

# News-Letter

## THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP

— AMERICAN BRANCH —

*The Shakespeare Fellowship was founded in London in 1922 under the presidency of Sir George Greenwood.*

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### "Shake-speare's" Own Secret Drama

Discovery of Hidden Facts in the Private Life  
of Edward de Vere, Proves Him Author of the  
Bard's *Sonnets*.

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While the plays and poems published under the name of "William Shakespeare" or "Shake-speare" in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I represent the most important body of creative art in the English language, it is a notable fact that more than a thousand volumes and many times that number of pamphlets and special studies have been written during the past two centuries in an effort to decide the true authorship of these immortal works.

During the same period, large numbers of people throughout the world have expressed their dissatisfaction with the so-called "orthodox" point of view which holds that the plays and poems were created by a man with no recorded educational or artistic background whatever, one William Shagspere, Shaxper, or Shaksper—as the name appears in the records of his native village of Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, where he was born in April 1564, and where he also died in April, 1616.

One reason why this attitude of skepticism regarding the identity of the creative personality behind the Shakespearean works has taken such firm hold upon so large and varied a body of public opinion is because there is no documentation whatever which can be shown to have been written or published during the lifetime of the shadowy William of Stratford, clearly and unequivocally stating that *this particular citizen* was either a playwright or a poet.

There are, of course, many references to "William Shakespeare" the writer, during the 1564-1616 period. But in no instance is he characterized or identified with the locale of Stratford-on-Avon.

Not even at the time of William Shaksper's death in April, 1616, was so much as one direct statement published to show that he had anything whatever to do with the creation of the works which had revolutionized the theatrical and literary worlds for all time. In fact, every reference to William of Stratford as a literary genius is posthumous. None of his contemporary relatives and associates at Stratford can be shown to have referred to him as a writer. All of the man's personal fame was thrust upon him after his death.

In view of the direct personal allusions made to every other widely approved literary light of the period and the encomiums that were heaped in realistic abundance upon the graves of Edmund Spenser, Francis Beaumont, and Ben Jonson—not to mention the public mourning that marked the passing of stage figures such as Richard Tarleton, Richard Burbage, and Edward Alleyn—the foregoing facts have led many students of the problem to one inevitable conclusion:

*The personality of "Mr. William Shakespeare," the author, was deliberately clouded in mystery.*

Moreover, as no one ever pointed out William Shaksper of Stratford as the mysterious creator either during his lifetime or upon the occasion of his death, analytical skeptics have excellent reasons for believing that a confusion between the identities of the real poet and the Stratford citizen with the somewhat similar patronymic was brought about by certain interested parties after both the actual author and the Stratford business man had

passed away.

When we further find that the grave of the alleged genius in Trinity Church, Stratford, bears no name, initials, or dates, nothing but a conventional warning to body-snatchers in provincial doggerel, while the so-called "monument" to the poet, which is in reality a London-made mural memorial fastened to the wall of the church chancel—not directly over the unmarked grave—conviction grows that all is not clear as crystal on the banks of the sluggish Avon.

It seems, for example, a most glaring inconsistency to find the poet memorialized on the wall as "a Virgil for poetic art, a Socrates and a Nestor for philosophical genius and wisdom," while the spirit of the man below the unmarked stone in the floor of the church breathes forth naught but a peasant's crude curse against anticipated disturbers of his anonymity.\*

These are some of the reasons why exhaustive and determined efforts have been made during the past century and a quarter, in particular, to penetrate the apparent camouflage of inconsistencies and evasions and bring to light the real personality of the "Mr. William Shakespeare" who wrote *Hamlet*, the *Sonnets*, and the other masterpieces that have played so vital a part in the development of modern culture.

Born of illiterate parents, as the Stratford records amply prove, forced into marriage at the age of eighteen, and the father of three children before his twenty-first year was out, William of Stratford was working as a butcher's apprentice, according to the testimony of John Aubrey and John Dowdall, two 17th century commentators on his career, at the time he "ran from his master" to seek his fortune in London. His name does not appear upon the rolls of any school, either elementary or collegiate, in Stratford or elsewhere, and no companion ever came forward to claim him as a schoolmate or a fellow student of any of the fine arts or specialized branches of knowledge such as Court etiquette, medicine, military tactics, music, and both civil and ecclesiastical law—with which Shakespeare the dramatist evinces easy familiarity.

\*The Latin inscription on the wall memorial to the poet reads: "Judicio Pylum, genio Socratem, arte Maronem."

On the unnamed and undated slab covering the actual grave in the floor of the church appear these words:

"Good frend for Iesus sake forbear  
To digg the dust enclosed here:  
Blese he ye man yt spares thes stones,  
And curst be he yt moves my hones."

Neither did the Stratford Shaksperes or their associates possess quantities of books or other known media for intellectual development.

There is no testimony, either direct or traditional, to show that Will ever made any of the efforts to educate himself that are recorded of such homespun geniuses as Robert Burns of rural Scotland, James Hogg the Ettrick Shepherd, or Abraham Lincoln in the primitive West. Yet, right in Shakspere's own period, such sons of the working class as Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, and Ben Jonson all rose to high rank in the creative arts, and we have today thoroughly adequate and satisfying records of the means whereby they acquired intellectual polish.

