrong trail.

Many of the laity follow blindly in their train. In the course of the correspondence in *The British Weekly* on Ivor Brown's book, Mr. R. W. Hart of Kenton put forward the old and stupid idea that the genius of Shakspeare of Stratford was no more difficult to explain than that of Dickens. The Editor invited him to debate under the auspices of the Fellowship. Once more—the stock excuse—he was too busy! Apparently he is still so, for there has been no further communication. These orthodox Shakespeareans seem to be badly overworked! It is unfortunate that their "business and desires"—particularly the latter!—never take them in the direction of the tents of the opposition.

### CAMBRIDGE FOR OXFORD?

On Sunday, 23rd October, the Editor had a most enjoyable time in lecturing to the Cambridge University Heretics on the subject, "Who was Shakespeare?" On a pouring wet night, over a hundred undergraduates, including a few women

from Newnham and Girton Colleges, gave him a rousing reception. There was no hostility, and thirty pamphlets were sold. The Editor naturally placed some emphasis on the fact that de Vere was a Cambridge man but, needless to say, he did not say anything to justify the heading in the University organ, which reported his lecture—"Bard of Avon wrote on the Banks of the Cam." Neither did he attempt to convince himself that he had proved his case "to the satisfaction of the whole University." The professors, of course, were not there, but it afforded an excellent opportunity to reveal their pusillanimity as displayed by Allardyce Nicoll, Ifor Evans, and Dover Wilson. The Editor has also been invited to address the Oxford University Heretics on the same subject.

### THE ENEMY FAINTETH

Ivor Brown was kind enough to inform the Editor that people "are thoroughly tired of you and your everlasting challenges." This is indeed good news. In intellectual, as in physical warfare, an object is to weary the opposition. If Mr. Brown has any further dispatches—we will not say from the front but the rear—we hope to have them.

### A POET CONVERT

Mr. Wally Gill, whose sonnet is printed in this issue, was a convert to the Oxfordian theory as the result of the Editor's visit to Nottingham.

### APRIL 22nd, 1950

If there be honour due, and sure it is,  
To poet of yore, how were some brains beguiled;  
Which swathed in blindest ignorance gave amiss  
Oxfordian laurels unto Stratford's child?  
But now that record can, with backward look,  
Even of four hundred courses of the sun,  
Both see your image in your world-famed book,  
Observe your character and note how done:  
So Vere's adherents to the whole world can say,  
"Shakespeare," composed under adopted name,  
Has now ascended to its own noon-day;  
And Edward Earl of Oxford bears the fame.  
For sure I am the wits of former days  
To playwrights worse have given admiring praise.

H.H.H.

### PRAETERITA

By Lt.-Colonel M. W. DOUGLAS, C.S.I., C.I.E.

In recalling the beginnings of the Shakespeare Fellowship, three distinguished men come to mind. Sir George Greenwood, first President, and author of the *Shakespeare Problem Restated* and other volumes (1908-1925), in which he confounded the orthodox, and convinced the interested and impartial, that the "Stratford rustic" was not "Shakespeare." J. T. Looney, who, convinced by Greenwood, employed deductive reasoning, confirmed by unanswerable evidence, to identify the Poet in Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford. Colonel Ward's intellectual powers covered a varied range: he had also a wide circle of friends. In 1922 he read *Shakespeare Identified* by

J. T. Looney, and *Sous Le Masque de William Shakespeare* by Professor Le Franc. He found the case proved for Oxford as the main author, in some collaboration with his son-in-law, Lord Derby. The quest was worth the toil, and Colonel Ward called a meeting on the 6th November, 1922, over which Sir George Greenwood presided. Colonel Ward explained the results of his researches, and the need for collective action. Sir George stated that, since his Eton and Cambridge days, his works on Shakespeare had been destructive, but he hoped he had now entered on a period of construction. It was agreed that the Folio was the work of "many pens and a Master mind"; that Ben Jonson wrote the preface signed by Heminge and Condell.

It was resolved that the Shakespeare Fellowship be founded to ascertain the truth, and unite in one brotherhood all those who were dissatisfied with Stratford orthodoxy, and who desired to see the principles of scientific historical criticism applied to the problem of Shakespearean authorship. A vote of thanks to Colonel Ward, the founder, was passed.

The President was Sir George Greenwood, K.C.; Vice-Presidents: the Hon. Sir G. Cockburn, K.C.M.G., M.D.; Mr. W. T. Smedley (Baconians); Mr. L. T. Maxse (Editor *National Review*: Independent); Professor Abel Le Franc; Mr. J. T. Looney. Colonel B. R. Ward, C.M.G., was Hon. Secretary and Treasurer. The Executive Committee were Sir George Greenwood, Mr. Francis Clarke, Colonel M. W. Douglas, C.S.I., C.I.E.

