The SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP

—AMERICAN BRANCH—

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Through De Vere Country

While visiting in England in a happier day than the present, at a time when ugly war was farthest from men's thoughts, it was my privilege to make, in the company of two delightful friends, a pilgrimage through the De Vere country. Our pilgrimage was made in a comfortable motor car just twelve years ago, on a bright and sunny August Bank Holiday. Perfect weather had enticed the whole world, it seemed, to spend the day under God's blue canopy; the roads were crowded with pedestrians and every variety of vehicle, from the great char-a-bancs down to bicycles.

From a London hotel, our way led through Piccadilly to Kingsway, with there a sharp turn to the left, crossing Oxford Street, then a turn to the right, to the west past Gray's Inn, and by way of Theobald's Road to Shoreditch. Shoreditch, it will be remembered, was that Elizabethan centre of theatrical interest where the first theatres, the Theatre and the Curtain, were built in England, outside the control of London authorities. Three and a half centuries have made such vast changes in this section that it was impossible for us to recognize old landmarks; indeed, there are probably none remaining.

Nevertheless, familiar with descriptions of this rural district directly north of Elizabethan London, we felt that we could, in imagination, picture Edward de Vere near his beloved theatres in his home at Stoke Newington, where he first lived after his marriage with Elizabeth Trentham. What was then almost open country is now a solidly built part of the greater London.

Passing on by way of Hackney Road and north through Mare Street, we found ourselves in Hackney, in Queen Elizabeth's time and later a fashionable London suburb. Here we saw the tower of St. Augustine's, all that still stands of the Sixteenth Century church which once held the tombs of the seventeenth Earl of Oxford and his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, for it was to Hackney they removed after two or three years' residence at Stoke Newington. What happened to these old tombs when the church was rebuilt many years ago (and later destroyed) cannot be learned. Colonel B. R. Ward, in his *De Vere Country*, states that the Thyssen Library possesses many drawings of the old church and a set of manuscript volumes containing the arms of noblemen and others who resided in Hackney in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

At King's Place in Hackney, we stopped to peer over the gate of a high fence to look at a Sixteenth Century building known as Brooke House, a name it has borne since its purchase in 1609 by Lord Brooke from the widowed Countess of Oxford. The view of the old house where Edward de Vere spent the last decade of his life is largely obscured by an addition built on the side towards the gate. The place is now used, unhappily, as a hospital for mental cases, which makes it difficult to secure permission to go through the old part and we did not attempt it, but we did have a glimpse of the window by whose light we believe him to have done his writing during the last years of his life. This belief rests upon knowledge of the floor-plan and an examination of the interior of the old house by those who had more time to pursue the matter than had we.

Leaving Hackney, we passed into the Essex country by way of the Mile End Road. The southwestern portion of Essex was once covered by Waltham Forest, the keepership of which was granted Lord Oxford by King James shortly after he came to the throne, a hereditary right, for the Forest had been under the custody of the Earl's ancestors for generations. Whatever may remain of this old royal forest is probably considered to-

day as the southernmost part of Epping Forest, which has itself suffered by time and building encroachment.

Essex is not considered among the most beautiful counties of England but once we had passed the London area which now extends into it and the recent new building projects which lie beyond, we were charmed with the soft rolling country as we sped on to the north. Hedges separated green fields, and here and there were clumps of old oaks. The road was punctuated at intervals by small old English villages with narrow curving streets and quaint houses set in gardens of roses, phlox, and flourishing cabbages. In each village was a lovely parish church, surrounded by a well-kept graveyard where lie the inhabitants of other days. The larger places through which we passed were Romford, Brentwood, Chelmswood (the county town), Braintree, and Halstead. At Halstead we entered what was once the domain of the ancient Vere family. For miles to the east, west, and north extend the lands which formerly belonged to that great family, the southern boundary being marked by the river Colne, which has its source not far south of Haverhill and flows southeast to the sea.

The ancient seat of the family, Castle Hedingham, whose massive Norman keep was built about 1100, has mostly disappeared, but the old tower can be seen over the tree-tops. A modern home nearby is occupied by descendants of the Trentham family, into whose possession the estate came upon the death of Earl Edward's son. The view of lovely greensward, through which a gentle meandering brook flows, stretches a mile toward the Castle, with fine old oaks at intervals, and probably has changed little since the days when the seventeenth Earl lived there.

The nearest village is called Sible Hedingham, its centre of interest being a church of the Fourteenth Century. This church, like the one at Earl's Colne, is built of flint rubble, a local stone of great hardness, with sandstone trimming, the mullet of the Veres being one of the striking features of the decoration. Formerly, in the middle of the chancel, stood the black marble tomb of John de Vere, fifteenth Earl of Oxford, but it has been moved to the left wall, so that the figures in relief of his four sons cannot be seen; on the exposed side are seen the figures of his four daughters kneeling in prayer, with the name of each one carved below her figure, in the following order: Elizabeth, Anne, Frances, Ursula. The sons' names were John, Aubrey, Geoffrey, and Robert, the eldest of whom, John, became the sixteenth Earl and father of Edward. On top of the tomb lie the recumbent figures of the fifteenth Earl and his wife, Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Edward Trussell, their robes richly decorated with devices from their coats-of-arms. Despite the destruction of antique glass in this old church during the Cromwellian period, two small pieces remain in the portico; on one side the mullet of the Veres, and opposite, the picture of an ox crossing through shallow water, obviously a play on the Vere title of "Oxford."