We also have excellent character sketches of each of them, drawn to the life by admiring and critical associates. In the cases of Marlowe and Jonson we even know their favorite foods and beverages from contemporary memoranda, the books they read, and their personal habits and idiosyncrasies. We know the friends who encouraged and assisted them, who stood at their backs when reputation and life itself hung in the balance, who participated in their defeats and triumphs, and who felt free to speak of them openly as understandable human beings in a world of men—not as enigmatic shadows or mere symbols of achievement lacking identifiable roots in the intellectual life of their times.

In other words, our first-hand, contemporary knowledge of the foremost Elizabethan and Jacobean writers is voluminous, with a single inexplicable exception. The one peerless genius of the group, responsible for the largest and most varied output, is virtually a soul without a body, or as Guizot, the French analyst puts it:

"Shakespeare is like a beacon shining in the night with no visible foundation to hold it aloft."

William of Stratford with his background of illiteracy and negative intellectual reactions, his traditional connection with the trades of butchering, wool-stapling and malt-selling, his recorded activities as a money-lender and land-speculator and as a persistent litigant, suing his neighbors and fellow-traders in the local courts for the collection of various small debts and loans, his itch for bourgeois "standing" in his home town and his purchase—under questionable circumstances—of a coat-of-arms, while at the same time allowing his daughter Judith to grow to full maturity so abysmally ignorant of "Shakspeare's" English that she could not write her own name, this William of Strat-

ford, it must be abundantly apparent, was *not* the great-souled cosmopolitan behind the masterpieces of the First Folio,

In each of which he seems to shake a Lance,  
As brandish't at the eyes of Ignorance.\*

Is it any wonder that hundreds of students of these incongruous circumstances long ago came to the conclusion that the Shakespearean works have everything except *the one human essential*—an understandable personality to account for their creation? In the truest sense of the word, these masterpieces have been anonymous—gifts of an Unknown God—books without an author.

While the efforts to locate and identify this missing author have been carried on almost continuously for more than a hundred and thirty years—ever since James Corton Cowell first enunciated before the Philosophical Society of Ipswich, England, on February 7, 1805, the theory that Sir Francis Bacon was the Bard of Avon—it was not until 1920 when J. Thomas Looney of Gateshead-on-Tyne published his epoch-making volume of documentation and deduction entitled "*Shakespeare*" Identified in *Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, that a really logical explanation of the age-old mystery was forthcoming.

Stimulating research along previously neglected lines and offering a widened outlook upon the whole Shakespearean period, Mr. Looney's work was followed by *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, a comprehensive life of this remarkable poet-peer by Bernard M. Ward, based upon five years' study of original documents in the Public Record Office and elsewhere, the examination of much correspondence and many unprinted manuscript collections of the 16th century. Captain Ward's work supplements and corroborates the Looney discoveries at every turn, showing Lord Oxford's lifelong preoccupation with literary matters, his association with the same group of writers, musicians, dramatists, and poets that are known to have influenced "Mr. William Shakespeare" artistically, and his close connection as a patron of players, a lessee of the Blackfriars' Theatre, etc., with the development of the Elizabethan stage as a force for public amusement and enlightenment.

For reasons of his own, Captain Ward failed to make a forthright endorsement of the claims advanced in "*Shakespeare*" Identified that Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, must have been the long-sought creative force behind the First Folio. But

Ward's documentation fully substantiates Mr. Looney's original conclusions regarding Lord Oxford's contemporary fame as the foremost poet at the Court of Elizabeth—and one who carried on his literary activities under a cloak of anonymity. Almost every open-minded person who reads these two works must feel the conviction that at last we have the long-sought personality that possessed the innate genius, wide and humane knowledge, cosmopolitan point of view, and carefully developed skill requisite to accomplish the high artistic tasks for which William Shakspeare, the narrow-visioned business man of Stratford, was so patently unfitted. In one outstanding particular Lord Oxford fits the role of the missing Bard better than any one else.

His reputation as the best of all the poets at the Court of Elizabeth is specifically referred to five or six times by the leading literary critics of the era, such as William Webbe, author of *A Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586); the anonymous author of *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589); and Henry Peacham in *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622). Incidentally, none of these writers mention the name of "William Shakespeare." Their praise of Oxford for his outstanding skill "in the rare devices of poetry" is echoed by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598), who places the Earl first when listing the playwrights "best for comedy among us."

Meres has the name "Shakespeare" in his list, also, and this has led many professional Stratfordians to declare that Lord Oxford could, therefore, not have been the author of *Hamlet*. However, there are many publishers' lists of the present day which mention Willard Huntington Wright and S. S. Van Dine, and Ray Stannard Baker and David Grayson, as separate entities, though "Van Dine" was a pen-name assumed by Wright, and "Grayson" a bucolic mask under which Baker dispenses fictionized philosophy. In the 1890's William Sharp, who also wrote under the name of "Fiona Macleod," even went so far as to publish separate and distinct biographies of himself and "Fiona Macleod" in various editions of *Who's Who*. So there is no reason at all why Meres could not have listed the Earl of Oxford first as the best writer of comedy for the Elizabethan Court, and later, even unknowingly, have referred to the same man under the stage name of "Shakespeare."