The Executive Committee set to work to enlist members, develop research, and contribute articles to the *Hackney Spectator*. Although the work moved round Oxford clues, Sir George, with the valuable support of Colonel Ward, took the greatest interest in our research, in which his wide knowledge as scholar and lawyer and wonderful grasp of detail were always at our service. He belonged to the Baconian Society, but was not a Baconian. He preferred to remain a critic, and to retain an open mind as to the author. When accepting office, he "hoped to be entering a period of construction," and we may reasonably assume that the case for Oxford, as presented in *Shakespeare Identified* and Colonel Ward's *Mr. W. H.*, impressed him. Bacon and Oxford were doubtless among his "many pens," and one or other was "the Master mind." He considered that Shakspeare of Stratford under certain conditions (collaboration?) might have written plays, but never a sonnet. His name was in use as a pseudonym; he acted as agent for the anonymous authors, and put their plays on the stage. They became, or some of them, Shakespearean plays. When, in 1928, Sir George Greenwood died, Colonel Ward preferred to remain as Secretary and Treasurer, and I was elected President.

Colonel Ward's great achievement was the discovery of the identity of William Hall and his marriage at Hackney, where, in the Parish Church, he found that, in August, 1608, "William Hall was joined in matrimony to Margery Gryffyn."

Canon G. H. Rendall defined the discovery as one of the romances of literary exploration, calculated to

route the fallacies of experts, while confirming Mrs. C. C. Stopes' surmise of the marriage. In 1609 Lord Oxford's residence, King's Place, passed into the hands of Fulke Greville, and during that period there was a recrudescence of Shakespearean publication. Playhouse copies of *Lear*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Pericles* appeared, and the Sonnets were procured by Hall. There is an obvious connection in these incidents. The Sonnets were handed over to Thorpe, whose dedication was an acknowledgment to Hall. No questions of chance or coincidence arise. In Colonel Ward's words—"I expected to find my fox in a spinney and did so."

In 1933 "fell sergeant death" deprived us of the services of our founder, Colonel Ward. He gave of his best, and left us one of our most valued books in his *Mystery of Mr. W. H.*

## MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING— A BURLESQUE OF THE OXFORD - HOWARD-ARUNDEL QUARREL

By PERCY ALLEN

(The substance of a Lecture given to the Shakespeare Fellowship)

The central theme of *Much Ado*, the story of the interrupted marriage, had been dramatised before 1581; and Oxford may have derived his plot, in part, from Belleforest's translation, in *Histoires Tragiques*, of Bandello's 22nd *Novella*.

Readers will remember that Oxford, while travelling in Italy in 1575 heard that his wife, Anne Cecil, had borne to him, in his absence, a daughter, Lady Elizabeth Vere, whose legitimacy he promptly repudiated; partly as a result of scandalous court rumours which were being circulated against her by, or by followers of, Oxford's Roman Catholic cousins, Charles Arundel and Lord Henry Howard, with whom, on his return to court in 1576 he became very intimate. Oxford so remained until, near Christmas, 1580, he discovered that both his cousins were paid spies in the service of the King of Spain, practising secret treacheries against their own country, whereupon the Earl made formal accusation to the Queen against both men, who fled to the house of the Spanish ambassador. They were at once put in durance, pending investigation, while Oxford, whom they had counter-attacked, was sent, for a short time, to the Tower.

There followed a storm of vituperation. Howard and Arundel launched against "the monstrous Earl" a series of charges so wildly exaggerated, and so patently absurd that they almost carried their own refutation with them.

Immediately upon reading a transcript of them, supplied to me, from the Record Office, by my late friend, Capt. B. M. Ward, I realised that sentence after sentence by Arundel was burlesqued by Oxford in the dialogue of *Dogberry* and *Verges* in *Much Ado*, a comedy which dramatised also the slanderous accusations against Lady Oxford (*Hero*), of which the Howard-Arundel group were the originators. Obviously, then, Oxford, as soon as the high tension of

the quarrel had subsided, had taken the perfect revenge of pilloring his cousins for centuries to come, in a comedy which would dramatise the pair twice over as knaves and fools, in the characters of *Borachio* and *Conrade*, and *Dogberry* and *Verges*. *Conrade*, it will be observed, is an anagram for Charles Arundel, thus—*CONRADE C. ARONDE(L)*; and *Dogberry* is a quasi-anagram for *Borachio*, because, substituting an O for the D, we get *BORREGYO* which is not far from *BORACHIO*. Such tricks were common in Elizabethan literature.

We now revert to the *Howard-Arundel Papers*. On 12th January, 1580, Lord Henry Howard wrote to Sir F. Walsingham, the Queen's principal Secretary of State, a letter from which I quote a few extracts which recall certain points in *Much Ado*. (Italics, in this article, are mine.)

