

# The Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter

SEPTEMBER 1953

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## NOTICE

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the Alpine Club, 74 South Audley Street, W.1, on Saturday, 10th October, at 3 p.m. Tea will be provided at a charge of 1s. 6d. It is hoped that all members will endeavour to be present.

## EDITORIAL NOTES

### Marjorie Bowen

The Editor has received the following letter from Mr. Arthur Long:

"My dear Mr. Kent,

My sons and I and Mr. Michael Constance (my step-son) thank you so very much for your kind and appreciative notice concerning my wife. It was indeed a very sudden and grievous blow to us, although she had not been in good health for some time; indeed, a great loss to many.

I would like to state she always had very deep interest in the matter the Fellowship stands for, and often she wished she could have taken a more active and scholastic part in it all, but felt she lacked the specialist knowledge of the Elizabethan period of history to do so.

With our deep thanks."

### "Save Shakespeare's Avon"

The above is the heading of the notepaper of The Lower Avon Navigation Trust Ltd. It is accompanied by an alleged portrait of the bard—much according to standard pattern—high brow, small moustache, pointed beard. The Trust is making an appeal for a fund for carrying out restoration work on the banks of "Shakespeare's Avon". A copy of the appeal was sent to the Editor of the *News-Letter* who in reply expressed his disbelief in the Avon having any connection with the real "Shakespeare". A further letter was received, suggesting that—waiving the question of authorship—the object was a worthy one. How can the question be waived in this way? It is, of course, clear that the only ground of this appeal is a mythical one and that the £11,000 already subscribed would not have been forthcoming had the Wiltshire Avon been in the picture.

### MISS DIANA NEILL AND MR. ALAN KEEN

Miss Diana Neill, for long a lecturer on Shakespeare at the City Literary Institute, was once a member of the Shakespeare Fellowship. She subsequently lapsed into an attitude of agnosticism

and some years ago, at the Institute, participated in a tripartite debate in which she criticised the Oxfordian case in opposition to the Editor and Mr. J. J. Dwyer. She intimated emphatically that she had no patience with Stratfordians, and said that anybody who accepted their candidate must have an organic predisposition to credulity. In November, 1951—as duly recorded in these pages—presiding for Mr. Alan Keen, she showed some inclination to go back to orthodoxy, but when the Editor quoted her outspoken attack as given above she frankly said she did not recant it.

In April, 1953, Miss Neill addressed the New Torch Theatre Club on the subject of the Oxford case, having been invited presumably because our esteemed chairman and treasurer, Mr. T. L. Adamson, had already championed our cause in a lecture there. Miss Neill was not very scrupulous. She accused Oxfordians of monkeying with dates, without giving any examples. She hardly touched any of the difficulties that must confront Stratfordians. These are clearly indicated in the Editor's Twenty Questions which were sent to her, but remained unanswered. Miss Neill was fortunate in her chairman. He cut short speeches by the Editor and Mrs. Le Riche though when the meeting closed the evening was very young—it was 5.15! It is safe to say that there would have been no guillotine operating had the speeches been on orthodox lines! Remarkable to relate, Miss Neill was alone—apart from the chairman's tacit support—as a defender of the man from Stratford. Mr. Alan Keen was in the audience and said nothing!

The Editor reminded Miss Neill of what she had said in the tripartite debate. Impulsively she could not wait for the Editor to finish. She intervened to say that she said this before Mr. Keen had made his discoveries. The Editor then reminded Miss Neill of her confirmation of that assertion in November, 1951. This she had evidently forgotten and the rest was silence—on this matter! If Mr. Keen has, since the lecture, found more convincing evidence, it is strange that neither he nor Miss Neill thought fit to impart it to the audience in April.

In the course of subsequent correspondence Miss Neill said: "I am of the opinion that in public meetings the greatest care should be taken to pass on accurate information, and not to mislead an audience in order to prejudice their beliefs." In reply the Editor said:

"I entirely agree . . . For this reason I regret that you should have misled your audience on one or two matters.

The book by J. C. Hart was *The Romance of Yachting* (1848)—a rare book. I think I am right

in saying that the *British Museum Quarterly* had an article thereon when they acquired a copy, as it was a valuable find. There is no reference therein to a 'learned pig'. This is the title of a still rarer Baconian book. You will find a reproduction of one of its pages in *Shakespeare: New Views for Old*, by R. L. Eagle. There is no copy in the B.M.

Furthermore you informed your audience that there was a portrait of Shakespeare over-painted with another portrait. This is not so. You are confused with the Ashbourne portrait, beneath which was found the arms of Elizabeth Trentham, the second wife of the Earl of Oxford. Rather different—is it not?"

In her reply (in which no reference was made to the three paragraphs quoted) Miss Neill said: "What offends me personally with the Oxfordians is their emotional approach to problems which are purely historical and literary." The following was the Editor's retort:

"It ill becomes a Stratfordian—or shall I say with reference to yourself a neo-Stratfordian?—to reproach Oxfordians for their emotional approach. Robert Louis Stevenson said of Dickens that he would 'wallow naked in the pathetic'. Stratfordians wallow naked in emotionalism regarding the Stratford boy who made good in London, a sort of literary Whittington . . . What are you doing but exhibiting an emotional approach in your desire to find that 'Shakespeare' and 'Shakeshafte' were identical? What is it but emotion that makes you suggest that, even if they were identical, the said actor must have been the *writer* of the plays? What evidence has Mr. Keen that his 'Shakeshafte' did any writing? . . . How is our knowledge of Shakespeare's education to be revolutionised by Mr. Keen's discovery? I cannot recall any suggestion that as 'Shakeshafte' of Rufford he was coached in Greek, Latin, English History, and the geography of Italy, its art and sculpture.

'It is unscholarly to judge without hearing the evidence weighing it.' True, but I heard you recently, Why did you not give us the evidence? Why did not Mr. Keen?"

Miss Neill had the audacity to say that when Oxfordians mention Meres it is only in part. It was pointed out that our pamphlet which no doubt Miss Neill has seen—and perhaps read—quotes him in full. Here is another extract from one of the Editor's letters: "I deny strongly that Oxfordians do not 'show any feeling for the poetry and the philosophy which so richly inform the plays.' Please name the Oxfordian who denies the theme of love, forgiveness and reconciliation in *The Winters Tale* and *The Tempest*. I cannot see what relation affirmation or denial of this has to the authorship question." No answer!

The final letter was the Editor's. He said he noted that no apologies were made for the errors, but was glad of the admission that "the links "

about to be established did not "prove that Shakeshafte wrote a line of the plays".

In one letter Miss Neill said:

"I would be very happy at any time to reveal the weaknesses of the Oxford case which become more and more apparent to me every time I consider it. That case is built up on a series of hypotheses most of them contradictory and contrary to commonsense and literary custom."

Yet Miss Neill has declined a debate!

We now await the book by Alan Keen which may revolutionise our knowledge of Shakespeare. It will probably impress the critics less than Miss Neill.

### "LORD OXFORD AND THE SHAKESPEARE GROUP"

[The following pleasing review of Lt.-Colonel Douglas's book, "Lord Oxford and the Shakespeare Group", is from the pen of Mr. Philip Drew, Principal of Glasgow University, and appeared in its organ.]