Angel Day, in his *English Secretarie* (1586), refers to Oxford's "learned view and (the) insight of your Lordship, whose infancy from the beginning was ever sacred to the Muses."

\* Ben Jonson's prologue to the First Folio.

Gabriel Harvey, in an oration of 1578, chided the Earl for devoting himself to "bloodless books and writings that serve no useful purpose" and urged him to give up the pen for military implements with the significant remark: "Thine eyes flash fire, thy countenance shakes a spear." In 1580 Harvey described him as

A fellow peerless in England,  
Not the like discourser for Tongue  
and head to be found out.

Edmund Spenser, himself a Court poet, also referred to the literary peer's affinity to the Muses in a sonnet addressed to Oxford in the opening pages of *The Faerie Queene*:

And also for the love which thou doest bear  
To th' Heliconian imps, and they to thee;  
They unto thee, and thou to them, most dear.

Arthur Golding, Thomas Watson, Robert Greene, John Lyly, Thomas Churchyard, and Anthony Munday—all writers that Shakespearean editors declare "William Shakespeare" studied carefully—were closely associated with Lord Oxford and dedicated books to him. Golding was his uncle and tutor. "Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid was one of Shakespeare's best-loved books in youth," says Sir Sidney Lee in his *Life of Shakespeare*. John Lyly was Oxford's private secretary and the stage manager of his theatrical troupe. "Shakespeare's early comedies owe much to Lyly's works," say all orthodox writers on the subject. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is reminiscent in parts of the writings of Churchyard, declare many editors of the play. Thomas Churchyard lived in Oxford's household for several years. "Shakespeare's" *Sonnets* have time and again been compared with Thomas Watson's *Passionate Century of Love*, a collection of sonnets which Watson dedicated to Oxford in 1582. A story by Robert Greene gave "Shakespeare" the idea for his play, *A Winter's Tale*, according to orthodox accounts, and Sir Sidney Lee declares that Greene had a hand in the writing of *Henry VI* and *Titus Andronicus*. In 1584 Robert Greene dedicated his *Card of Fancy* to Lord Oxford in words that show he was one of the poet-Earl's retainers:

"Wheresoever Maecenas lodgeth, thither no doubt will scholars flock," is one of the statements here that bear witness to Oxford's predilection for the same writers that make up the "Shakespearean" circle.

Anthony Munday, traveler, translator, and playwright, also lived under Oxford's roof and personal patronage for many years. One of the Earl's

theatrical companies was managed by Munday during the 1580's. Sir Sidney Lee is of the opinion that "Shakespeare" must have read Munday's play *Fidele and Fortunio* before writing his *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

In 1596 Munday translated a book from the French called *The Orator*. One of the medieval tales that it contains is entitled: "Of a Jew who would for his debt have a pound of the flesh of a Christian." It seems needless to point out that this fable was put to good use by the mysterious author of *The Merchant of Venice*.

Munday dedicated several of his translations to Lord Oxford. A sentence in the dedication of *The Mirror of Mutability* (1579) to the Earl shows that Munday considered Oxford his "master" in the true professional sense of the word, for after speaking of "having not so fully comprised such pithiness of style as one of a more ripier invention could cunningly have carved, I rest, Right Honourable, on your clemency, to amend my errors committed so unskillfully."

It is a significant fact, in this connection, that all modern experts who have studied the interesting manuscript play of *Sir Thomas More*, of which Anthony Munday was the principal author, and which was held up for revision by the Elizabethan censor, are agreed that "William Shakespeare" had been called in by Anthony Munday or one of the other troubled playwrights concerned in the work, to re-write the crucial riot scene in the drama which had not been "carved . . . cunningly" enough by Munday and his original collaborators to meet the approval of officialdom.

So we see that Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, appears in contemporary documentation as a man fully qualified to meet the one great test in which William of Stratford cuts so poor a figure. *Oxford is categorically mentioned as the possessor of creative talents of a high order*. At the same time, as the author of *The Arte of English Poesie* states, his true talents as the head of the Court poets would appear only "if their doings could be found out and made public with the rest." In the same volume, the author also speaks of "notable gentlemen in the Court that have written commendably and suppressed it again, or else suffered it to be published without their own names to it." Robert Greene, in his *Farewell to Folly* (1591), corroborates this when he tells of "others—if they come to write or publish anything in print—which for their calling and gravity being loth to have any profane pamphlets pass under their hand, get some other to set

his name to their verses. Thus is the ass made proud by his underhand brokery."

These statements undoubtedly provide the best contemporary explanation of a further significant circumstance in connection with Lord Oxford's fitness for the role of the real "William Shakespeare." For while it is undeniable that the literary peer was looked upon by many as the leading Elizabethan poet and dramatist, *no volume of verse and not so much as a single line of dramatic writing bearing his name, title or initials has ever been discovered*. A few juvenile lyrics and snatches of more mature poetry from his pen have been found in long-forgotten manuscript collections and out-of-print anthologies. But that is all—certainly nothing of sufficient weight or amplitude to justify the high reputation as poet and dramatist which he enjoyed in the age when poetry and the drama were at their all-time apogee. The best answer seems to be that suggested by Robert Greene and the author of *The Arte of English Poesie*.