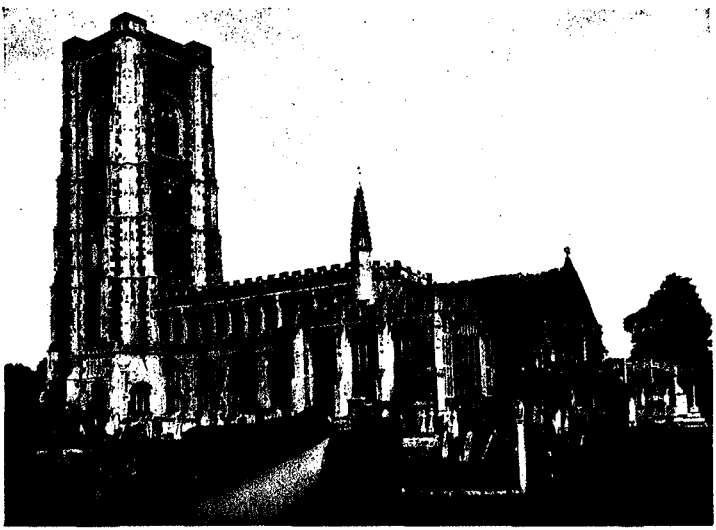
From Sible Hedingham, we retraced our motoring steps to Halstead, where we again joined the great road, going almost due north, by way of Sudbury and Long Melford to Lavenham in Suffolk, through a wide domain which once belonged to the Vere family.

While lunching at the quaint Swan Inn in Lavenham, we could hear a group of holiday-makers singing lustily over their mugs of ale. Only this touch was needed in this ancient, unspoiled town, to carry us back in spirit to Elizabethan days. Our modern appearance made us an anachronism. We almost had to pinch ourselves to make sure we were not dreaming, but, much as we should have liked to dream, we could not linger for the afternoon would not be long enough for us to see the historic buildings in this old town.

Lavenham's history goes back to the times of the ancient Britons; a Roman camp was once established here; in Saxon times, it had a church mentioned in the Domesday Book, showing it was then a village of importance. These facts would make the place fascinating to the archaeologist or to the historian of very early England or Britain, but we had come many miles to view the evidences of Vere influence which, to be seen on every hand, seemed ancient enough to our modern eyes.

We first called on Mr. Francis L. Ranson, whose enthusiasm for this lovely old place and the Vere influence on its architecture has prompted him to photograph every minute detail of the beautiful parish church of St. Peter and St. Paul; the Guildhall, once belonging to the Guild of Corpus Christi; Garrard's House, originally one of the Vere properties; and other places too numerous to mention. Mr. Ranson's collection of photographs is unique and preserves for the future a knowledge of this old town, whatever catastrophe may happen to dim its present antique beauty. For several years, Mr. Ranson has edited a page or more

in the *East Anglian Magazine,* published at Ipswich, in which he supports the theory that Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, was the author of the Shakespeare plays.



The 15th Century Church at Lavenham, Suffolk, Built by Ancestors of the Poet Earl of Oxford.

The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, built about 1485, stands on the site of an earlier church, and was made possible by the generosity of its two wealthiest parishioners, Thomas Spring, a famous wool merchant, and John de Vere, thirteenth Earl of Oxford, whose large land holdings in and about Lavenham gave him a special interest in the place, though, when not engaged in the extraordinary military exploits which filled much of his life, he made his home at Hedingham Castle.

The stone of which the church was built, says Reverend G. H. Lenox-Conyngham, Rector of Lavenham, was brought from Barnac in Northamptonshire, or possibly from Tadcaster, and the carving, even outside, is as crisp and clear cut, after nearly five centuries, as if it had been carved only a few years ago. The roof, each of whose great oak beams was cut from one piece, was in process of being repaired from the ravages of the deathwatch beetle, the enemy of so many buildings of historic interest in England. In further description of the church, the Rector says, "The two bays in the roof near the chancel are enriched by panels and bosses. The bosses are carved with the signs of the four evangelists, the coat-of-arms of the thirteenth Earl of Oxford and the monogram of Thomas Spring . . . The shield on the porch, with various quarterings of the Vere arms, is of great interest to heralds."

We saw much more than it is possible here to tell about, and there was more still to see, but lengthening shadows warned us that it was time to turn our faces toward London.

On our way home, tired but happy over the wonderful day we had had, we recalled that in 1577, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford presented the Rectory of Lavenham, which was within his gift, to the Reverend Mr. Copinger, who held it for forty-five years. Dr. Fuller says that Lord Oxford presented it "upon this condition, that he should pay no tythes for his park, being almost half the land of the parish. Mr. Copinger told his Lordship 'that he would rather return the presentation than, by such sinful gratitude, betray the rights of the Church,' which answer so affected the Earl that he replied, 'I scorn that my estate should swell with Church goods.' But, notwithstanding these words, the Earl's successor con-

tested the right, and it cost Mr. Copinger 1600 pounds to recover it, and leave it to the quiet possession of his succcessors."

As memory recalls the pleasures of that August Bank Holiday of a dozen years ago, I feel impelled to express the hope that the lovely Vere country, with its countless antique treasures, may be spared the horror and devastation wrought by a rain of German bombs—monstrous cruelty—so that many may, when peace again comes to the world, make such pilgrimages as ours.