"Touching mine accuser (Lord Oxford) if the botchie and deformities of his mis-shapen life suffice not to discredit . . . the warrant of his wreckful words . . . I know my state dependeth much upon your dealing with the Queen on my behalf; and therefore I can say no more, but humbly desire the best and remain as ready to deserve the uttermost. I craved leave to write this letter because I had a strong suspicion in my mind that you would do me good."

That paragraph alone, with its muddled and inconsequential style, coupled with the alleged "deformities" of Oxford's "mis-shapen life," reminded me at once of the watchmen in *Much Ado*, III, 3, with their "dangerous piece of lechery, and one Deformed is one of them." I was already pretty sure; but Arundel's answer to Oxford, in *Articles* 43-45, settled the matter once for all. Thus Arundel, abbreviated:

To the fourth . . . to the eighth . . . to the tenth, etc. . . . If this be untrue, God never receive me to His mercy . . . to the eleventh, I take God to witness . . . Christ never receive me to his mercy . . . if ever I spake with a Jesuit . . . To report at large all the vices of this monstrous Earl were a labour without end because they are so many, so vile . . . as of the testimony of some very honorable and divers very honest shall plainly appear . . . He hath perjured himself a hundred times and damned himself to the pit of hell.

All who are familiar with the text of *Much Ado* will have perceived already the cunning drift of Oxford's revenge. For example, Arundel writes of "some very honorable, divers very honest." Now listen to *Dogberry* and *Verges* in III, 3 and III, 5.

*Dogb.* (of *Verges*) honest as the skin between his brows.

*Verg.* Thank God I am as honest as any man living that is not honest than I.

Arundel, as we have seen, wrote:

"He (Oxford) has perjured himself a hundred times, and damned himself to the pit of hell."

Compare this with *Dogberry* to *Borachio* in IV, 2.

*Dogb.* Write down Prince John a villain. Why

this is flat perjury to call a prince's brother villain . . . O villain, thou wilt be condemned into everlasting redemption for this!

Here are the pertinent phrases in sequence:

*Arund.* Perjured himself . . . damned himself to the pit of hell.

*Dogb.* Flat perjury . . . thou wilt be condemned into everlasting redemption.

*Conrade* (Arundel) and *Dogberry* (Howard) continue thus:

*Conr.* (to *Dogb.*) Away! you are an ass.

*Dogb.* O that he were here to write me down an ass! Masters, remember that I am an ass, though it be not written down . . . No, thou villain, thou art full of piety.

The point here, of course, is that Arundel's own written charges (against Oxford) have, by their muddle-headedness, written Arundel himself down as the ass that he unquestionably was. Further, Arundel, like *Dogberry* (Howard), is "full of piety," a quality which his charges against Oxford simply exude—"God never receive me"; "I call God to witness"; "Christ never receive me," and so forth. Later on in the papers, and again in Arundel's own handwriting, we get:

"To the sixth. I protest before God . . . to the eighth. I take God to witness . . . to the twentieth. As God knows . . . his intent."

Arundel throughout is as muddle-headed as he is incoherently pious. *Dogberry*, in a comparatively short part, uses the name of the Deity twenty-three times!

We have already noted that some of the points in the various *Articles* show a striking contrast between the mathematically correct sequence of the numbered sections—fourthly, fifthly, sixthly, etc.—and the jumbled incoherence of Arundel's replies under each number—a contrast which has not escaped Oxford's searching eye, as he awaits every opportunity to win more laughs from his opponent's muddled mind. Thus Arundel on Oxford, early in 1581.

*Fifthly*, the world never brought forth such a villainous monster.

Now see how Oxford burlesques all this, while, in the play, he makes the prototypes of Howard and Arundel, in V, 1, charge one another out of their own mouths:

*Don Pedro.* What offence have these men done?

*Dogb.* Marry, Sir, they have committed false report . . . secondarily they are slanderers; sixthly and lastly they have belied a lady; thirdly they have verified unjust things; and to conclude they are lying knaves.

*Don P.* First I ask thee what they have done; thirdly what's their offence; sixthly and lastly why they are committed, and to conclude what bring you to their charge?

Space forbids more; but have I not shown that Lord Oxford's intimate connection with the Shakespearean comedy *Much Ado* can now no longer be disputed?

## POLONIUS

By J. SHERA ATKINSON

The Gratulationes Valdineses of Gabriel Harvey—the addresses of welcome delivered by him as Public Orator of Cambridge University to Queen Elizabeth and her Court at Audley End in July, 1578—include addresses in Latin verse to Elizabeth, the Earl of Leicester, Lord Burghley, the Earl of Oxford, Christopher Hatton, Philip Sidney, and others of less importance.