*If Oxford's serious literary work survives, it does so under a name other than his own.*

Here we have the man of great reputed talent without adequate examples of achievement to back up the claims of his contemporaries.

On the other hand, we have the truly magnificent achievement of the plays and poems of "Mr. William Shakespeare" with the pitifully inadequate personality of the Stratford native to account for their amazing art and almost plumbless depths of scholarship and world-wisdom.

Recalling Gabriel Harvey's comments on Lord Oxford at this point:

"Thy countenance shakes a spear" and

"A fellow peerless in England.

Not the like discourser for Tongue  
and head to be found out,"

let us bring the Earl with the reputation for outstanding skill "in the rare devices of poetry" into juxtaposition with the works that lack a convincing author and see what happens.

Charles Wisner Barrell

(To be continued)

## De Vere at Newport

On Saturday, September 20th, Mr. James Stewart Cushman addressed the Art Association of Newport on the claims of Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, as the author of the Shakespeare plays. Mr. Cushman's talk was so well received that he has been asked to give another on the same subject next year.

## First Folios in the News

A despatch from London on October 25th states: "The Foreign Office announced today that a valuable Shakespeare folio owned by Major E. W. B. Gill and Mrs. Gill, of Oxford, will be given to the United States in 'appreciation of American friendship aid.' Viscount Halifax, British Ambassador to the United States, will present the folio to the Librarian of Congress. Prime Minister Winston Churchill has written a letter to the Gills thanking them for the gesture."

Two parts of the famous library of the late A. Edward Newton, of Philadelphia, were sold earlier in the year. The third and last part was sold on October 29th and 30th at the Parke-Bernet galleries in New York. Among the treasures of the concluding sale was a First Folio, formerly known as the Earl of Carysfort copy, listed as No. 6 in Sir Sidney Lee's census. Philip Brooks, in his "Notes on Rare Books" in *The New York Times*, calls it "the outstanding prize in the Newton collection." The account of that part of the sale which concerns the First Folio, as published in the *New York Herald Tribune*, is worth repeating:

Gabriel Wells, New York book collector [and member of the Shakespeare Fellowship], turned a tidy profit last night at Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., 30 East Fifty-Seventh Street, at the opening session of the third part of the sale of the famous library of the late A. Edward Newton, Philadelphia author and bibliophile. Mr. Wells succeeded in buying for \$22,000 a first folio Shakespeare which he had sold in 1928 to Mr. Newton for \$62,500.

The Shakespeare folio, which is known as the Carysfort copy and is considered the second best in the country, brought the highest bidding of the session, which yielded a total of \$46,014.50. Hiram H. Parke, president of the galleries, started the bidding at \$10,000.

With Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach, noted rare-book collector, competing against Mr. Wells, the price rose by \$1,000 jumps to \$17,000 and then by \$500 jumps to \$22,000, at which point there was silence.

"Come, gentlemen," said Mr. Parke, "I'll give you a minute to think it over. This item is worth much more than that."

Dr. Rosenbach, however, was not to be moved. He kept silent, and Mr. Parke finally pounded three times to signify completion of the sale.

"Sold to G. W.," he said. "Back home again."

## NEWS-LETTER

## THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP

## AMERICAN BRANCH

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Charles Wisner Barrell

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.

## Our Third Year

In spite of daily anxieties over the European war and complications connected with it nearer home, the Shakespeare Fellowship, American Branch, begins its third year with a knowledge that it has achieved a very real place in the affections of its members and that members everywhere are helping to spread the truth regarding the authorship of the Shakespeare plays.

Not only do reports come from all parts of America, Canada, and England, but from places more remote, like Switzerland and faraway New Zealand. These reports encourage us to greater efforts in making known the facts about Edward de Vere, first set forth so ably by Mr. J. Thomas Looney in "*Shakespeare*" Identified.

The flames of London's great fire of last December devoured the remaining unsold copies of that

first edition and the loss of these copies brought a sense of personal bereavement to members of the Fellowship, next only to that of Mr. Looney. One of the important achievements for the coming year must be the publication of a second edition. Some way must be found, and will be found, by which Mr. Looney can arrange for the re-publishing of this invaluable book. Tentative suggestions towards this end have already been received. The American Branch of the Fellowship will be glad to aid in any way possible.

## Leading Article

Shakespeare's *Sonnets* have fascinated every student of the master dramatist and many theories have been published in an effort to arrive at a solution of the mysterious secret they contain.

Mr. Charles Wisner Barrell has gone much further afield than most theorists on the subject and has gathered a collection of facts based on documentary evidence from which he has deduced an entirely new solution of the mystery.

In this issue of the NEWS-LETTER, Mr. Barrell gives the beginning of his story on the *Sonnets*, a story which will be continued in later issues. He expects eventually to expand his account as here given and have it published in book form with complete documentation.

## Most Famous Pseudonym

The Saturday Review of Literature, September 13, 1941, in its page of "Letters to the Editor," has the following letter of interest to members of the Shakespeare Fellowship:

SIR:—Thanks a million for changing the cover of the *Review* to one more pleasing.

I am wondering how Howard Collins, in his list of twenty famous pen-names, overlooked "Shakespeare," the world's most famous pseudonym, and the one that has fooled more people than all of the twenty he mentions combined.