It is a disturbing book which suggests that we should date *The Comedy of Errors* 1570 and *The Winter's Tale* 1584, reject *Coriolanus* and *The Tempest* from the "Shakespearean" canon, and accept Ben Jonson as the editor of the First Folio. These, of course, are heresies which no Shakespearean scholar can countenance for a moment, yet even the fundamentalist must acknowledge that Colonel Douglas has marshalled a considerable body of evidence for his theories.

He restates the contentions of Sir George Greenwood, Canon Rendall and others that the "Shakespearean" plays were written not by Shakespeare of Stratford but by a company of poets whose leader and inspiration was Edward de Vere, Lord Oxford. Colonel Douglas has not the space to document his case in detail, and many of his contributory points seem in consequence asserted rather than established. However, the hinges of the argument are clearly and ably displayed.

The strength of the Oxford theory, of which this book may be taken as the definitive summary, comes chiefly, I suspect, from the weakness of parts of the orthodox case, which, of course, is not itself free from conjecture and assumption. However, Lord Oxford does very well in the part of the hypothetical genius, anonymous and unacknowledged: he is shown as a surprisingly energetic figure in the late sixteenth-century world of letters.

I do not expect the book to revolutionise English Literature; "Shakespeare" like Homer, is what he wrote. The plays and the poems, not the man, are the critic's field, but Colonel Douglas's book is of extreme interest for the study of the by-ways of Elizabethan and Jacobean social history. In criticism, one must remark the apparent reluctance to accept the distinction between the "good" and "bad" quartos.

In the preparation of this book, Colonel Douglas was assisted by Mr. T. M. Aitken, a Glasgow graduate of 1894.

## A SHAKESPEARE QUIZ

Anyone who wants a terrific blast in small compass—as a sort of anti-Stratfordian atom bomb, cannot do better than obtain for sixpence *Shakespeare Quiz*, by Edward D. Johnson. Of a hundred shots against the Stratford Shakespeare, in the Editor's opinion only two miss the mark. "He deserted his wife and never sent for her to join him in London where he is alleged to have been prosperous." "Apparently he never corresponded with her during his absence in London." The "apparently" is too much like Sir Sidney Lee's "probably". Would one expect a wife, then or now, to keep a note requesting her to come to London? What other evidence could there be? He might have sent a verbal message, as possibly she could not read. We can never see any ground for a definite statement of desertion.

This valuable Quiz can be obtained for 7½d. from George Lapworth & Co. Ltd., Vernon House, Sicilian Avenue, London, W.C.1.

Readers of the *News-Letter* will remember that we have published in brief form Henry James's delightful story "The Birthplace". Mr. E. D. Johnson (a Baconian) quotes a letter from Joseph Skipsey the principal character, written in 1902 to Mr. Cuming Walters, Dickensian as well as Baconian, in which he said that "the chief reason why he had resigned his position as curator was because he has gradually lost all faith in the so-called relics which, as custodian, it was his duty to show, and if possible explain, to the visitors at the birthplace".

### A New Member

A new and most welcome member of the S.F. is Mrs. Harriet Sprague of New York. She has been good enough to notify the Editor of others in U.S.A. likely to be interested, and one who has joined is the only surviving child of Mark Twain, whose contempt for the Stratford theory is well known to all our members. Mrs. Sprague sent a letter to the Editor of the *New York Times Book Review* protesting against the most biased review (by Professor Oscar James Campbell) of *This Star of England* by Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn. Only the following paragraphs were published:

"It is unfortunate that this important and convincing book was given for review to a writer long antagonistic to the claims for Edward de Vere as author of the Shakespeare plays and sonnets.

Reviewers antagonistic to any new light on this great problem resort to sarcasm and contempt because they are unable to answer the important questions involved."

Happily, there were other protests published.

New members are now supplied with a copy of the Fellowship's pamphlet, also those by Miss Eggar and Miss Gwynneth Bowen. The latter's deals only with *The Tempest*.

### Another Convert

In the course of a letter to the Editor from his friend the veteran and prolific journalist S. K. Ratcliffe, the latter said that he had sent the S.F. pamphlet to an old friend in New Jersey, U.S.A. This friend has now written to Mr. Ratcliffe as follows:

"The Kent brochure on Oxford interested me greatly. He writes more as protagonist than authority, though I imagine he could be one, if he let himself go. The Oxford movement, grown to astonishing proportions over here, must be strong enough over there to see to that. On this side the book must have had wide circulation. I got it from the Library of Congress and then later found it in the Newark, N.J., and beside it another work on Oxford by an American woman whose name escapes me. I was in Washington, too, when Looney's assistant took X-ray pictures of the rare "Shakespeare" portrait in the Folger Library there. Whether they establish refutation-tight proof of the Oxford authorship I don't know, but the argument does nothing to relieve me of a long-time feeling that the Fat Boy from Stratford simply couldn't have done the plays. For one thing, where could he have found the *time*, even given the genius! And the most towering genius ever born couldn't have tossed off those performances overnight.

After reading the Looney book it amused me no end to go over Georg Brandes again, and find every word he wrote in his lengthy tome but added unconscious attestation to the Oxford theory!"

*William Shakespeare: A Critical Study* was published so long ago as 1899. It is one of the most interesting books on the subject. The comment of the American gentleman is quite justified.

### Shakespeare Statues

Some readers of the S.F. *News-Letter* probably saw a contribution in *The Times* on the above subject. It was the work of the Editor, and was an answer to Mr. Donald Wolfit. The latter suggested that the statue in Leicester Square should be restored in view of the Coronation, and he made the astonishing statement that it was the only Shakespeare statue in London! In addition to the statue in Leicester Square there is one in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, from which the former was copied. There are also a statue in Southwark Cathedral and one outside the City of London School, Victoria Embankment. There is a statue in the British Museum, made in 1758 to the order of David Garrick for his Hampton villa. There is another outside the Hammersmith Central Library in Brook Green Road, and a bust outside St. Mary Aldermanbury Church in the City.

Mr. Donald Wolfit must have been rather embarrassed by this catalogue. It was astonishing that he overlooked the figure in Southwark

Cathedral, as he must have been at the annual Shakespeare service there.

It might have been mentioned that in no case does the statue's face resemble the Droeshout portrait in the First Folio or the Stratford bust, but it is certain that this remark would have been rejected.

## ANNUAL DINNER

The Annual Dinner was held at the English-Speaking Union, 37 Charles Street, W.1, on 23rd April. Fifty-four people were present, including members and guests, and it was a great success.

The Chair was taken by Mr. Christmas Humphreys, who read a telegram from the President, sending best wishes for a pleasant evening, and extracts from a letter addressed to the President by Mr. Charlton Ogburn. Members were disappointed to hear that Mr. Milton Waldman, who was to have been the principal guest, was ill and unable to come, but he, too, sent his greeting and "hopes that you will have a very successful evening".

The toast to the Ever-living Memory of Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, was proposed by Mr. J. W. Russell, who made several cogent points in favour of de Vere as at least the main author of the Shakespeare plays and poems. He stressed Vere's personal relationships with certain of his contemporaries who were known to have been connected, in one way or another, with the author. Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, and William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, for instance, had been proposed as husbands for two of Vere's daughters, though the match did not come off in either case. His youngest daughter did, however, marry Philip Herbert, afterwards Earl of Montgomery, the younger of the "incomparable pair of brethren" of the Folio dedication. Arthur Golding, the translator of Ovid, whose influence on Shakespeare is unquestioned, was Vere's uncle and, for a while, his tutor. John Lyly was his private secretary, dedicated *Euphues his England* to him, and produced plays under his patronage at the Blackfriars Theatre. None of these facts, Mr. Russell admitted, was conclusive evidence in itself, but each was—"just another of those things"! This was the constant refrain to a witty and convincing speech. Mr. Russell also showed by a quotation from *Stalky and Co.* that Rudyard Kipling was neither a Stratfordian nor a Baconian. He had probably never heard of Edward de Vere.