Following a custom which still prevails for Latin addresses of the kind, much play is made in the various addresses by means of puns on the name of the person addressed.\* Thus the address to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, many times uses the words *Sicilides* and *Caecilius*, by way of puns on "Cecil." Most interesting however is the use, three times, of the word *Polus*—an uncommon word, "dragged in."

We venture to think the use of that word suggests—if it is not actual evidence—that at that time—1578—there was current a nickname for Cecil, either *Polus* or something very like it. If this is so, the name Polonius, in *Hamlet*, was, we further suggest, derived from it. It is generally agreed that the original of Polonius was Lord Burghley.

It is true that in the first Quarto of *Hamlet* (1603) the name of the character is Corambis. This is an obvious reversal of Lord Burghley's motto, which, incidentally, is printed with his coat of arms as a frontispiece to the Grat. Val. address—"Cor unum, Via una," i.e. "one heart, one way," or "single-hearted"—while "Cor Ambo," double-hearted, would signify one accustomed to double dealing.

The first quarto is a pirated copy, and defective in many respects. It would seem that in at least one early MS. copy of the play—or perhaps only in some performances of it on which the "memory version" printed as the first quarto was founded—the name Corambis was used, but it is not possible to say which of the two—Corambis or Polonius—was the author's original choice, or whether Polonius was substituted because Corambis too obviously identified Lord Burghley. Polonius is used in the second quarto (1604), later quartos, and the First Folio.

Sir Edmund Chambers (*William Shakespeare, a Study of Facts and Problems*), suggested that Polonius was the earlier of the two names, and posed the question—Can Polonius have resembled some nickname of Burghley?

It is known from extant letters that in 1583 a nickname for Burghley was *Pondus*. Percy Allen (in *The Case for Edward de Vere as "Shakespeare"*) considered that to be the source of the name Polonius, and also of the name Pandarus in *Troilus and Cressida*, and identifies Pandarus also with Burghley. The "Polus" of the Grat. Val. is, however, much closer to Polonius than is *Pondus*.

The orthodox chronology dates the writing of

*Hamlet* about 1600-1; but Professor Cairncross (*The Problem of Hamlet*) shows from internal evidence that it was probably written by Shakespeare not later than 1589. Supporters of the Oxford authorship date it earlier—for example, Admiral Holland (in *Shakespeare, Oxford and Elizabethan Times*) puts the date about 1583.

The research work of orthodox and non-orthodox thus tend to bring the date much nearer to the date of the Grat. Val. addresses, and so enhance the importance of the passages in those addresses referred to in these notes.

Perusal of the Grat. Val. addresses—which are numerous and lengthy—suggests strongly that they were not delivered verbally. It would have occupied several hours to do this, and it seems more likely that Gabriel Harvey, after a short speech, delivered a printed copy of all of them to each person addressed. Possibly the printed copies now available in the British Museum and elsewhere are of that original printing, though their title page gives the date of publication for sale as September, 1578—two months later. In any case the Earl of Oxford would certainly possess a copy, so if he was the real Shakespeare it would be at hand when *Hamlet* was written.

Turning now to the next address in the Grat. Val.—that to Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, which is preceded by his coat of arms, with the motto "Vero nihil verius," we find the first 36 lines or so packed with puns on the name Vere—a mass of about 40 in 36 lines. The principal part which follows extends to six pages and forms a most remarkable analogy of the Earl, in which, after extolling his high achievements in literature, both in English verse and polished Latin prose, Harvey urges him to put aside the pen and employ his great talents as a leader in the defence of England against her foreign enemies. In that passage he uses the phrase "*Virtus Tela Vibrat*"—thy countenance shakes a spear.†

We venture to suggest that this is either (a) a pun on, or reference to, a name already adopted and used by de Vere, as a *nom de plume* for literary purposes: Harvey intimating in this way that he knew the identity of the user of that name; or (b) a phrase which suggested the *nom de plume* to de Vere. Which of these is correct it is not possible to say, though the custom of introducing veiled reference to a nickname into such addresses may well lend force to the first suggestion. Either conjecture is consistent with the name having been suggested by the Bolebec crest—a lion brandishing or shaking a broken spear. The Earl of Oxford was also Viscount Bolebec.

Sir Edmund Chambers, in the work already referred to, does not mention the Grat. Val. passage. He says that the phrase "Shake a spear" and the like are common in Elizabethan poetry, and as an orthodox Stratfordian finds it necessary to add that

\* A recent example occurred when honorary degrees were conferred on Field Marshal Lord Montgomery and others at Oxford in October, 1945. In the address (in Latin) to Lieut. General Freyberg, who came to North Africa and served under Montgomery at the time when "a mountain (Monte) was in labour and the Desert Rat re-born," Monte was a clear pun on the Field Marshal's nickname "Monty."