FLODDEN W. HERON.

San Francisco, Calif.

Trust our alert San Francisco member not to let an opportunity slip!

Mr. Heron often speaks to San Francisco audiences on the De Vere Theory and is now having printed a folder giving the important points of the theory. Not only will he have copies of the folder distributed among his future auditors, but he expects to include them in letters to friends in whom an interest in the subject may be aroused.

## The World's Great Letters

Mr. M. Lincoln Schuster, a member of the Shakespeare Fellowship, has since boyhood pursued the pleasant—at times exciting—hobby of collecting letters written by famous men and women of the world. As the years passed, Mr. Schuster's collection grew to such a mass of material and some of it so valuable and interesting that eventually he decided to share his pleasure with others by publishing some of the more notable letters. The task of choosing the number to fill a single volume was an exacting one, and on his final decision, Mr. Schuster makes the comment: "After years of postponement, the book has finally and reluctantly gone to press. I say 'reluctantly' because irrestible material is still pouring in from many generous and co-operative friends and co-workers." The result is an anthology which will live through the years, a fascinating book to dip into in a spare half-hour, a delightful gift-book.

It is too late now, alas, but a letter which should have been called to the attention of Mr. Schuster before his anthology was published is that one written by Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, at the age of twenty-two, to his father-in-law, Lord Treasurer Burghley, following the frightful Massacre of St. Bartholomew in Paris in 1572. As Lord Oxford was in later years to adopt the pen-name "William Shakespeare," letters written in his youth are all valuable, but this urgent plea to his father-in-law to have a care for his safety, at a time in the world's history almost as difficult as the one we are now living in, is of superlative interest.

The letter is given by B. M. Ward, in his *Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, as follows:

I would to God your Lordship would let me understand some of your news which here doth ring doubtfully in the ears of every man, of the murder of the Admiral of France, and a number of noblemen and worthy gentlemen, and such as have in their lifetime honoured the Queen's Majesty our Mistress; on whose tragedies we have a number of French Æneases in this city that tell of their own overthrows with tears falling from their eyes, a piteous thing to hear but a cruel and far more grievous thing we must deem it then to see. All rumours here are but confused of those troops that are escaped from Paris and Rouen where Monsieur hath also been, and like a Vesper Sicilianus, as they say, that cruelly spreads all over France, whereof your Lordship is better advertised than we are here. And sith the world is so full of treasons and vile

instruments daily to attempt new and unlooked for things, good my Lord, I shall affectionately and heartily desire your Lordship to be careful both of yourself and of her Majesty, that your friends may long enjoy you and you them. I speak because I am not ignorant what practices have been made against your person lately by Mather, and later, as I understand by foreign practices if it be true. And think if the Admiral in France was an eyesore or beam in the eyes of the papists, that the Lord Treasurer of England is a blot and crossbar in their way, whose remove they will never stick to attempt, seeing they have prevailed so well in others. This estate hath depended on you a great while as all the world doth judge, and now all men's eyes not being occupied any more on these lost lords are, as it were on a sudden bent and fixed on you, as a singular hope and pillar, whereto the religion hath to lean. And blame me not, though I am bolder with your Lordship than my custom is, for I am one that count myself a follower of yours now in all fortunes; and what shall hap to you I count it hap to myself; or at least I will make myself a voluntary partaker of it. Thus, my Lord, I humbly desire your Lordship to pardon my youth, but to take in good part my zeal and affection towards you, as one on whom I have builded my foundation either to stand or to fall. And, good my Lord, think I do not this presumptuously as to advise you that am but to take advice of your Lordship, but to admonish you, as one with whom I would spend my blood and life, so much you have made me yours. And I do protest there is nothing more desired of me than so to be taken and accounted of you. Thus with my hearty commendations and your daughter's we leave you to the custody of Almighty God.

Your Lordship's affectionate son-in-law,

EDWARD OXFORD.

The letter is of further interest from the fact that it was written only a few months after the execution of the Duke of Norfolk, cousin of Lord Oxford, who tried every means within his power to prevent it. Historians have contended that the Earl, to revenge himself on his father-in-law, who could have stopped the execution, dissipated his inheritance in order to ruin himself and his wife by selling his lands at ridiculously low prices. Records show that he did not sell his lands till later and the letter indicates that he was very soon on the most amicable terms with Lord Burghley.

E. T. C.

## La Vie Intellectuelle in Switzerland

At a meeting in April of *La Société d'histoire et d'archéologie* of Geneva, Switzerland, the Shakespeare problem, previously brought to the attention of the Society a few weeks earlier by Mademoiselle Montandon, was treated by Mr. Charles Boissevain, a member of the Shakespeare Fellowship.

Mr. Boissevain gave a demonstration of the evidence furnished by Mr. Charles Wisner Barrell's X-ray analysis of several so-called "Shakespeare" portraits.

The following translation of a summary of Mr. Boissevain's address has been furnished by the Secretary of the Society:

"One of the oldest of the 'Shakespeare' portraits, the 'Ashbourne,' shows unmistakably that the portrait suffered wilful modification in the course of the 17th century, consisting notably of the repainting of the ruff, the date, and the signet of the ring, as also of effacing the de Vere crest and other emblems.