The toast to the Fellowship was proposed by Mr. Robert Sinclair who, speaking from personal experience as a writer and editor, gave some friendly advice on the gentle art of persuasion. Miss Gwynneth Bowen replied, followed by Dr. John R. Mez.

Mr. T. L. Adamson then proposed the guests. In replying, Mr. C. B. Oldman, Principal Keeper of the Printed Books at the British Museum, said

that, while unable to accept the Oxfordian hypothesis, he appreciated the work done by the Shakespeare Fellowship, and felt that we had not had a fair deal from the orthodox Shakespeare scholars. His speech was followed by one from Mr. A. S. Frere, of Heinemann, Ltd., who will shortly be publishing a book on the Earl of Oxford as Shakespeare, by Miss Hilda Amphlett, with a foreword by Mr. Christmas Humphreys.

The Chairman, in his concluding speech, thanked all those whose work and enthusiasm had contributed towards a very enjoyable evening.

On the same evening, in the same building, an orthodox celebration was proceeding, the principal speaker was Miss Pamela Hansford Johnson.

## Other Events

Mention must also be made of the excellent lecture on 14th March, 1953, by Dr. A. W. Titherley on "The claim of William Shakespeare sixth Earl of Derby." It was most able and informative, if not quite convincing.

The Shakespeare Fellowship also is greatly indebted to Dr. J. R. Mez for his lantern lecture at Bedford College, Regent's Park, on 21st April. It was unfortunate that the College was in vacation, otherwise there would probably have been a larger attendance.

## THE THIRD EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON

BY KATHLEEN LE RICHE

Following Mr. G. W. Phillips' careful scrutiny of historical facts concerning the birth of Henry Wriothesley, the Third Earl of Southampton, which appeared in the April, 1953, issue of the *Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter*, I wish to join with him, as other Oxfordians have already done, in repudiating the hypothesis (first launched by the late Capt. B. M. Ward and Mr. Percy Allen, and now repeated by Mr. and Mrs. Ogburn in their book *This Star of England*) that Henry Wriothesley was the illegitimate son of the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford and Queen Elizabeth.

On October 6th, 1573 (when forty winters had besieged the brow of Queen Elizabeth), Henry Wriothesley was born to Mary Browne, wife of the elegant Second Earl of Southampton, at Cowdray House, near Midhurst, Sussex, the residence of her father, the first Viscount Montague. Sir Sidney Lee, in his *Life of William Shakespeare*, quotes the Loseley MSS. (ed. A. J. Kempe) for the delighted father's letter to a friend, "A goodly boy, God bless him".

The father died eight years later, and, as the first son had also died, Henry succeeded to the title. The resemblance of the Third Earl to his mother is vouched for by Sir Sidney Lee, who visited Welbeck Abbey with the permission of the Duke of Portland. He writes that her portrait shows a young woman with regularly formed

features beneath bright auburn hair, which is the same hue as the "lovely boy" whose portrait also hangs at Welbeck. This recalls and affirms the first seventeen Shakespeare Sonnets, particularly number iii:

Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee  
Calls back the lovely April of her prime.  
and number xiii:

You had a father; let your son say so.  
These are explicit statements of verified facts, that the boy resembled his mother and that his father was dead.

If we accept that the first seventeen Sonnets urging a young man to get married and re-create himself are addressed to the brilliant young Earl of Southampton, bearing in mind the evidence for Lord Oxford's authorship of the Sonnets, we must look also at the evidence which exists for the proposed marriage between Southampton and Lord Oxford's daughter, Elizabeth de Vere. The marriage was urged by the young Earl's mother, by Lord Burghley, her grandfather, and, from the internal evidence of the poems, by Lord Oxford too.

Does anyone seriously accept that this nobleman, so proud of his ancient lineage and the honour of his name, would have countenanced an incestuous marriage between his own legitimate daughter and his illegitimate son? Shakespeare's own denunciation of incest again and again in the plays as a black evil puts this preposterous idea out of court. On page 246 of J. T. Looney's *Shakespeare Identified* he quotes an entry in the Calendered State Papers, Domestic 1601-3, page 56 that it was affirmed by one party that "the Queen wooed the Earl of Oxford but he would not fall in". That the Queen liked to keep Lord Oxford by her side and that their relationship was close cannot be denied, but that is far from giving validity to an unsupported case for joint parentage.

The theme in *Venus and Adonis*, dedicated to the youthful Earl of Southampton in 1593, reiterates the plea that this lovely boy should create his own eternity by begetting his kind. The dedication has in it respect and some humility, as befits the pen-name of a supposed commoner, but compared with the tediously abject dedications used in that period by commoners to noble patrons it is brief indeed. The crucial phrase in the dedication, however, is, "onely if your Honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vowe to take advantage of all idle houres, till I have honoured you with some graver labour".

No commoner at that period or any other, would presume to honour his patron by further labour, however grave.

As Canon Rendall has written in his *Personal Clues* concerning Sonnet xxvi: "In the vocabulary of ceremonial courtesy, neither 'Lord' 'vassalage' nor duty (*devoir*) convey the least touch of servility: on the contrary, they imply mutual dignity of relation and would be unsuitable and indeed presumptuous on the lips of a plebeian client addressing a noble patron."

A year later, however, in 1594, William Shakespeare begins his dedication of *The Rape of Lucrece* to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton and Baron of Titchfield: "The love I dedicate to your lordship is without end." Surely this implies that the author and the patron were, whatever the pseudonym, of equal social status, very thinly disguised for the public eye.

During the same year, Elizabeth de Vere having refused—or the Earl of Southampton having declined—the proposed marriage, she became betrothed to William Stanley, the Sixth Earl of Derby, and in January, 1595, after some delay which seemed to cause them vexation, they got married.

My reiteration of these well-known facts is to point out that this betrothal and marriage of Lord Derby, at the age of about thirty-three, to the young lady whom Southampton was being urged to marry the year before, rules out the Derby theory of Shakespearean authorship of the *Sonnets*, *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece* and therefore the plays. It is extremely unlikely that Lord Derby would have dedicated poems to his rival urging him to get married to the lady he then married!

There is no reason, however, to reject William Stanley as a collaborator with his father-in-law, Edward de Vere, in composing or producing the plays. His brother, Ferdinand, the Fifth Earl of Derby, had his own players—Lord Strange's Company—and the Sixth Earl was reported as "penning plaies for the common players".

Professor Abel Lefranc, and, more recently, M. Georges Lambin, have made a very strong case for the close association between certain of the plays and the life of the Sixth Earl of Derby.

Too many Shakespearean scholars agree, for such opinion to be ignored, that an inferior writer imitated as best he could the style of Shakespeare, and interpolated his contribution rather too freely.

To my mind, the most reasonable theory so far put forth is that William Stanley completed, or re-wrote, so far as he was able (and with his own bias), the plays his father-in-law left unfinished at his death in 1604. For example, *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, etc., are possibly by Oxford and Derby, and *The Tempest* wholly by the latter except, perhaps for the little song "Where the bee sucks" which might have been among Lord Oxford's manuscripts. The complete collection, published in 1623 in the First Folio, was possibly under Lord Derby's supervision or editors chosen by *The Grand Possessors* referred to in the suppressed prelude to *Troilus and Cressida*. They were allied by marriage to Lord Derby and the Pembroke brothers to whom the First Folio was dedicated.