Eva Turner Clark

Muddled Miracle: Dr. Phelps Conjugates the Incongruous

Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, dated September 25, 1939, contain a paper entitled "Notes on Shakespeare," read before the society April 21, 1939 by Dr. William Lyon Phelps, Professor Emeritus of English Literature at Yale.

Dr. Phelps' lecture represents so aptly the contradictions and incongruities that always appear when the effort is made to marry the citizen of Stratford-on-Avon to the titanic cosmopolitanism of the Shakespearean works that we cannot forbear to cull a few extracts.

Speaking of William's final bequest to his wife, Dr. Phelps remarks:

> " . . . he left her the second best bed. Many people have taken that bequest to be an insult when it is far more likely to have been a token of the most intimate affection."

Owing to two circumstances that Dr. Phelps fails to mention, many people will continue to hold the opinion that William Shakspere's feeling for his wife was anything but affectionate.

1. This is the only mention of a wife in the entire will. In point of fact, it is an *interlined after-thought;* and the testator doesn't even bother to mention his aged partner by name.

2. In March, 1613, three years before the will was drawn up, Shakspere came into possession of some property in the Blackfriars district of London. The documents in this transaction clearly show that he made his ownership a joint tenancy by associating three merely nominal partners with himself. "The effect of such a legal technicality," says Sir Sidney Lee, the eminent Stratfordian, "was to deprive (his) wife, if she survived him, of a right to receive from the estate a widow's dower."

If this sort of thing represents "the most intimate affectionate relationship," as Dr. Phelps insists, then logic and common sense are at a discount in evaluating the Stratford records generally.

Dr. Phelps fails to mention the well corroborated statements that William Shakspere worked as a butcher's apprentice to support his wife and three small children up to the time that "he ran from his master to London." But he does make the following observation, drawn from a study of the plays instead of from the *actual records* of the Warwickshire man's life:

> "Whatever social position Shakespeare may have had in Stratford or during the earliest years that he spent in London, it is certain to my mind that he very soon had for his intimate friends social aristocrats and that he made visits in splendid homes. For example, in the famous song on winter in *Love's Labors Lost,* the tone is patrician; the affectionate intimacy in the attitude towards servants is the true patrician attitude. The man who wrote this was used to being waited on by servants in the hall and in the kitchen.
>
> "When Isicles hang by the wall,
> And Dicke the Shepheard blowes his naile;
> And Tom beares Logges into the hall,
> And Milke comes frozen home in paile, etc."

Here we have the obvious anomaly that has made so many thousands of people the world over distrust the whole Stratfordian point of view. Did Shakspere, the uneducated butcher's apprentice, suddenly develop into a "patrician" who "was used to being waited on by servants in the hall and in the kitchen"?

Such a supposition is woefully weak because there is no testimony to show that William of Stratford was ever seen in high society. No aristocrat of the day ever claimed him as a personal friend or equal. None of the Court gossips or letter-writers mention the kind of transformation that Dr. Phelps takes for granted. If it had oc-

curred, we should unquestionably have heard as much about it as we have heard of Dick Tarleton's, Will Somers' and Ben Jonson's exploits among the socially prominent.

In the present instance, we ask for verification and are confronted with a vacuum. But such circumstances do not shake the faith of Dr. Phelps and his orthodox colleagues.

> "Finally, as is well known," he concludes, "Shakespeare attained fame and popularity immediately. . . . But what particularly impressed his contemporaries was his ease and fluency, not having to wait for inspiration . . ."

Thus the miraculous is worn threadbare at every turn to explain the apparently inexplicable. On the other hand, modern research has logical and satisfying answers to just such problems.

We do not raise these points in any spirit of carping criticism of Dr. William Lyon Phelps, with whose point of view on other matters we are frequently in hearty agreement. We merely wish to make plain the skimpy patch-work of contemporary fact and luxuriantly overblown fable that passes for Shakespearean biography.

We would draw Dr. Phelps' attention to the new and rapidly accumulating documentation which shows, on the other hand, that the citizen of Stratford and the scholarly patrician who wrote the plays were two entirely different men. The *nom de plume* of the one was intentionally confused with the somewhat similar legal name of the other. Shakspere of Stratford simply will not measure up to the specifications of Shakespeare of high Olympus.

Charles Wisner Barrell

The Painting In Lucrece

Foremost art collector in the Shakespearean Age was John Lord Lumley, friend of the Earl of Oxford. Lumley owned large paintings of the Trojan wars, as well as canvases of Venus and Adonis and the rape of Lucrece.

Georg Brandes, in his *William Shakespeare* (ed. 1924, p. 59), makes the following observation in connection with *Lucrece*:

"In point of mere technique the most remarkable passage in the poem is the long series of stanzas describing a painting of the destruction of Troy, which Lucrece contemplates in her despair. . . . So dense is the throng of figures in the picture, so deceptive the presentation,

> That for Achilles' image stood his spear,
> Grip'd in an armed hand: himself behind
> Was left unseen, save to the eye of mind.
> A hand, a foot, a face, a leg, a head,
> Stood for the whole to be imagined.