† Attention has been drawn to the importance of this passage by the B. M. Ward in his *Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, and by Percy Allen in *The Case for Edward de Vere as Shakespeare*. Thomas Fuller, in his *Worthies of England*, 1662, latinised the name Shakespeare differently, as "*Hasti vibrans*."

the use of it does not necessarily constitute an allusion to Shakespeare. We suggest however, that if the name concealed a great nobleman, whose identity was the subject of speculation, such phrases were very probably generally intended to hint at the writer's knowledge of the "top ranking" secret in question.

Sir Edmund Chambers might perhaps with advantage have given more attention to the inconvenient facts which point away from Stratford and in the direction of Edward de Vere.

## NOTHING BUT LEAVES

By WILLIAM KENT, F.S.A.

My title is not intended to decry the literary merits of the new Shakespeare books under review. I mean only that, whilst these leaves fall from the press, like those of the autumnal Vallambrosa, they do nothing to establish the orthodox in their feeble and falling faith. Indeed, the more of these books that are written, the more we Oxfordians rejoice. We are as happy as a Plaintiff in a court of law when witness after witness is called to prove—nothing.

First: *Shakespeare*, by Ivor Brown (Collins, 12/6). The author starts by quoting Bernard Shaw. "With the plays and sonnets in our hands we know much more about Shakespeare than we know about Dickens or Thackeray." This is Shavian nonsense, as a little more reflection than a journalist has time for, would have convinced Mr. Brown. We have hundreds of letters of Dickens and Thackeray. We have not a single one that was written by the Shakespeare of Messrs. Brown and Shaw. We have a score of volumes of reminiscences of people who knew the two Victorian novelists. No contemporary of the Stratfordian has left any impression of what he was like. Shaw's statement renders ridiculous the art of biography. As he has happily never attempted it, presumably this matters nothing. I have said "happily" by reason of an extraordinary avowal made by Shaw in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1945.

"I never investigate authorities or investigate conditions. I just deduce what happened and why it happened from my flair for human nature, knowing that if necessary I can find plenty of documents and witnesses to bear me out in any possible conclusion. This is a shorter method than that of the Webbs."

It is indeed! Most Shakespeare biographies are written that way. It saves much trouble for the writer, and even if it causes no end of error, what is that to G.B.S.?

I do not deny that Mr. Brown has been a student of Shakespeare, but he shows signs of superficiality almost inseparable from his craft, which calls for speed first and foremost. In this he is amusing on Shakespeare's copious industry. "He wrote fast, of course; otherwise his work would never have been done." If the six signatures were specimens of his slow writing—there would be no haste in signing a legal document and they appear laboured, the

compositors must have troubled Heaven with their bootless cries for guidance when they came to put the plays into print. Mr. Brown was in a hurry, too. On his third page he refers to "Shakespeare's service of the Earl of Southampton." This is one of a score of allusions to "the great friendship." Mr. Brown had no time to look up a biography of the Earl. Perhaps he did not know that so long ago as 1922, Mrs. C. C. Stopes wrote one of over five hundred pages in which she could not offer any evidence of the friendship, and frankly admitted her disappointment. He has written in the organ of the National Book League that "Covering up ignorance is a most important part of one's life work." We Oxfordians, however, will heartily agree with one comment:

"When all allowance has been made for changes in social and literary fashions and terms of personal address, a commoner belonging to an 'Outcast' profession, that of stage-player—'outcast' is his own choice of adjective—would certainly not address one of the brightest and loftiest stars of the young nobility with such a phrase as 'my lovely boy' unless he had been very sure of his ground."

If the ground was one of social equality it would be quite safe.

Another welcome remark is the following: "Folio verses were bound to be flattering. They were there, after all, to sell the book as well as to celebrate the man." This is truly said. They were like publishers' blurbs, and one—raising me to heroic mould— informed the expected reader that I walked the streets day and night during the blitz! In effect, Ben Jonson was asked to write one of these "blurbs." He did his job well, with no nice regard for truth. I like also the dismissal of the evidence of the Rev. John Ward, which the valiant Mrs. Helena Normanton, K.C., so relied upon in the debate. He "was a notoriously inaccurate gossip, who dabbled in such 'news' as that Milton was crypto-Papist and frequented Catholic clubs."

Then there is Dr. John Hall, "who in his case-book noted illnesses of his wife, his daughter, and himself," but "lamentably omitted to say anything about the decline and demise of his father-in-law." This is so upsetting to Mr. Brown that it is a repetition of a previous passage. It well might be. Perhaps it has not occurred to him that Dr. Hall lived for five years after the publication of the Second Folio, with the glowing tribute of young John Milton, so it could hardly be said that, if his father-in-law wrote the plays, he did not think people were much interested in him.