As far as is known, Lord Derby, although he lived another nineteen years after that publication, never wrote again for the theatre. The inspiration, the creative drive, and the true poetry had expired with the death of Shakespeare, Lord Oxford, in June, 1604.

## PROFESSOR ABEL LEFRANC ON OXFORD

BY H. CUTNER

In his *A la découverte de Shakespeare* (which has unfortunately not yet been translated into English) published in 1945, and which is a detailed study of the part the murder of Darnley played in the writing of the various editions of *Hamlet*, as well as many other studies on the problem of Shakespeare, there is a note (page 330) worth translating:

"I cannot here examine the Oxfordian thesis, first made in 1920 by J. Thomas Looney, and which has since attracted numerous followers. In a letter sealed and confided to the care of M. R. Cagnat, the permanent secretary of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres in the summer of 1918, I felt I ought to give a date on the subject of the possible participation of Lord Oxford in the Shakespearean theatre. Since then I have found it impossible to work further on the problem contenting myself to follow in the wake of the many books dealing with it. At the moment, I can best send students to the excellent book by B. M. Ward (*The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*). I have been assured that my letter of 1918 still exists intact in the Academy of which I have the honour to be a member."

That Professor Lefranc in his studies leading to his belief that the real author of the Plays, or at least of most of them, was the Earl of Derby, came across his father-in-law as also a writer of plays, and possibly Shakespearean ones, may well be. But Looney had discovered the fact long before 1918 for it was the war which prevented the publication of his book. Still, it is interesting to find such a great scholar as Lefranc saw that the claim made by Oxford's contemporaries was at least justified.

## WAS SHAKSPERE ILLITERATE?

BY R. L. EAGLE

The reply to this question begins with a cliché made famous by the late Dr. C. E. M. Joad, "it depends what you mean by" illiterate. Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence certainly overstepped the bounds of probability when he described the player as "a drunken illiterate clown" who was "unable to write so much as his own name". There is no contemporary proof that he was a drunkard. The alleged drinking bout at Bidford is a legendary exploit, first mentioned in 1762, and appears to have been invented by John Jordan, a Stratford "antiquary" who manufactured a variety of myths about Shakspeare.

The story of the "merry meeting" between Shakspeare, Drayton and Jonson at Stratford at which, it is stated, "Shakspeare itt seems drank too hard, for he died of a feavour there contracted", had its origin in the Diary of the Rev.

John Ward, written between 1661 and 1663. It is a most improbable yarn. Drayton was described as "very temperate in his life, slow of speech and inoffensive in company", and is a most unlikely member of the trio at this supposed "merry meeting". So far as I can discover these two stories, which are valueless as evidence, led to the charge of drunkenness made by Sir Edwin.

As for the alleged illiteracy which Sir Edwin claimed was total, surely this is a rash and dangerous claim to make. If a Baconian writer or lecturer were to follow Sir Edwin by repeating him, he might be asked such questions as these:

If, as is stated, Shakspeare was totally illiterate, how did he manage to study plays and learn parts?

Would Bacon, or any other author or authors, be likely to take cover behind the mask of a totally illiterate person who was associated in public life with actors who took parts in the plays known as Shakespeare's?

It is true that, apart from the six signatures to legal documents, we have no undisputed specimen of his handwriting. It is an indisputable fact that these signatures are dreadful efforts at handwriting, and even the experts cannot decide what all the letters represent, and no two of them are much alike. Three of the six are on the will, and it is strange that the words "By me William" of the third will signature are well-written, but are followed by the surname written in a hesitating and scrawling hand. I would like to quote what the late Sir George Greenwood has to say concerning this in his little book *Shakspeare's Hand-writing* (1920):

"Let us again examine the third signature, which is preceded by the words, 'By me', concerning which Sir E. Maunde Thompson writes as follows: 'The firmness and legibility of the first three words, "By me William", as compared with the weakness and malformation of the surname, and of both the other signatures, are very striking. We can attribute that weakness and malformation *certainly* to the condition of the dying man. The firmness of the first three words indicate, we believe, an effort on the part of the invalid, which, however, he was incapable of maintaining to the end'."

"*Certainly!*" Well, it is, of course, very convenient to assert certainty for that of which your argument stands in need, but there is really no certainty whatever that William Shakspeare was a "dying man" at the time these words were written; there is, indeed, no evidence at all that he was then ill or so weak that it was an effort for him to write his name.

The will was originally dated 25th January, 1615-16, and in it the testator is stated to be "in perfect health". The signatures were added 25th March, and Shakespeare lived for nearly a month afterwards. The words "By me William" are certainly in marked contrast to the surname,

being written in a fine, strong, legible hand. The only reasonable inference is that some man, other than the testator—a law-scrivener may be—wrote those words, and left it to Shakspeare to add his surname. It is the writing of a good penman in ordinary health, followed by that of a man who probably was always a very poor penman.

The ornamental dot under the final curve of the "W" in "William" was a common feature in this and other capitals. In the great majority of cases, where it is found, it is the sign of professional writers such as scriveners. A gentleman employed at the Guildhall Library, who had a very large experience in the reading of old manuscripts, wrote to Sir George Greenwood that "the dot was seldom, if ever, used by lay-writers". Is it not extremely improbable that a "dying man", making a great effort to write his signature, would have been at the pains to trouble about adding the ornamental dot?

Sir George Greenwood goes on to say, "At the present day, of course, when the law as to wills is far stricter than it was in Shakspeare's day, and when a testator's signature has to be witnessed by an attestation clause in due form, such a course of procedure would be most irregular, but in the year 1616 things were very different, and, I may again remind the reader that, at that time there was no actual legal necessity that a will should be signed at all." The law only required "sealing and delivery".

It does not necessarily follow that because the law-clerk wrote the words "By me William" that the testator was incapable of writing them himself. My opinion is that Shakspeare wrote his surname as evidence that he had read the will and given it his approval. Bad handwriting is not necessarily a sign of a poor education. Many men of intelligence and genius have written, and do write, in an almost illegible hand. The signatures of many a business letter are impossible to decipher!

If, as appears highly probable, Ben Jonson's epigram "On Poet-Ape" makes reference to player Shakspeare, it is highly important because it was written in the lifetime of the Stratford man. It was published in a book of Epigrams in 1616, but was written many years earlier. The volume was dedicated to William, Earl of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain, the elder brother of the "Incomparable Pair" of the Shakespeare Folio. The epigram runs as follows:

Poor Poet-Ape, that would be thought our chief,  
Whose works are e'en the frippery of wit,  
From brokage is become so bold a thief,  
As we, the robb'd, leave rage, and pity it.  
At first he made low shifts, would pick and glean,  
Buy the reversion of old plays, now grown  
To a little wealth and credit in the scene,  
He takes up all, makes each man's wit his own,  
And told of this, he slights it. Tut, such crimes  
The sluggish, gaping auditor devours;

He marks not whose 'twas first, and after times  
May judge it to be his as well as ours.  
Fool! as if half eyes will not know a fleece  
From locks of wool, or shreds from the whole  
piece.