"Here, as in all other places in which Shakespeare mentions pictorial or plastic art, it is realism carried to the point of illusion that he admires and praises. . . . It appears . . . from a list of 'Pictures and other Works of Art' drawn up in 1613 by John Ernest, Duke of Saxe-Weimar, that there hung at Whitehall a painting of Lucretia, said to have been 'very artistically executed'. This picture may possibly have suggested to Shakespeare the theme of his poem. Larger compositions were no doubt familiar to him in the tapestries of the period (the hangings at Theobalds presented scenes from Roman history); and he may very likely have seen the excellent Dutch and Italian pictures at Nonesuch Palace, then in the height of its glory."

Instead of speculating on what the Stratford youth might have seen, the time seems better spent on what we know.

It is far more reasonable to believe that the description was written by one entirely familiar with the works of art in all the palaces mentioned; by one who, as son-in-law of Lord Burghley and keenly observant, was a frequent visitor to the Lord Treasurer's great country estate of Theobalds; by the only one among Elizabeth's courtiers who was both poet and dramatist and often accompanied the Court when the Queen stayed at Nonesuch. Edward de Vere knew well the tapestries and paintings with which these famous palaces were embellished.

Even if Sarrazin (see *Variorum Shakespeare: The Poems*, 1938) were correct in his belief that "the probable original is Giulio Romano's fresco on the walls of the Appartmento di Troia in the Palazzo del Te in Mantua," it would have been the Earl of Oxford who described it, for he spent the greater part of sixteen months of Continental travel in Italy, while there is no evidence whatever that the young man from Stratford was ever outside of England.

Eva Turner Clark

NEWS-LETTER
THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP
AMERICAN BRANCH

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Occasional meetings of the American Branch will be held, for which special notices will be sent to members. Dues for membership in the American Branch are $2.50 per year, which sum includes one year's subscription to the NEWS-LETTER.

The officers of the American Branch will act as an editorial board for the publication of the NEWS-LETTER, which will appear every other month, or six times a year.

News items, comments by readers and articles of interest to all students of Shakespeare and of the acknowledged mystery that surrounds the authorship of the plays and poems, are desired. Such material must be of reasonable brevity. No compensation can be made to writers beyond the sincere thanks of the Editorial Board. Articles and letters will express the opinions of their authors, not necessarily of the editors. They may be sent to Charles Wisner Barrell, 17 East 48th Street, New York, N. Y.

" . . Let No Dog Bark"

Harper's Magazine for July contains an 11,000-word article by Prof. Oscar James Campbell of Columbia University, entitled "Shakespeare Himself," purporting to be a complete and final refutation of all evidence that has been advanced to show Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, as the real author of the immortal plays and poems.

The peg upon which Prof. Campbell drapes the voluminous fabric of his blackout is the Scientific American article by Charles Wisner Barrell, "Identifying Shakespeare With X-Rays and Infra-Red Photography," published last January.

While admitting the accuracy of Mr. Barrell's proof that Lord Oxford was the original of the famous Ashbourne portrait of Shakespeare, Prof. Campbell argues that such facts have no bearing whatever on the authorship question.

In the course of his disputation, the Columbia savant makes several noteworthy misstatements of essential documentary evidence. He also deliberately suppresses the all-important fact—reiterated by Scientific American—that Mr. Barrell's X-ray and infra-red dissections of the ancient Shakespeare paintings did not cover a single isolated picture, but *three*, viz., the Ashbourne, the Hampton Court and the so-called "Janssen" portraits of the Bard. All three show Oxford as the real man behind the Shakespeare camouflage.

Academic conjectures are boldly exaggerated throughout Prof. Campbell's critique to make them appear as attested truth, while independent research in the Shakespearean authorship field, as represented by leading Oxfordian scholars, is arrogantly dismissed as the pitiable stumblings of "the mentally unemployed."

Although the editors of Harper's Magazine admit that they have received many letters objecting to the tenor of Prof. Campbell's article, and asking for the presentation of adequate evidence for Oxford as "Shakespeare," they have up to date steadfastly refused to give any Oxfordian writer opportunity to reply in their columns.

However, an effective answer to the Campbell "blitzkrieg" is now in preparation and will be printed in some form in the not too distant future.

Under the Stukas' Shadow

The dictators may blast, but they will not conquer Britain. Letters from the fortress island, written by several of our foremost Oxfordians to the accompaniment of droning motors aloft, reflect a spirit of philosophical acceptance of danger that precludes panic. Mr. Percy Allen, now entirely deprived of sight in one eye, is on a farm in Somerset, collating his voluminous notes on Oxford-Shakespeare matters. Mr. F. D. Bone, Hon. Librarian of the ancient Stationers' Company, is writing a series of one-act plays on Oxford as the Bard. Lieut.-Col. Montagu Douglas, President of The Shakespeare Fellowship of Great Britain, makes his headquarters in Kent. Despite his more than four score years, Col. Douglas has taken on certain war duties. During leisure hours, he paints and sketches under the open sky, as usual. It will require more than a few thousand Stukas to blast this breed of man off the earth.

Had Shakespeare Read Dante?

Students familiar with the intellectual life of Elizabethan England know that Shakespeare's knowledge was not exceptional . . . . Shakespeare's "learning" can be shown to be no more than the knowledge in the possession of all intelligent persons of his day.

Prof. Oscar James Campbell

The cosmopolitan scholarship of the author of the Shakespearean plays was not clearly perceived until the 19th century.