As a London historian, too, I like the following. "Much romance has been built round the toping and tattling at the Mermaid, but we have no contemporary evidence that Shakespeare himself was ever inside the place." Mr. Brown must be congratulated on reading Thomas Fuller on the "wit-combats" more carefully than Dr. Dover Wilson. In his *Life in Shakespeare's England*, the latter heads the extract, "Shakespeare and Ben Jonson at the Mermaid Tavern." Fuller gave no *locus*. I am

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glad, too, that Dr. Leslie Hotson is put in his place. How he is boosted as a sort of literary Sherlock Holmes! He may be in a way but—unlike that most famous detective—he pursues the wrong man. It is as if Holmes, hearing of a shocking business about a speckled band, spent days on the tracks of a man who did nothing worse than keep pet rabbits. Referring to the book *Shakespeare versus Shallow*, Mr. Brown truly says: "These events prove nothing to our purpose, except that Shakespeare was lodging for a period in the rowdy, licentious Bankside, where tempers were hot and hasty, and that his companions there were not all as lofty as the Earl of Southampton." The Earl again! Certainly Dr. Hotson's work is much ado about nothing.

Here is another passage as to which Oxfordians will say, "And so have said all of us."

"It does seem odd to us nowadays that objects of such affection as some of Shakespeare's books must have been to their owner, were not specified but left to go in with the rest of his personal belongings, his Ovid and his history books, Hall, Holinshed, and North's Plutarch, along with his cloaks, shoes, tables and chairs."

Yes: but the hasty Mr. Brown has the solution. "If he was confident that the doctor would appreciate his books, there was no reason to be precise about them." Perhaps, though, it was ignorance more than haste that caused Mr. Brown to write thus. Maybe he did not know of the visit of Dr. James Cooke to Mrs. Hall in 1642. If her deceased husband had cherished those books what had she done with them? There is no record of their being mentioned or of her father at all!

Now for a few matters as to which a lack of scrupulosity is sadly shewn. Mr. Brown writes: "Indeed it was partly due to William's 'excellence in the quality he professed,' as Henry Chettle phrased it in 1592, that the status and substance of the actor were improved and increased." Mr. Brown is here trying to put into the mind of the uninformed reader that Chettle mentions Shakespeare. He does not, and some orthodox writers have suggested that other dramatists were there referred to. Since the publication of Mr. Brown's book, an article in *Notes and Queries* has dismissed the idea he so artfully puts forth.

Abraham Feldman, of Temple University, Philadelphia, wrote:

"May I make a motion that we drop from the biography of Shakspeare the statement in Henry Chettle's *Kind-Harts Dreams* (1592), which is alleged to be an allusion to his genius and honesty? . . . It deserves study for information on the lives of Greene, Marlowe, Nashe and others. But it does not contain a word that can reasonably be construed as a reference to Shakspeare."

Sir Edmund Chambers takes a similar view.

Then there is the famous letter to Richard Quiney. Mr. Brown says it was addressed to "his loving good friend and countryman, Mr. William Shakespeare." It is in fact addressed to Mr. Wm. Shackspeare, as

Sir Sidney Lee and Sir Edmund Chambers have it. This seems like another attempt to mislead the innocent reader. Also there is the guying of Professor Gilbert Slater, by saying that he held "there were Seven Shakespeares, seven contributors to the Shakespeare canon." Elsewhere, Mr. Brown ridiculed it by saying that a committee could not have written the plays!

Letters were published in *The British Weekly* by Mr. H. Cutner and myself, criticising Mr. Brown. His only reply was to assure the readers that he had read Professor Slater's book, which I had doubted. These were bad tactics indeed. If there had been no reply the inference might have been that Mr. Brown knew nothing of the letters. As it was, he shewed that the only reply of which he was capable, to criticism covering a column, was an irrelevancy!

Mr. Brown has to be very cautious in the Press and disdainful of a platform discussion because of his wobbly past. "Does the life of William of Stratford add up to the known facts of the Shakespeare plays?" he has asked in *The Observer*. In this book he mentions a deal in stockings at Evesham market, in which it was supposed his Shakespeare would be interested.

"It was presumed that Shakespeare would be attentive to this proposition. Perhaps he was—and profitably. Financing an able 'barrow-boy' to ask the Avon Valley farming folk, 'Can I interest you in a few knit stockings?' may have been a happy idea. Nor do I see any reason why a great poet should not back the sale of hose as a side-line to his iambics. Man does not walk by verse alone."

Another idea Mr. Brown is in love with has been in *The Observer*.

"If Burbage or any other members of the Fellowship took Shakespeare by the scruff of the neck from time to time and at last bundled him out of the tiring house for ever with a violent command to waste himself no longer, but to go home and scribble, scribble, scribble, then that man has earned, through three and a half succeeding centuries, the unqualified gratitude of all mankind."