I can think of no other than Shakspeare to whom these lines can apply. He has made some reputation by passing off other men's writings as his own, but all he has done is to add some "shreds" to those plays. He began as a broker or purchaser of plays and adding the "frillery" or cast off garments of "wit" from old plays. The Shakespeare plays prove that this was done, and many a play is marred by passages, and even whole scenes, of coarseness or banality by somebody who had not even the gift of style.

The first quarto of Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* (1605), gives the names of the actors who took part in its original production at the Globe in 1603, and the Stratford player heads the second column. He stands first in the list of actors in *Every Man out of his Humour* in the first quarto of 1598.

In the *Microcosmos* (1603), John Davies of Hereford has the initials "W.S.R.B." in the margin against the lines:

Players, I love yee, and your Qualitie,  
As ye are Men, that pass time not abus'd:  
And some I love for painting, poesie,  
And say fell Fortune cannot be excus'd,  
That hath for better uses you reus'd:  
Wit, Courage, good shape, good partes, and  
all good,  
As long as all these goods are no worse us'd,  
And though the stage doth staine pure gentle  
blood,  
Yet generous yee are in minde and moode.

Here W.S. is coupled with Burbage—the leading player of the King's Company. Davies' epigram "To our English Terence Mr. Will. Shake-speare" is better known, for it mentions that "good Will" had played "some kingly parts in sport". (It may be sarcasm, and allude not to playing Kings but to belonging to the King's players). This epigram is in *The Scourge of Folly*, undated, but written about 1611. Most of the epigrams are satirical, and this one appears to be no exception. The allusion to Terence, whose comedies were said to have been written by the consuls C. Laelius and Scipio is curious, if not significant, firstly because Shakespeare had then written his great poems, tragedies and histories as well as comedies, and secondly because of the opinion of the Roman *illuminati* that the Carthaginian ex-slave could not have written such polished and elegant Latin. That belief was expressed by, among others, Cicero (*Ad. Att.* vii, 3), and Quintilian (*Inst. Orat.* x, I, 99). It is stated as a fact by Montaigne (*Essays*, Bk. I, 39).

For performing "two several comedies or interludes" at the palace at Greenwich on December 26th and 28th, 1594, Kemp, Burbage and Shakspeare received a total of £20 (see



Accounts of the Treasurer of the Royal Chamber—Pipe Office Declared Accounts, vol. 542, fo. 207b, in The Public Record Office).

When James I promoted the Lord Chamberlain's company to that of the King's Company, nine of the actors were mentioned in the license of 19th May, 1603. Shakspeare's name is second and Burbage third. The name of Lawrence Fletcher is first on the list. They then become numbered among the Grooms of the Chamber. As such they were included in the royal progress through London on 15th March, 1604, and were allowed by the Master of the Wardrobe  $4\frac{1}{2}$  yards of scarlet cloth to make themselves suits. In the document authorising the grant Shakspeare's name stands first, and is immediately followed by Lawrence Fletcher, John Heminges, Augustine Phillips and Richard Burbage.

In the face of such evidence, it is absurd to pretend that the Stratford man was not a person of some importance in the theatre. But that, of course, does not affect the Shakespeare authorship problem. There is nothing published, written or said during the lifetime of the Stratford man which so much as suggests that he was the mastermind who wrote under the name of William Shakespeare.

His name is placed at the head of the "Principall Actors" in the Folio of 1623. Although this is seven years after his death, most of the actors, and others who had attended the theatre, would know whether, or not, he did perform in the plays. It was not only the "penny knaves" who visited the theatre. Young "bloods" from the Inns of Court and other intellectuals (the very sort who might purchase copies of the Folio) were also frequent patrons of the playhouses.

[This article had long been held over, and so it appears in the current issue of *Baconiana* to which Mr. Eagle offered it. As it was in print before this was known, it has been decided to include it, as probably few members of the S.F. read the organ of the Bacon Society.]

## EDWARD DE VERE IN HOLLAND

*Achter het Mombakkes*, by P. H. VAN MOERKERKEN, 1950, published by G. A. van Oorschot, Amsterdam.

Edward de Vere as we know, fought in Holland, like his cousins Francis and Horace, and in conjunction with the Dutch at sea against the threatening Spanish domination of Western Europe.

To me as Hollander it is therefore an agreeable task to introduce to the readers of our paper a book written by a countryman of mine, the first and, as far as I know, only written book on the European continent, which treats of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare, the more so as it has been excellently written.

P. H. van Moerkerken, Doctor of Literature and one-time Professor of Iconography and Sym-

bolism at the State Academy of Plastic Arts at Amsterdam, edited his book *Achter het Mombakkes* (Behind the Mask) in 1950. Unfortunately he died shortly afterwards at 74 years of age.

Van Moerkerken was one of the best Dutch authors of historical novels and wrote among other things dramas and poems. Science and art imbued his noble mind in an ideal way. That is why he was an ideal person to write a historically scientific and at the same time artistic book about Oxford as Shakespeare.

It not only gives evidence of a lucid style and wide reading, often giving facts in a witty way, drawing conclusions to the exactness of the Oxford thesis, but presented us Hollanders with excellent translations of several of Shakespeare's sonnets and of Oxford's poems.

As his book consists of only 150 pages, it stands to reason, that he had to limit himself to the most important points of view and arguments which appeared in the yearly growing comprehensive Oxford literature. This however has the advantage that his oeuvre is an excellent introduction to those who have not yet been initiated into the Oxford thesis, giving them a clear and general notion of the essentials, which might induce them to make a study of more elaborate works.

They who through Van Moerkerken's book are being acquainted for the first time with the Oxford thesis, may be convinced moreover of the exactness of this thesis by the photographs which the book contains, for instance the six photographs of the Ashbourne portrait, X-rayed by Barrell.

After a short refutation of the Stratford myth, Van Moerkerken elaborates his arguments about de Vere, concealed behind the (Droeshout) mask being the real Shakespeare, by following Looney's and B. M. Ward's oeuvre, naturally availing himself also of the literature which came before and after them. Particularly he mentions Le Franc's Derby thesis and arrives at the conclusion that some of the plays contained in the folio of 1623 could have been written by Derby or in conjunction with his father-in-law de Vere. He names particularly *The Tempest* and *Cymbeline*, the versification of which (note for instance the many rigid and annoying enjambements) remains under the mark of Shakespeare's other creations.

I am sure that Van Moerkerken's book, concise and extremely readable as it is, is one of the best introductions to the Oxford thesis and might promote the interest for the thesis also on the European continent if it could be translated into French or German.

S. A. VAN LUNTEREN

## THE MANOR OF BILLESLEY

By J. SHERA ATKINSON

The picturesque Tudor house, Billesley Man lies a little to the north of the main road from Alcester to Stratford-on-Avon, and is about four miles from the latter.



William Dugdale, in his *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, printed in 1656 but compiled about 1644, in giving particulars of Billesley states that the manor—with others in Warwickshire and neighbouring counties—after long being held by a branch of the Trussell family was inherited by Elizabeth Trussell in the time of Henry VII, and passed on her marriage with John de Vere, 15th Earl of Oxford, to the Vere family, in which "most of the lands of her inheritance continued till of late time".

Elsewhere, giving particulars of Cublesdon, another Trussell property in the county, Dugdale says that he does not apprehend how Billesley came to Elizabeth Trussell's forebears, and adds that "this so ancient patrimony" was sold "in our time" by Thomas Trussell, who was of another branch of the Trussell family (some of which branch were known as "de Billesley") to Sir Robert Lee, son of Sir Robert Lee, Alderman of London: "which Sir Robert new built a great part of the manor house and made it his chief seat". The sale appears to have been about 1592.