For two hundred years commentators parroted John Milton's misleading allusion to the Bard's "native woodnotes wild," together with Ben Jonson's statement in the First Folio that the plays bearing "Mr. William Shakespeare's" name reflect

"small Latin and less Greek
From thence to honour thee."

Milton's phrase is so wide of the mark that modern students find it inexplicable. Jonson, on the other hand, appears to have been indulging in his customary habit of "double-talk." For immediately following his gibe regarding "small Latin and less Greek," Ben proceeds to compare the dramatist to "thund'ring Aeschilus, Euripides . . . Sophocles . . . Paccuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead" (Seneca), and

"all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come."

Here is a typical Jonsonian paradox. It simply means that although Shakespeare conceals his classic lore, he does in fact surpass the greatest dramatists of antiquity in their own field.

Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show,
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.

* * *

The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please.

On the surface there is, indeed, "small Latin and less Greek" to "honour" the author of the First Folio plays. Shakespeare's scholarship is of that high order which represents complete assimilation of source material and its transmutation into the idiom of the Bard's own currency. Classicism has merely undergone a sea-change, as also happens occasionally in Chaucer's work. It seems to have been one of Shakespeare's avowed purposes to make the English language suffice for the expression of ideas gathered from multitudinous sources and served up for the edification of his fellow countrymen. Only an artist-scholar of ripe experience could achieve so effective a synthesis. A second-rate writer such as Ben Jonson, puffed with ego and the "show-off" type of inferiority complex, lost no opportunity to parade his familiarity with the classics. Jonson introduces Greek, Latin and Italian tags into his plays on the least provocation. But Shakespeare notably scorns such "scholarly" antics. Interested primarily in forging English into an all-powerful medium, when Shakespeare does not find a word or phrase in his own tongue to express a certain meaning, he coins one. Altogether, he is credited with inventing some 3,000 words. This gift bears witness to a wider fundamental grasp of philology than the mere copying of choice phrases from the ancients in the pompous Jonsonian manner.

"Of Shakespeare," says Prof. Ernest Weekly, author of *The English Language*, "it may be said without fear of exaggeration that his contribution to our phraseology is ten times greater than that of any writer to any language in the history of the world."

Nevertheless, the "small Latin and less Greek" surface anomaly that Ben Jonson notes in the plays which at the same time excel

"all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
Sent forth,"

for generations provided lazy and inattentive readers with the argument that Shakespeare had practically no first-hand familiarity with the classics. This theory was also well suited to the background of trivia and illiteracy that has always been apparent in the life-records of William Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon. Hence, its wide acceptance.

It was not until the beginning of the present century, when Prof. John Churton Collins took up the matter in his *Studies in Shakespeare* that adequate appreciation of Shakespeare's real knowledge of the ancient masters was forthcoming. Collins, an avowed Stratfordian, could hardly credit the obvious fact that the dramatist must have read Sophocles and Plato in the original Greek. But he proved beyond all question that the mysterious Bard had saturated himself in the creations of both writers—perhaps in Latin translations. Though, as Mrs. Eva Turner Clark recently pointed out in the NEWS-LETTER, there is no evidence that Soph-

ocles was available in translation during the 16th century.

Other investigators besides Prof. Collins have since proved that the Bard had familiarized himself with works published in French, Spanish and Italian.

All of these discoveries are highly irritating to the professionally orthodox "authorities" whose standing in scholastic circles is dependent upon a "safe and sane"adherence to the Stratfordian myths. They cannot admit that the Bard could have been the cosmopolitan scholar that his own works proclaim, for the simple reason that there is no attested record of William of Stratford having ever attended school, of having privately studied languages at home or abroad, or even of having owned so much as one copy of any book in any language.

The following article by Mr. James J. Dwyer of *The Shakespeare Fellowship of London,* poses a new and interesting question in this debate—"Had Shakespeare Read Dante?"

It is perfectly safe to admit that William of Stratford did not have first-hand acquaintance with the (untranslated) works of the Tuscan master. But if we consider Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, as the real Shakespeare, we find that he would have been one of the few Englishmen of his age most likely to have made personal acquaintance with Dante in the original Italian, as Mr. Dwyer suggests.

According to old account books still preserved at Hatfield House, "two Italian books" were charged to Lord Oxford's personal account during his 20th year—1569-70. In addition, the Earl was himself known to his contemporaries as the "most excellent" poet at Elizabeth's Court, one who had "drunk deep draughts of the Muses of France and Italy"—in fact, in Gabriel Harvey's phrase, he was a veritable "Mirror of Tuscany." Having spent several months during 1575-76 on the Italian peninsula, Oxford's knowledge of the language of Dante was largely gained at the fountain-head. As a recorded master of the playwright's art, though significantly avoiding publication under his own name or title, this literary nobleman meets every requirement of the scholarly Bard who seems to have read Dante's *Divina Commedia* at least two centuries before any considerable portion of the work had been translated into English.

C. W. B.

* * *

Churton Collins was persuaded that Shakespeare was something of a classical scholar and many will remember his declaration that "the quality of mercy" speech in *The Merchant of Venice* was taken straight out of Seneca's *De Clementia.* Everybody now agrees that the Poet was saturated with Ovid, and some students have detected, in certain of the "dark lady" sonnets and in allied passages in *Antony and Cleopatra,* recognizable echoes of Catullus. But to Maurice Baring we are indebted for raising the question, "Did Shakespeare ever read Dante?" The charming collection of favourite passages, labelled *Have You Anything to Declare?* naturally contains a full section on Dante and this section begins and ends with Francesca da Rimini (*Inferno V*).