"It follows then that Shakespeare was not Bacon, nor William Stanley, but that he was Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, one of the most fantastic personalities of that fantastic period.

"The aristocratic nature of the poet, his wide humanistic culture and the profound knowledge he possessed on various subjects, do not tally with the attribution of the great works of the quasi-illiterate actor, seven years after the latter's death, but fit in every respect the personality of Edward de Vere, whom a  *censor mores* addressed in his youth as *hastam vibrans* (shake a spear).

"If, then, cryptography seems to reveal that Bacon was 'Shakespeare,' radiography proves that it was de Vere who adopted that name for his poetic and dramatic work."

## Shakespeare on the New York Stage

Most of the critics were rather severe on the production of the charming comedy, "As You Like it," in spite of the fact that the cast included some very competent players, and it lasted only a week, closing on Saturday, October 25th.

For their lack of enthusiasm over the comedy, the critics made up in abundance when the New Opera Company, at the Forty-Fourth Theatre, brought out of an undeserved oblivion Verdi's opera, "Mac-

beth," on Friday evening, October 24th. The fine libretto, based on Shakespeare's tragedy of the same name, is supported by magnificent music. Says Olin Downes in *The New York Times*, "The theme fully releases Verdi's savage dramatic power. The characters gripped his imagination as they have gripped the imagination of the human race since Shakespeare created them." Jess Walters as Macbeth, Florence Kirk as Lady Macbeth, and Fritz Busch, conductor of the orchestra, were outstanding figures in a great performance and received an ovation from the audience.

Two famous Shakespearean actors, Maurice Evans and Judith Anderson, opened on Tuesday, November 11th, a limited engagement of the same great tragedy, *Macbeth*, at the National Theatre, under the direction of Margaret Webster. Richard Watts, Jr., critic of the Herald Tribune, calls the opening performance "the finest *Macbeth* of our time," and says, "The haunting poetry of its superb lines is almost invariably managed with an expertness which loses none of the incomparable Shakespearean words."

## Excerpts from Members' Letters

Charles F. Van Cleve, Ball State Teachers College, Muncie, Indiana: "The whole Oxford case is intriguing to me. Has any one yet agreed to print a reply to Campbell's *Harpers* article? Were the war over, I should love to spend a year in England digging out new evidence."

A. C. Gifford, "Tirohanga," Heretaunga, Wellington, New Zealand: "I have been a member of the Shakespeare Fellowship from the start. I had for many years been convinced that the Stratford theory was absolutely untenable. But I didn't know who was the real author until 1922, when I got 'Shakespeare Identified.' We were convinced by it. . . . I now have about thirty books on the problem. The Bacon theory never appealed to me as he seemed quite the wrong kind of man. It is very interesting that his connection with the First Folio seems now clear. . . . Every number of the News-Letter is full of discoveries. I wish to thank your branch for continuing to send it under the circumstances." (Mr. Gifford refers to the ban, under war conditions, on sending money out of the country; he regrets he is unable to pay his membership dues).

Percy Allen, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, England: "Your June News-Letter did not come



through to any of us, so far as I know, so that I was doubly glad to have the August number, with its interesting contents. I enjoyed most the articles on "Sebastian of Messaline" and "Fluellen." It is wonderful how, little by little, it is becoming clear that even the apparently trifling episodes in Shakespeare are actually topical and symbolical. . . . I am getting out here a short News-Letter, which will probably be out by mid-October. . . . I shall be wintering with Captain Ward, at Welwyn Garden City. . . . What is in store for us all here, in England, nobody knows, but we are not despondent. This much is certain—we will never bow the knee to Hitler; upon whom, as also upon the German nation, sooner or later, the judgments of the Most High will inevitably descend. America will be one of the instruments of that doom." (The June NEWS-LETTER was sent to England, as usual, but must have gone on one of the ships lost at sea. Duplicate copies have now been sent.)

James J. Dwyer, whose scholarly articles on Dante have been read with great interest by Fellowship members, writes from a small seaside town in Carnarvonshire. "The country is beautiful but lacking in cultural facilities and amenities. We notice the change from Winchester, where the former were somewhat amply provided; here there is no library and there is no bookshop worth mentioning. . . . It will not be possible here to pursue any course of reading outside my own books, a few of which I have brought with me. In these circumstances, the numbers of your excellent News-Letter which I have with me become more valuable than ever. The entry into the third year of this war finds us all in good heart and more confident than ever. We rejoice that owing so largely to generous American aid we are in a far stronger position than we were twelve months ago and that our prospects of victory are immensely improved."

## Folger Shakespeare Library Suggestion

In the fine article by Mrs. Davidson, published in the June issue of the NEWS-LETTER, the statement is made that possibly a re-dedication of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington might some day be made. There is no doubt now about Edward de Vere being the author of what are supposed to be the writings of "Shakespeare," but to re-dedicate or re-name that grand monument will require years and years of tedious effort, and I fear with doubtful result, even though the plea be

founded upon fact.