In 1934 Billesley passed into the hands of Sir Martin J. Melvin, Bart., and following his recent death the property came into the market.

Shortly before the property was offered for sale in the summer of 1952, the present writer had the opportunity of going over the lovely, and beautifully situated old house. The older part, which was incorporated in Sir Robert Lee's building, can still be distinguished, and he was interested to find that the best bedroom, in the older part, is known as "The Shakespeare Room", and there is a tradition that in the Library, also on the first floor, and close by the Shakespeare Room, Shakespeare wrote *As You Like It*. The first item is stated in the printed Particulars of Sale, and it was from the butler that the writer learned about the tradition. He has not been able to obtain any amplification of the information about either item.

It can hardly be supposed that the aristocratic owner of Billesley—whether Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, or his kinsman of the other branch of the Trussell family—would entertain in his house the young son of the tradesman in near-by Stratford-on-Avon: still less that he would give him the best bedroom. Nor, later, is it likely that Sir Robert Lee, the purchaser, would do so.

But if Billesley belonged to the Earl of Oxford it is by no means unlikely that when, during the early fifteen eighties he was out of favour at Court, he should have retired to Billesley and—if he was the author—have there written the play in question.

Even if, as Dugdale suggests, Billesley belonged to that other closely related branch of the Trussell family, it might well be that the Earl, their most illustrious kinsman, was entertained there for an extended period. He had extensive estates in the neighbourhood, derived from Elizabeth Trussell, and would unquestionably be known to and honoured by that other branch of the family. His own manor houses may well all have been let to

tenants, and none of them available when (as we are conjecturing) he wished to be at a distance from London.

It needs to be borne in mind that the home of Elizabeth Trussell's forebears was at Aylmesthorpe, in Leicestershire, one of their many estates in the midland counties. Not themselves occupying Billesley, there is the possibility that it was, as far back as the time of Henry VIII, let to the head of the other branch of the Trussell family, and that he and his successors continued to occupy it as tenants: the first of them to be designated "de Billesley" by Dugdale died in the reign of Henry VIII, which would fit in with this conjecture.

We know that Edward de Vere made many sales of his lands, and it is possible in this case that—perhaps in the fifteen eighties—he sold Billesley to the tenant, his kinsman. That may explain the difficulty which Dugdale found in tracing to which Trussell family Billesley belonged, and would fit in with his statement about it being Thomas Trussell, of that other family, who sold it to Sir Robert Lee "in our time".

The Arden country of Warwickshire—well wooded, but which was never subject to the forestry laws—is near at hand, northwards, and the scene of the play is the "Forest of Arden". Wilmcote, the home of Mary Arden, the mother of Will Shakspeare, is close by, the land belonging to Billesley Manor extending almost to that village, and the Arden farm house there being probably the nearest considerable house. Oxford, at Billesley, would hardly fail to hear about the lad whose name so nearly agreed with the pen name he had himself adopted in the fifteen seventies, "Shakespeare", as would appear from Gabriel Harvey's address to Oxford in the *Gratulations Valdinenses*, in 1578, in which he punned "vultus tela vibrat"—"thy countenance shakes speares."

It has been suggested (Percy Allen, *Life Story of Edward de Vere as William Shakespeare*, and following him, C. Wisner Barrell, *News-Letter* of the American Branch, December, 1942), that the Manor of Bilton, near Rugby, another of the manors which Elizabeth Trussell brought to the de Veres and which (as Dugdale records) the 17th Earl of Oxford sold to John Shugborough towards the end of the reign of Elizabeth I, may have been that Earl's retreat in Warwickshire. It lies, however, some distance (about 23 miles eastward) from Stratford, is not near the Arden country, and appears not to have any Shakespeare tradition.

It may be added that (as Allen also notes in the *Life Story*) the John Trussell who wrote *The First Rape of Faire Hellen* (1595) appears to have been one of the Billesley Trussells. It has been regarded as "The first printed plagiarism of Shakespeare's *Lucrece*", and the dedicatory Sonnet seems to be addressed to the author of *Lucrece*. Were *Lucrece* and *The First Rape*, perhaps both written in the fifteen eighties at Billesley?

## MORE PROOFS FOR SHAKSPERE OF STRATFORD?

By H. CUTNER

A notice of *Recent Discoveries Relating to the Life and Works of William Shakspeare* in the *Literary Guide* some time ago, brought me a copy from its author, Arthur Field, M.A., formerly of St. Catherine's College, Cambridge. It was most kind of him to send it me, and I read his arguments with extreme interest.

He points out that the word "shak" or "shag" is a bird of marine habits—though my unabridged Webster gives the word "shag" only; for the word "shak", Webster says "Abbr. Shakespeare". He also says that there is a little village in the region of the forest of Arden called Shakenshurst or Shakswood. The shak was used in falconry, hence the armorial bearings granted to John Shakspeare had "A Spear and a Falcon". But surely this does not prove that William Shakspeare wrote the plays?

Mr. Field has no doubt whatever that young Will enjoyed his school days; and in a "black letter copy of the *Psalms in Metre* bound up with a Bible dated 1579 is . . . the draft of a playbill" signed "G. Shak." As the Latin for William is "Gulielmus", the G shows that the book belonged to young Will, and proves his interest in "play-acting". The name "Anne Haths" occurs in the "play-bill" and this *must* mean Anne Hathaway. In a third entry in the book, the word "prescience" occurs—a word found two or three times in the plays. This is additional proof that "Shak" wrote them—to Mr. Field of course.

He then proceeds to quote from a book published in 1811, entitled *A Tour in Quest of a Genealogy through several parts of Wales, Somerset and Wiltshire, in a series of letters to a Friend in Dublin, together with various anecdotes and Curious Fragments from a Manuscript Collection ascribed to Shakespeare*.

In it will be found "letters, poems, and memoirs which Mr. Field appears to have no doubt were written by Shakspeare (and Anna Hathaway) but which seems to have escaped the notice of all other Shakespearean students. The author had bought a "manuscript quarto volume" at a sale; it had belonged to a "stranger" who had copied it all from "an old manuscript in the handwriting of Mrs. Shakspeare" found in Wales in a house where had lived somebody who had married one of the Hathaways. And there was also a "Journal"—the Journal of William Shakspeare himself. There were also many letters by Christopher Hatton, Philip Sidney, Lord Southampton, and many others.

The "quarto manuscript volume", of course, has disappeared; but there is no doubt—in the mind of Mr. Field—of its complete authenticity.

It is impossible here to do anything like "justice" to the book. But the poems sent by Anna Hathaway to Will, and by Will to Anna, appear to me to have been written late in the eighteenth century by the same hand. There is no resemblance

whatever to poems or songs by the writer of the plays. Mr. Field thinks, if he quotes "parallels" between the poems and the plays, it was the same writer of both. Perhaps he could tell us why the author of the poems did not have the plays in front of him when composing them?

There is a letter to "Good Cosen Judith" from Will which is so rank a forgery that I can only wonder how or why it impressed Mr. Field. Shakspeare is made, in his "Memoirs", to have as "patron" "my Lord Southampton" who called on him, "and returned my tragedy of Richard the Third which he was pleased to speak of in strains of high praise". Anyone who can swallow this can swallow anything.