"There is a passage," says Mr. Baring,[1] "in *Measure for Measure* which makes me think that he (Shakespeare) may possibly have read the *Inferno;* and Mr. Baring proceeds to quote that famous outburst of Claudio (Act III, Scene I) on theh terrors of the Other World:

> Ay, but to die and go we know not where:
> To lie in cold obstruction and to rot:
> This sensible warm motion to become
> A kneaded clod, and the delighted spirit
> To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
> In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
> To be imprisoned in the viewless winds
> And blown with restless violence round about
> The pendent world; . . .

These lines and indeed the whole of the passage seem to be a summary of the punishments described in the "Inferno" and the last three lines above-quoted irresistibly suggest:

> La bufera infernal, che mai non resta.

That is all that Maurice Baring has to say on this subject, but there is more than he has suggested. When Othello in an agony of remorse calls down upon himself the pains of hell as the only fit punishment of his rash and cruel deed, he cries:

> . . . Whip me, ye devils![1]
> Blow me about in winds![2] Roast me in sulphur!
> Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire![3]
> *Othello* Act V. sc. 2.

[1] *Have You Anything to Declare?* p. 109. London, 1936.

[1] Cp. *Inferno* XVIII. 35-39; [2] Cp. *Inf.* V. *passim;* [3] Cp. *Inf.* IX & X.

And there is yet another small but strange echo of the Fifth Canto. Francesca, telling Dante how she was suddenly and pitilessly slain, speaks:

> . . . della bella persona
> Che mi fu tolta, e il modo ancor m'offende.
> *Inf.* V. 101-2

Now, this strange expression "and still the manner of it offends me" crops up in a surprising way in the middle of *Othello*. Montano is called upon by Othello (Act II, sc. 3) to explain what happended to him in the "night brawl" fomented by Iago, and he does so in these words:

> Mon: Worthy Othello, I am hurt to danger:
> Your officer, Iago, can inform you—
> While I spare speech, *which something now offends me—*
> Of all that I do know . . .

The context, of course, is very different from the narrative of Francesca; but that seems to make it all the more remarkable. It would seem this singular expression had stuck in the mind of the poet and he found that he simply had to use it. Everybody who writes knows how some words and phrases haunt the mind and clamour to be used somehow, whereupon the obsession is dispelled. The appearance in *Othello* of "il modo ancor m'offende" is either an example of this, or a very strange coincidence.

In Canto XXXIII of the *Inferno*, which contains the dreadful story of Ugolino, we find another of those curious verbal similarities. Ugolino has begun to tell of the frightful vengeance taken by his enemies and he interrupts his narrative to say to the horrified listener:

> Ben se crudel, se tu gia non ti duoli
> Pensando cio ch'al mio cor s'annunziava:
> E se non piangi, di che pianger suoli?
> (*Inf.* XXXIII, 40-42)

> Cruel indeed art thou, if yet thou grieve not,
> Thinking of what my heart foreboded me,
> And weep'st thou not, what art thou wont to weep at?
> (Longfellow's Translation)

Does not this instantly recall the words of Mark Antony:

> "If you have tears prepare to shed them now"?

Some striking verbal parallels are to be found in the notes appended to Cary's Translation. Ugolino's words about being turned to stone (si dentro impetrai) can be disregarded because they reappear in every language; but in another place we find this:

> Come procede innanzi dall'ardore
> Per lo papiro suso un color bruno
> Che non e nero ancora e il bianco more
> (*Inf.* XXV. 64-66)

This striking simile is aptly compared by the annotator with the words of the dying King John:

> I am a scribbled form, drawn with a pen
> Upon a parchment; *and against this fire do I shrink up.*
> (*K. John*, V. sc. 7)

Compare, again, the queer phrase "cima di giudizio" (*Purg.* VI, 37) with the literal translation of it found in the mouth of Isabella when she is pleading with Angelo:—

> How would you be
> If He, which is *the top of judgment*, should
> But judge you as you are?
> (*Measure for Measure*, II, sc. 2)

Hamlet also uses this expression when he is talking to the players about the speech that was never acted:

> "Others whose judgments *cried in the top of mine*"
> (*Hamlet*, II, 2. 437-8)

One of the most celebrated and oft-quoted passages in Dante is the outburst against the military weakness and political factions that for so long rendered Italy an easy prey to the foreigner. Eerybody should know the lines:

> Ahi, serva Italia di dolor ostello,
> Nave senza nocchiero in gran tempesta,
> Non donna di provincie, ma bordello!
> (*Purg.* VI, 76-78)

Now turn to *Richard II*; here is the surprising thing that the Queen says of poor Richard in his downfall:

> Thou most beauteous *Inn*,
> Why should hard-favoured *grief* be *lodged in thee*,
> When triumph is become *an Alehouse guest?*
> (*Richard* II, Act V, sc. 1)

Here is another curious verbal parallel:

et io gustavo
Lo mio, temperando col dolce l'acerbo
(*Par.* XVIII, 3)

Chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy.
(*As You Like It*, III, sc. 3)