If Shakespeare preferred to act in old plays when he had in him the stuff of new immortal dramas, he was not for an age, but for all time—as the greatest eccentricity of genius!

It remains only to say that Mr. Ivor Brown makes no reference to a previous work, *The Amazing Monument*. He has probably realised that this was about as encouraging to the Stratfordian, as was Mark Twain's *New Pilgrim's Progress* to the Christian faith.

It was rather an unkind cut of Mr. Ivor Brown to list Mr. Hesketh Pearson's *Shakespeare* (Carroll & Nicholson, 9/6) amongst the "imaginative" books on the subject. Perhaps he did not know that Bernard Shaw—so favourably regarded at the outset of his own work—had said of it: "You have made a good job of it, which is more than I can say for the



older biographies." When this book first appeared in 1942 in the Penguin Library, I reviewed it for the *News-Letter*, *The Listener* said another book on the same subject should appear to save the reputation of the series! No doubt, Mr. Shaw likes it because it is an untuitive biography with no concern with what another Stratfordian called "sordid facts." Mr. Pearson wrote to me recently:

"You must not expect me to fight with you about Shakespeare, with whom I have lived on terms of great intimacy for over forty years, and whose personality is as familiar to me as that of my most intimate friend. There is in fact nothing I do not know about him as a man; and I can assure you that he was most certainly not a peer of the realm."

I replied: "I have no esoteric knowledge of any dead man or woman, so any performance of mine in the biographical line must be on the pedestrian lines of documents and contemporary evidence." It is notable that one passage in the original edition of Mr. Pearson's book has not been repeated. After quoting a line from *The Winter Tale*, "I am a feather for each wind that blows," he continued:

"The lines ache with personal suffering; and one cannot help wondering whether Shakespeare, returning home unexpectedly in an overwrought condition, found 'Sir Smile,' a goodly neighbour, at his house, 'paddling palms and pinching fingers' with his wife, and whether he made a terrible scene with Anne, following it up with a scene of heart-rending remorse."

Anne, at the date Mr. Pearson gives for this play, would have been 54! He had not intuited her age, alas! It is not surprising that this book had to find another publisher. I have enjoyed Mr. Pearson's biographies of Sydney Smith, Henry Labouchere, Thomas Paine, Bernard Shaw, and Dickens. The last, which I had the pleasure of reading in proof, I consider the best life of the Victorian novelist. Shakespeare is a different proposition. An unwary writer might here find the grave of his reputation.

A very different book is *Shakespeare and his Critics* by F. E. Halliday (Duckworth, 30/-). This is most valuable and worthy of the recommendation of the Book Society. It is full of useful facts—about sources, critics, editions of the plays, etc. The biographical part is better than Ivor Brown's or Hesketh Pearson's. Of course, there is some guessing, e.g., "There can be no doubt that Bottom and his friends are natives of Warwickshire," but there is a degree of frankness. "We know little more of Shakespeare's last years than we know of his first." "Contemporary allusions are tantalisingly few!" "His death appears to have passed unnoticed." Moreover, when I sent Mr. Halliday my twenty questions, he attempted answers to two. They were both wrong, but still—as I told him—the effort was courageous. To question No. 1, "How is it explained that there is no record of a single play being performed in Stratford-on-Avon in the lifetime of William Shakspeare?" he replied: "Do you know of any provincial records that give the names of plays performed?" I referred him to the book by E. I.

Fripp, in which he said that the King's men visited Stratford for "the first and only time" in 1622, and were not allowed to perform. This is not in Mr. Halliday's bibliography, and apparently he had not seen it. The answer to No. 11—as to the silence of Henslowe—is "that Shakespeare never wrote for Henslowe." Yet, on p. 336, Mr. Halliday says, "The most valuable records of early performances are those in Philip Henslowe's Diary between 1592 and 1594, when Shakespeare was writing for a number of companies in which Henslowe had an interest." Even if the plays were not Shakespeare's, as some would maintain, I asked Mr. Halliday how he could explain the inability of that astute man of business, pawnbroker, starch-manufacturer, broker of plays, to nobble his man? There was no answer to my letter. According to the "blurb," this book contained "a sober refutation of disintegrators and Baconians." The Baconian case is stated at length, with hardly an attempt at refutation. We Oxfordians would have delighted in such publicity.

All the three writers reviewed accept the Earl of Southampton as the friend of the Stratfordian, and not one seems aware of Mrs. Stopes' book. All three quote Sir John Mennes on Shakespeare's father, oblivious of the fact that at the time of the latter's death he was little Johnny Mennes, aged four!