Mr. Field naturally "annotates" everything as well as he can, and I must say I found his little book full of interest, particularly as I am always on the lookout for anything which will show that William Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon wrote the plays. So far, my own investigations have not produced a scrap of evidence that he could write, let alone write the plays. But an excursion into the highways and byways of the literature surrounding Shakspeare and Shakespeare is always interesting and Mr. Field is well worth reading.

## INFORMATIVE BOOKLETS

By DR. J. R. MEZ

*Elizabethan Miniatures* in the series "King Penguin Books", contains charming illustrations, among others that portrait of "A Man Clasping a Hand from a Cloud", which has been reproduced in the last issue of the *News-Letter*, as well as that of an unknown "lover"; "A Man against a background of flames".

*The Golden Ass* of Apuleius, a famous classic which had been familiar to the poet called "Shakespeare" from its vigorous early-Elizabethan translation by William Adlington, has recently appeared in a new translation by Robert Graves in the Cardinal Editions, published by Pocket Books Inc., New York. It is as funny, lusty and naughty as some of the writings of Rabelais. It costs 35 cents (about 2/6d.).

*Sous le Masque de Molière: Louis XIV est Molière*, by MAURICE GARÇON, de l'Académie Française. Librairie Arthème Fayard, 62 pp. Paris, 1953.

A few years ago, Professor Abel Lefranc of the French "Académie" had published his *Sous le Masque de Shakespeare* in which he tried to prove that no other than William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby, could have written the works attributed to Shakespeare. That book has been read by thousands who accepted Lefranc's conclusions. Maurice Garçon justly ridicules Lefranc's methods of false reasoning, lack of logical training, erroneous conclusions, etc., and demonstrates that by adopting Lefranc's faulty lines of procedure you might as well prove anything, as for instance that Louis XVI wrote the works of Molière. The

literature of the Oxford thesis has not been free from those shortcomings satirised in this study, in accepting mere assumptions, hypotheses or wish-dreams as established facts, or mere coincidences as evidence, but what we know of Edward de Vere's life has produced sufficient facts and a complete logical edifice which is well-nigh irrefutable with its external evidence and historical method. But it will be well to let this satire serve as a warning!

## LORD MACAULAY AND LOONEY'S METHODS

BY S. A. VAN LUNTEREN

Looney has, as is known, framed eighteen requirements (nine general features "and nine special characteristics") to which the real "Shakespeare" must have conformed, beside which he traced a number of cases of *internal* evidence.

In his brochure "Shaksper, Shakespeare and De Vere" (1937), Louis P. Bénézet reviewed fourteen points of Looney's to which *they* have to conform who might be considered the possible creators of "Shakespeare's" works. He mentions eight candidates (Shaksper included) and comes to the conclusion that De Vere conforms to the entire fourteen requirements and the other seven only to half or less of them (Shaksper at the most to *one!*).

To obdurate persons, whether Stratfordian scholars or not, it would probably be useful to know that the celebrated historian Macaulay used precisely the same method as Looney and Bénézet did in an identical case, to wit the controversy about the "Letters of Junius" (see Macaulay's article on *Warren Hastings*, *Edinburgh Review* of October, 1841).

Macaulay asked "Was Philip Francis the author of the Letters of Junius?" I mention here the essentials of his argumentation: Macaulay drafts *five* requisite essentials to which the unknown author of The Letters of Junius has to conform; he concludes:

"Now, here are five marks, all of which ought to be found in Junius. They are all five found in Francis. We do not believe that more than two of them can be found in any other person whatever. If this argument does not settle the question, there is an end of all reasoning on circumstantial evidence. The internal evidence seems to us to point the same way. The style of Francis bears a strong resemblance to that of Junius."

It may be observed that we possess in the Shakespeare-De Vere-case not only *five external* evidences but thanks to Looney's perspicacity *eighteen!* And since Ward still many more and with regard to the *internal* evidence a *host* of them (see the extensive work by the Ogburns)!

Macaulay's judgement regarding the force of his evidence in the Junius-Francis-case, we may surely with more right uphold in regard to the

evidence brought forward in the Shakespeare-Oxford-case, viz.:

"The evidence is, we think, such as would support a verdict in a civil, nay in a criminal proceeding."

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NICHOLAS HILLIARD'S MINIATURE

Dear Sir,

The following extracts, I believe, corroborate Mrs. le Riche's contention that the miniature by Nicholas Hilliard, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and which figured as a frontispiece to the April number of the *News-Letter*, is indeed a portrait of de Vere.

Regarding the likeness, I felt rather sceptical, the cheekbone, for one thing, being much more pronounced than in either of the authentic portraits of Oxford, but I have now come to the decision that it must be he.

The portrait, it will be remembered, represented a youngish man, in court clothes of doublet, grey hat and lace collar, who has one hand raised, clasping the hand of a woman from the cloud above his head. On the blue background, between his hand and face appears the motto, "Attici Amorés Ergo" which Mrs. le Riche translates as "Of Attic love therefore" (more accurately, "Athenians, therefore lovers") and on the opposite side the date 1588. The whole picture has undoubtedly a symbolical significance.

Now, in 1582, there was published a work entitled *A Looking Glass for Lovers*, containing 78 poems and a dedication to the Earl of Oxford, which is signed Thomas Watson.

The MS., I understand, has 78 headings in an Italian hand-writing which bears a similarity to that of de Vere.

Attached to this is a "Protrepticon" or foreword addressed to the book itself, of which I here give a few pertinent extracts.

"Go, timidly, I beg, on thy destined way through thy native country, and do not boast, little pamphlet, of the trifles thou dost contain . . . And if asked who added the verse to the prose, say that the name has escaped your recollection.

Perhaps you will see the sacred precincts of the goddess who lives a mighty Diana amongst the Roses. If she casts her sacred eyes on your rhymes, you will be happy in a sun beloved by the immortals. But do you, prostrate on the ground, clasp as a suppliant the feet of *her whose hand will bear with difficulty your vile weight*: but here I must warn you not to expect such great things; *her Attic ear* does not approve idle songs. Therefore still timid, do you enter *the learned bookshelves of Vere*, where the Muses have the place of honour."

I think the juxtaposition of the "clasping hand" (from a cloud, because metaphorically intended) the "Attic ear" (meaning highly cultured), and the "learned bookshelves of Vere" (all probably written by Oxford himself) is not just a coincidence.

Regarding the identity of "mighty Diana", which does not in any way augment or diminish the identification of the portrait, it seems as though the Queen was intended, but I have an idea that it was not she but the *Countess of Pembroke*.

Perhaps Miss Eggar, who has made more adventures into the histories of Vere and Watson, can suggest an identification.

H. AMPHLETT.

"THE VIRGIN QUEEN"

Dear Sir,

The claim of Elizabeth to be the Virgin Queen has had many detractors both during her life and afterwards. Even in her youth there was "Slander that she was with child by the Lord Admiral . . ." (brother of Protector Somerset).

In February, 1561, accusation was made that the Queen was secretly married to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and in 1587 a young Englishman, Arthur Dudley, captured by the Spanish, claimed to be the child of the union.

Some Baconians, on the contrary, claim that the child was secretly fathered upon the Bacon family and grew up to be Baron Verulum and the author of *King Lear*!

These gross accusations may be explained in many ways.

(a) England "a bone between two dogs"—France and Spain—she played a philandering game with foreign nobles for political reasons, but had no intention of marrying. "I hate the idea of marriage for reasons I would not divulge to a twin soul", confided the Queen to Lord Sussex. (Psychologists would trace this fixation to her unhappy childhood). The Spanish ambassador Feria (after careful inquiries) told King Philip significantly "entiendo que ella no terna hijos"—she would have no children.