At the end of the third canto of the "Purgatorio" we come to the celebrated colloquy of Dante with Manfred.[1] It may seem fanciful to suggest that there can be affinity between that which the unhappy prince relates to Dante and Hamlet's meeting with the Ghost of his father. There are, indeed, no striking verbal echoes such as those already quoted. But is there not an underlying general resemblance The Scandinavian saga that is the source of the plot of *Hamlet* could not have told the poet very much about Purgatory. Now Shakespeare, half-Catholic and half-sceptic, clearly understands the doctrine of Purgatory as a place of expiation, and it looks as if he had Manfred at the back of his mind when he wrote that thrice-famous scene. Manfred begins in the same way: "Io son Manfredi," and he bids Dante go and tell his fair daughter what has befallen her father. He then relates how he was defeated and slain in battle and how he came to be in this place of expiation:

"Orribil furon li peccati miei,"

The foul crimes done in his days of nature, coupled with the fact that he died excommunicate, would lead the reader of The Divine Comedy to expect to find him elsewhere; but Manfred explains how at the very last moment the Divine Compassion intervened to save him from eternal doom. He goes on to relate how his remains were torn up from his tomb at Benvento and brought away to the river bank hard by the Verde. This was done, "*with maimed rites*," by order of the Bishop, because the Prince had died under the ban of the Church:

Dov'ei le trasmutò *a lume spento*,
(*Purg.* III, 132)

And Manfred bursts out against the harsh sentence that denied him Christian burial:

Per loro maledizion sì non si perde—

By their curse man is not wholly lost, all the same. One is reminded here of the indignation of Laertes at the burial of Ophelia. This parallel is perhaps not very strong, but the whole episode is suggestive. And the last line of the Manfred episode brings us back to the doctrine which Shakespeare so clearly understood:

Che qui per quei di la molto s'avanza.

"For those on earth can much advance us here"; that is, by their prayers.

The spirits of the blessed in Paradise are represented by Dante not in human semblance but always as moving and circling forms of living light. From Canto XXIII onwards there are many expressions which bring before the mind's eye those images of the luminous glory of the blessed amid the music of the spheres that must have haunted the imagination of Fra Angelico and Botticelli. Here are some of those passages:

Vid io sopra migliaia di lucerne,
Un sol che tutte quante l'accendea;
Come fa il nostro le viste superne;
E per la viva luce trasparea
La lucente sustanzia tanto chiara
Nel viso mio, che non lo sostenea.
(*Parad.* XXIII, 28-33)

Ciascun di quei candori in su si stese
Con la sua fiamma . . .
(*Ibid.* 124-5)

. . . quest'e la favilla
Che si dilata in fiamma poi vivace
E, come stella in cielo, in me scintilla.
(XXIV, 145-7)

. . . dentro al vivo seno
Do quello incendio tremolara un lampo
Subito e spesso, a guisa di baleno.
(XXV, 79-81)

And so it goes on, "lo schiarato splendore" and "L'infiammato giro", and much more. There is no single passage in the plays and poems that directly corresponds with these images; but there is (it is true, in a very different context) one marvellous and unforgettable phrase, in which all such visions are called up:

filling the brain with *nimble, fiery and delectable shapes*.
(*II Henry IV*, Act. IV, Sc. 3)

Lastly, the attention of the reader may be drawn to Shakespeare's choice of the name of Romeo for a hero who speaks as Hamlet does—one might say, as a younger Hamlet would speak—in accents of singular intensity. It is from Dante, himself a traveller and and a pilgrim, that we hear about Romeo. First, he explains in the Vita Nuova (XLI, 54.) that, of the three kind of folk who journey, those are called *palmers* who from beyond the

[1] *Purg* III. 112-145.

seas bring back palm branches;[1] those that go to the sanctuary in Galicia (St. James of Compostella) are called *pilgrims;* and those are called *romers* who journey to Rome.

Now let us turn to *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, sc. 5, and read again the well-known dialogue:

Romeo. If I profane with my unworthiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

Juliet. Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

Romeo. Have not saints lips and holy palmers too?

Is there not something more than accidental resemblance here?

In the sixth canto of the *Paradiso* Dante introduces a real character who bore that name, Romeo of Villeneuve (1170-1250), chamberlain to the high and mighty prince, Raymond Berengar IV of Provence.[2] The story told of Romeo of Villeneuve is that he rendered great service to his prince but was ill requited, for it was he who brought about those marriages that added such renown and greatness to the family of his master.

. . . la luce di Romeo, di cui
fu l'opera bella e grande, ma mal gradita.
(*Parad.* VI, 127-28)

Romeo was high-spirited and sensitive about his reputation. When he was calumniated he left the Court and went his way, though old and poor, declaring that if the world knew the heart he had in him, much as it praised him, it would praise him more.

Indi partisse povero e vetusto,
E se il mondo sapesse il cor ch'egli ebbe
Mendicando sua vita a frusto a frusto,
Assai lo loda e piu lo loderebbe.
(*Parad.* VI, 139-142)

[1] per quello, Che si reca il bordon di palm cento. (*Purg.* XXXIII, 77-78.)

[2] Famous not only for his patronage of men of letters but from the fact that all four of his daughters were the wives of Kings: Margaret married Louis IX of France (St. Louis); Eleanor married Henry III of England; Sancha married Henry's brother, Richard of Cornwall, who became King of the Romans; and Beatrice married Charles of Anjou who became King of Naples and Sicily.