However, the Fellowship might well support a movement and devote its efforts to bring about a slight addition to the name, that is reasonably possible of achievement, in the not distant future. Instead of change of name or re-dedication, merely insert in small letters and in brackets, beneath the word "SHAKESPEARE," wherever it appears either in or on the building the words—(A pseudonym), in the following manner:—

### FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY

(A PSEUDONYM)

Such insertion could be easily made, does not alter the present name, yet it does make the name both more attractive and surely more interesting, because of the added factual words. Future generations could not then question the authenticity or correctness of the name.

As the De Vere discovery becomes known more of the present and larger numbers of admirers in years to come will ask the question—"why Shakespeare"? unless something is done about it.

*Flodden W. Heron*

## Shakespeare and Lope de Vega

America's lively periodicals, *Life* and *Time*, recently ran an advertisement for a manufacturer of woolens which struck our fancy. Part of it follows: Shakespeare's output doesn't look so good in

Madrid

But he still packs 'em in on Broadway!

Lope de Vega, Spain's prolific dramatist and a contemporary of Shakespeare, wrote 1800 plays.

But Shakespeare, with only 36 plays to his credit, continues to prove, after 300 years, that Input is Remembered When Output is Forgotten.

Born at Madrid in 1562, Lope de Vega lost both parents while still a small boy and was reared by an uncle whose home was at Seville. From his earliest years, Lope was a zealous student—indeed, an infant prodigy—and before he was twelve, besides his serious studies, "he was possessed of all the accomplishments of youth, such as dancing, singing, fencing." The childhood of Lope de Vega, as described by Dr. Hugo Albert Rennert (*The Life of Lope de Vega*), parallels in many ways the early years of Edward de Vere, our Shakespeare. Certainly, no parallels can be found between it and the early life of the Stratford William Shakspeare.

Lope was already known as a poet and dramatist when, at the age of twenty-six, he went with the Spanish Armada to attack England in 1588. One of the survivors of that ill-fated expedition, upon his return to Spain, he began his writing career in earnest. He soon became known as "the great Monarch of the Spanish theatre." Montalvan says of him, "He composed with miraculous facility—his pen could not keep pace with his mind." This great facility in composing made possible the production of an "astonishing profusion" of plays, the number at the end of his life being given by Montalvan at 1800, though Lope himself gave the number at 1500, and he wrote much poetry besides.

Shakespeare, in England, and Lope de Vega, in Spain, disregarded the unities, beloved of classical writers, and their example continues to be followed by more modern dramatists. Lope is known to have done this deliberately. Some critics say Shakespeare did it through "ignorance"! That is what comes of trying to make a dramatist of the Stratford man. Like Lope, our Shakespeare refused to be fettered by the strait-jacket of the unities and deliberately disregarded them. Dr. Rennert says, "A transcendent genius like Shakespeare or Lope de Vega cannot be bound by the paltry artificialities of the unities." As for "ignorance," such a calumny cannot be fastened on Edward de Vere, for the records tell us of his wonderfully cultivated mind; he could say with perfect understanding: "Ignorance is the curse of God, Knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to heaven." (*Richard II*, iv.7.78).

In another respect there was a likeness between the two great dramatic poets. With Spain's recognition of Lope's supremacy as a writer, he received for his work a handsome material reward, "beyond that which generally falls to the lot of great creators," though, in spite of a large income, he was always poor, owing to his boundless generosity. "One who knew him best said he never denied alms to any one that asked him." In a similar way, the inherited wealth of Edward de Vere was dissipated so that he, too, was always poor. Some of the ways taken by the flight of his money were his patronage of the University Wits and of the playing companies, for we know by Lord Burghley's complaints that it was these, his "lewd friends," who benefited by his generosity; his gift to Lavenham Church of half the land of the parish; his purchase and fitting out of the Ship *Edward Bonaventure* for the defense of England against the Spanish Armada. Only when he could no longer support the financial demands of the stage was the value of his

work with it recognized, in this differing from Lope de Vega. The recognition came from the Queen in the form of an annual pension of £1000, the exact amount said to have been spent each year by Shakespeare. It was, perhaps, Elizabeth who had the truest appreciation in his own time of our great author.

The generous nature of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, is typified by a question he asks in his prefatory letter to Thomas Bedingfield's translation of *Cardanus' Comfort*: "What doth it avail a mass of gold to be continually imprisoned in your bags and never to be employed to your use?" Such a question is well answered by the author of *The Merchant of Venice* (iii.2.108): "Therefore, thou gaudy gold, Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee." The same attitude towards gold and possessions is shown in many situations by Edward de Vere and "William Shakespeare."

Enough has been said in these few paragraphs to indicate that a new comparative study of the lives and works of the two great dramatic contemporaries of England and Spain would prove of unusual interest. Thanks to *Life* and *Time* for the reminder!

## Welbeck Abbey

Possessor of the well-known portrait of Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, is the Duke of Portland, whose ancestral estate is the famous Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire. The fact that the portrait, painted when the earl was twenty-five years of age, shows features common to the so-called Shakespeare portraits (unmasked by Mr. Charles Wisner Barrell), gives it particular importance and even the place where it now hangs seems to have a peculiar interest.

Welbeck Abbey, however, has an interest of its own, for it was once, as its name indicates, an important monastery, one of those disestablished by Henry VIII. For various reasons, the monks had made a labyrinth of cloisters beneath the monastery, and as the surface buildings fell to ruin, the buried cloisters were almost forgotten.