(b) The Catholic party had much reason for blackening her reputation.

(c) She was a frigid Queen eager for male admiration. Her Court favourites had to be praised or repelled to suit her diplomacy.

Among these was her gallant Earl of Oxford, Edward de Vere, whose just claim to be "Shakespeare" has received little good at the hands of the authors of *This Star of England* when they suggested that little more than three years after *Hamlet* was completed (1587) the author, encouraged by Lord Burghley, proposed to contrive what would have been an incestuous marriage between his own daughter Elizabeth, and the Third Earl of Southampton.

This is no compliment to Vere whose *Hamlet* is a pathological study of a youth nauseated with disgust at such unions.

"O most wicked speed to post

With such dexterity to incestuous sheets

It is not—it cannot come to good."

Assuming that Wriothesley was his own son, how could he have hinted at such a match—let alone written his incomparable sonnets (as most

scholars believe) to urge the gorgeous youth to "a couch for luxury and damned incest" as Hamlet described it.

Mr. G. W. Phillips has explained the Queen's innocent behaviour during the suspicious dates, but there is one witness whose evidence is even more convincing—I refer to his mother, the Countess of Southampton who, when her son was on trial as a principal in the Essex Rebellion, wrote this pathetic letter to Lord Cecil.

*Earl of Southampton's Mother at his Trial to Lord Cecil* (Salisbury Papers, XI, 71-72).

God of heaven knows I can scarce hold my hand steady to write and less hold steady in my heart how to write, only for what I know, which is to pray mercy to my miserable son. Good Mr. Secretary, let the bitter passion of a perplexed mother move you to plead for her only son for whom, if he led the dance of this disloyalty, I protest to God I would never sue, but first surprised by an alliance seduced and circumvented by that wicked acquaintance and conversation, good Sir give me leave and believe that with duty nature may speak, and my continual tears may plead for mercy.

It appeared to me many times his desire to secure her majesty's favour, his doleful, discontented behaviour when he could not obtain it, how apt despair made him at length to receive evil council and follow such company.

... O Good Mr. Secretary as God hath placed you near a Prince, so help you move her majesty to do like a God whose mercy is infinite which I hope may be with her safety when the head of this confusion (Essex) is taken away. Nothing is fitter than her safety, nor any virtue can better become her place and power than mercy which let my prayer move you to beg for me and God move her majesty to grant the most sorrowful and affected mother.

These questions arise if the letter is genuine:

(1) If the Queen was the true mother (who would obviously spare her own son) why does the Countess "pray mercy"?

(2) The Earl of Oxford was one of the judges who declared Southampton guilty. Would a father do this?

(3) Why does she mention "with duty nature may speak" if the bonds of nature are a pretence?

F. L. NICHOLS.

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

Dear Sir,

The recent critical research of Professor G. Lambrin (*Les Langues Modernes* (1951-52) on the text of *All's Well that Ends Well*, *The Tempest* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* has brought to light what can only be construed as Shakespeare's personal acquaintance with the lives of several prominent individuals in France and Italy, notably Henri of Navarre and Francesco-Maria, second duke of Florence, who was murdered in 1587: but beyond

this Lambin now offers definite proof of what has long been urged by Sullivan and others that the poet was intimate with the detailed topography of Verona and Milan, as well as with the canal transport between them. The evidence is decisive though it raises as many questions as it answers, and one of these, a minor one, is the question of textual corruption. *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is less corrupt than most of the Plays in the Folio, but there is one corruption that may be legitimately suspected—the two lines (V, 4, 82-3) spoken by Valentine:

And that my love may appear plaine and free,  
All that was mine, in *Silvia*, I give thee.

Dramatically these lines appear to violate Shakespeare's great truthfulness in characterisation, quite apart from the inconsistent sequel, where Valentine wins Silvia with the Duke's approval. The lines have been accepted as representing Valentine's supreme unselfishness (but with sublime disregard to the grievous wound he would have thereby inflicted on both Silvia and Julia). No—this explanation does not ring true as coming from the master dramatist; and it has disturbed commentators for many years. Over 100 years ago, for example, Charles Knight suggested that the lines were spoken, not by Valentine at all but, by Silvia, with the single substitution of "is" for "was" in the second line. It seems to me however that this most plausible suggestion fails to explain the reaction of Julia ("Oh me unhappy") and my alternative amendment is to put the words *into the mouth of Proteus*, with the change of "Silvia" into Julia, thus:

And that my love may appear plain and free,  
All that was mine in Julia I give to thee.

This change means that the unfaithful lover, overcome by Valentine's magnanimous forgiveness (but not his surrender of Silvia), will give him as much love as he used to bestow on Julia, and that it was the cruelty of that little word "was" that made the boy page (Julia) swoon.

A. W. TITHERLEY.

#### DIANA IN THE FOUNTAIN

Dear Sir,

In an Editorial Comment on *This Star of England*, and referring to "Diana in the Fountain" from *As You Like It*, you doubt whether this is a reference to Montemayor's Diana, and consider it is much more likely to be an allusion to a fountain in Cheapside erected in 1596. This of course would imply either that the play was not written until 1596 or that the passage in question was an addition in 1596 or some later date. If the former, then the whole value of the age of William is lost.

How old are you friend?

William. Five and twenty sir.  
This is obviously only suitable to 1589.

In addition to this, I may say that since I first suggested in *Shakespeare, Oxford, and Elizabethan Times* that the Diana in question was Montemayor's Diana, I have noted at least five passages in *As You Like It* that are based on another translation by the same translator, Bartholomew Yong. The book is Boccaccio's *Amorous Fiammetta*, and the translation was published in 1587. So there is strong presumptive evidence that about 1589 Shakespeare was very well acquainted with Yong and his literary work.

I have not yet seen *This Star of England* (though I have asked for it) but if you refer to my own book you will see that Diana weeps at least five times in the first four pages of the book, and that two of the occasions are clearly stated as being at a fountain.

H. H. HOLLAND.

The writer is guilty of vile and intolerable heresy—to wit that he shares the conviction of the late Henry James and many others alive and dead—that the author of *Hamlet*, *Lear* and *Othello* was actually a well-educated man of high position and the representative of the highest culture of his day and is therefore taboo to the editors of all decent journals.

SIR GEORGE GREENWOOD  
(Introduction to *Baconian Essays* by  
E. W. Smithson, 1922).

I am a sort of haunted by the conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practised on a patient world. The more I turn him round and round the more he so affects me. But that is all. I am not pretending to treat the question or to carry it any further. It bristles with difficulties, and I can only express my general sense by saying that I find it *almost* as impossible to conceive that Bacon wrote the plays as to conceive that the man from Stratford, as we know the man from Stratford, did.

HENRY JAMES (In a letter to  
Violet Hunt, August 26th, 1903).

We went to Stratford for the first time. The absolute extermination and obliteration of every record of Shakespeare save a few sordid material details, and the general suggestion of narrowness and niggardliness which ancient Stratford makes, taken in comparison with the way in which the spiritual quantity "Shakespeare" has mingled into the soul of the world, was most uncanny, and I feel ready to believe in almost any mythical story of the authorship. In fact a visit to Stratford now seems to be the strongest appeal a Baconian can make.

Professor WILLIAM JAMES (letter to  
C. E. Norton, May 4th, 1902).