Here is the comment of a great Dante scholar:[1]

"The figure of Romeo, unjustly accused of corrupt practices in office, supporting with magnanimous heart the poverty and humiliations of exile, is perhaps an unconscious protrait of Dante himself."

It may be objected that all this is mere fantasy because "Shakespeare" simply took the story from the *Romeo e Guillietta* of Bandello. But, admitting that he did, may we not ask what guided his choice? There were scores of Italian novels and love-stories, tragic and comic, to choose from. Lord Oxford, the real "Shakespeare," seems to have loved Verona even above those other cities of Northern Italy that he knew so well and he seems to have had some deep reason for giving the name of Romeo to a character in which many critics have seen a special projection of himself. Haply an echo may be found in the Sonnets, where a plangent voice tells of disgrace and banishment and bewails an outcast state.

The foregoing instances of parallelism have been observed by the present writer in the course of ordinary reading and without any particular research. They could no doubt be considerably augmented by those who possess a full knowledge of Dante's and of Shakespeare's text.

It is often said that such parallels in words and imagery mean nothing or are merely coincidences. But is that true? Do art experts disregard similarities or resemblances in designs, colour treatment, brush strokes and so forth when they seek to identify a painting? One verbal parallel, or two, may be the result of chance; but when the number of them grows, the probability that this is not the result of chance increases progressively.

Lord Oxford was *par excellence* the Englishman Italianate. He spent both time and money in Italy; he was publicly hailed as one who had "drunk deep draughts of the Muses of France and Italy;" he was likewise ridiculed and denounced for "Tuscanish" costumes and outlandish behaviour. Of Italian influence on his personality it is needless to speak, for that is the one point on which Stratfordians and Oxfordians are agreed. Could he not also have been the personal medium whereby the original ideas and expressions of Dante Alighieri were transmuted into the language of "William Shakespeare"?

James J. Dwyer

[1] The late Prof. Edmund G. Gardner: *Dante*, p. 160.

First Play Presenting Oxford as "Shakespeare"

"By Any Other Name," the dramatic treatment of Edward de Vere. 17th Earl of Oxford in the role of "William Shakespeare" by Warren P. Munsell. Jr., was produced at the McCarter Theatre, Princeton, New Jersey, on July 29th, continuing throughout the week.

The cast was headed by Harry Ellerbe as Lord Oxford and Winifred Lenihan as Queen Elizabeth. Warren P. Munsell, Sr., of the Theatre Guild, directed the production. The settings were designed by Bradford Ashworth.

Events depicted cover twenty years, 1581 to 1601, beginning with Oxford's activities as collaborator with his private secretary, John Lyly, in writing comedies for Court audiences at the Blackfriars Theatre, and ending with the Essex Rebellion.

Biographical plays dealing with literary figures demand audiences thoroughly conversant with the milieu and the characters depicted. Lord Oxford as the real "William Shakespeare" is still largely inexplicable to *hoi polloi.* Presentation of this mysterious genius on the public stage can be effective, therefore, in proportion to the amount of emotional excitement that his activities engender in an audience.

The weather bureau did not give the producers of this interestingly written play the co-operation they deserved, the week of July 29th being so hot that ordinary process of concentration were difficult. Emotional voltage is leeched away by humidity in the same way that the power of a storage battery is dissipated by excessive moisture.

The best acting in this biographical study of the poetical peer whose "doings" were so hard to "find out and make public with the rest," was contributed by Harold Vermilyea as Lord Burghley and Winifred Lenihan as the Queen. Mr. Munsell seemed to touch highwater-mark in his writing of the scenes between Oxford and Elizabeth. If the quality and pace of the intimate relationship which Oxford enjoyed with his drama-loving sovereign is consistently maintained throughout the entire three acts of the comedy, it is safe to say that it will enjoy a long and profitable run on Broadway.

I should like to see Mr. Munsell's play again on a cool autumn evening with another actor in the leading male role as fully alive to the opportunities of compelling characterization as Winifred Lenihan proved herself to be in the part of Queen Elizabeth.

Tom Nash, Jr.

Eminent Elizabethan Scholar's New Publication

The American Branch of The Shakespeare Fellowship is proud to announce the addition to its active membership of the Rev. Dr. Gerald H. Rendall, Hon. Canon of Chelmsford, former Principal of Victoria College, University of Liverpool and Headmaster of the Charterhouse School of London for many years.

Dr. Rendall lives at Colchester in south-east England, a city now in the direct line of fire from the super-siege-guns which the Germans are installing in captured French and Belgian seaports. Nevertheless, the eminent Elizabethan scholar has within recent weeks added a new item to his list of publications on the Oxford-Shakespeare evidence.

This is a 16-page illustrated pamphlet entitled *"Ashbourne" Portrait of Shakespeare* (published by Benham & Company Ltd., Colchester, England. Price 1 shilling; by post 1 shilling, 1½ pence).

Dr. Rendall discusses Mr. Barrell's scientific discoveries regarding the famous painting owned by the Folger Shakespeare Library and contributes interesting documentation regarding the evident owners of the picture during the 16th and 17th centuries.

A review of Dr. Rendall's conclusions will be published in a later issue of the NEWS-LETTER. One or two of the questions that he raises may be elucidated by broadening the discussion to include other Shakespeare paintings that reveal Lord Oxford as the original sitter.

Meanwhile, a few copies of the Canon's pamphlet are available through the American Branch of The Fellowship at 25 cents each postpaid.