So is Shakespeare biography written! What dusty answers the would-be Stratfordian gets to his questions about their god. These alone should drive him to other gods.

## ON THE SHAKE-SPEARE SONNETS

The secret hand now tells of time's decay  
The secret heart and mind to dust succumb  
These words remain, and feckless fame betray—  
Usurper ill attired. A poet dumb.  
The thieved text shall tell the fatal tale,  
The sorrow, speaking in a nameless hand.  
These lines bring forth a spectre sad and pale  
Yet having breath for those who understand  
The hopeless passion, long ago expired.  
The loveless ecstasy, the broken voice.  
These words undying, by despair inspired,  
Remain unnamed, for us to make the choice;  
The sireless song a noble father find,  
This orphan is the child of noble mind.

WALLY GILL

## THE DEBATE

The Shakespeare Fellowship is greatly indebted to Mrs. Helena Normanton, K.C., for her fine contribution to the success of what was considered a most enjoyable afternoon at the City Literary Institute, when she debated with Mr. William Kent. She has set an example to the literary professors which they are unwilling to follow. Thanks are also due to the Principal of the Institute, A. G. T. White, V.C., B.A., for his admirable chairmanship and happy address that concluded the proceedings on 15th October, 1949.

### " SERGEANT SHAKESPEARE "

It is always very difficult to find the Editor of a daily paper hospitable to our heresy. It was therefore very pleasing to read the following in *The Daily Telegraph* of 5th December, 1949 :

Sir,

In Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge's review of " Sergeant Shakespeare " it is mentioned that Sir Duff Cooper notes the likeness between Michael Cassio, the great arithmetician, and Maurice of Nassau, whose bent lay chiefly towards mathematics.

I have not the slightest doubt that Sir Duff has noted this independently. Nevertheless, I should like to mention that I pointed this out 26 years ago, and repeated it ten years later in books in which I claimed that *Othello* was written by the Earl of Oxford in December, 1588.

As to the identity of Iago in the particular passage under discussion, we differ. Iago had looked upon the world for four times seven years, the precise age in 1588 of Sir Francis Vere, the Second-in-Command of the English Army in Holland. He is therefore more suitable than Leicester.

H. H. HOLLAND.

History is a sort of trade in which false weights are more criminal than in other matters, because the error may go further and run longer, though their authors colour their copper too slightly to make it keep its credit long.

Isaac D'Israeli.

History suffers more than any other faculty from academic conservatism and pedantry. All discussions and theories are mischievous which by representing historical method as something esoteric, tend to obscure the truth. That which we label as peculiar to the specialist is in danger of becoming peculiar to a clique . . . The self taught student is no doubt prone to exaggerate this, but University professors are tempted to neglect it.

Dr. G. G. COULTON.

Nothing great has been founded that is not built upon a legend. In such cases the only culprit is mankind, which is willing to be deceived.

ERNEST RENAN.

### GEMS OF MYTHOLOGY

#### SHAKESPEARE'S BROTHER

But there is one more Shakespeare memory here (Southwark Cathedral) most poignant of all. Looking up at the window above the cenotaph we see in it an imaginary portrait of Edmund Shakespeare, and in the great register which has been kept here since 1570 we find this entry :

1607, December 31st, Edmund Shakespeare, a player, buried in ye church, with a forenoon knell of the great bell. 20s.

So we know that Shakespeare stood here in one of his most sorrowful hours. We may be sure that he would pay the fee for the forenoon knell. Certainly on that last day of the year 1607 he would stand by the open grave, with immortal men bearing him company. The snow would be falling, perhaps, as the old year was dying sadly for our greatest Englishman, and there, standing by his brother's grave, he would summon up remembrance of things past, would think of happy days with Edmund in the fields.

" Where often you and I

Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie."

He would feel that something of this world had passed away for him ; we are such stuff as dreams are made on, he would think, as his little brother's life was rounded with a sleep. He knew that " all that lives must die, passing through Nature to Eternity " ; but can we not imagine him saying, with almost the words he put on Cleopatra's lips : " Finish, good brother ; the bright day is done, and you are for the dark " ?

Arthur Mee (*London*).

If a copy of the Sonnets ever came back to New Place she could hardly help wondering what William had been up to and inquiring who exactly were his " loves of comfort and despair " and why he had to proclaim that " love is too young to know what conscience is." The Dark Lady bestrode the final Sonnets with her ebon-gleaming tyranny. Perhaps William took particular care to forget this volume when saddling up for Stratford in his later years, but Anne, if she could read books—and there is plenty of evidence for widespread literacy in Stratford—must have heard of and at least dipped into *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, which were the chief causes of her husband's early advancement to wealth and to renown. If she had so dipped, she must have wondered a little about the way in which his mind was working.

Ivor Brown (*Shakespeare*).

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