When the fifth Duke of Portland inherited the Bentinck family estates in 1854, his curiosity regarding the old cloisters sent him exploring underground in every direction. His discoveries gave him a new enthusiasm which he pursued with much secrecy. He engaged many workmen to repair the ancient rooms and halls, and as he observed with satisfaction the result of his plans and expenditures, his ideas grew apace and he began designing new

and larger rooms, some with elaborate decorations. One of these rooms, begun as a riding school 400 feet long, 120 feet wide, and 60 feet high, and lighted by 4,000 gas-jets, was later changed to a ballroom with many chandeliers and mirrors. Tunnels, one of them wide enough for a two-way carriage drive, radiated in every direction. Along these passage-ways were many rooms, large and small, dainty shades of pink being the prevailing color in them. The eccentric Duke did not entertain his friends in this enormous underground palace. Only his workmen were familiar with it. What his intentions were regarding this remarkable project will never be known. He died in 1879 and the title to the estates passed to a distant cousin.

The present Duke of Portland has found a real use for the extensive subterranean labyrinth. He has loaned it to the nation as an air-raid shelter.

*Briefly summarized from an article in the American Weekly.*

## Horse and Rider

In 1935, Professor Caroline F. E. Spurgeon published a book called *Shakespeare's Imagery*, the result of seven or eight years of collecting, sorting, and classifying the images to be found in the plays of Shakespeare and comparing them with images from a number of plays by his contemporaries.

In this entertaining book (p. 108), Miss Spurgeon says, "Shakespeare's love of the horse and of riding must not pass unnoticed. Here again he differs from his contemporaries, who, although they draw images from horses and riding, show none of the tender intimate knowledge of the horse and its feelings, or of the close sympathy between horse and rider which Shakespeare does. . . . No one of his contemporaries could have written the carriers' talk in the Rochester inn yard, with their complaints about the bad quality of Cut's food, and their thought of softening and padding her saddle, to make it more comfortable for the 'poor jade . . . wrung in the withers out of all cess.' Shakespeare thinks of the tired horse and its uncomplaining endurance, 'though patience be a tired mare, yet she will plod,' and he alone, of all writers of his time . . . seems aware of the cruelty and folly of undue use of the spur."

In writing of the images of soaring flight which she finds in *Henry V*, Miss Spurgeon extends the thought to include the horse. "The little scene of the Dauphin with his spirited horse adds to this feeling of strong and soaring motion, and coming where it does, just before the description of the 'poor con-

demned English,' sitting by their camp-fires, patient and sad, lean and pale as ghosts, it points the contrast vividly between them and the 'over-lusty' French. The Dauphin's horse bounds from the earth like a tennis ball ('as if his entrails were hairs'), he is 'le cheval volant, the Pegasus,' 'he trots the air,' 'the earth sings when he touches it,' 'he is pure air and fire,' and 'when I bestride him,' declares his master proudly, 'I soar, I am a hawk.' And the next minute we are with 'Harry in the night,' 'walking from watch to watch, from tent to tent,' cheering his war-worn soldiers."

The sixteenth Earl of Oxford was an enthusiastic sportsman and various stories are told of his prowess in the hunting field. It was natural that he should teach his young son his own accomplishments of riding, shooting, and hawking. In 1562 the sixteenth Earl died, and, following the funeral in Essex, the twelve-year-old successor to the title rode into London "with seven score horse all in black"; so long a ride for a child argues that he was already an experienced horseman. It is plain that he continued the sports he had learned under his father's tutelage, as much as his studies permitted, and his chief outdoor recreation seems to have been riding. This is indicated by the following extracts from one quarter's accounts, while he was a ward living at Cecil House: "For fine black [cloth] for a cape and a riding cloak"; "for one doublet of cambric, one of fine canvas, and one of black satin; and the furniture of a riding cloak"; "for collars and girths for my Lord's horse"; "for the charges of keeping in the stable [at Cecil House] and shoeing of four geldings for my Lord's service."

In 1570, after many entreaties, Lord Oxford was permitted to join the Earl of Sussex, who was engaged in subduing the rebellion in the North, and there, of course, good horsemanship was invaluable. The following year, he took part in a three-day tournament at "tilt, tourney, and barriers," receiving from Her Majesty a tablet of diamonds as a prize for his successful participation. An observer says he performed this challenge "far above expectation of the world, and not much inferior to the other three challengers," who were veterans at the game. "There is no man of life and agility in every respect in the Court but the Earl of Oxford."

About this time Giles Fletcher paid him a tribute in Latin verse, thus translated by B. M. Ward: "But if at any time with fiery energy he should call up a mimicry of war, he controls his foaming steed with a light rein, and armed with a long spear rides to the encounter. Fearlessly he settles himself in the

saddle, gracefully bending his body this way and that. Now he circles round; now with spurred heel he rouses his charger. The gallant animal with fiery energy collects himself together, and flying quicker than the wind beats the ground with his hoofs, and again is pulled up short as the reins control him. Bravo, valiant youth! 'Tis thus that martial spirits pass through their apprenticeship in war. . . . The country sees in thee both a leader preëminent in war, and a skillful man-at-arms. Thy valor puts forth leaves, and begins to bear early fruit, and glory already ripens in thy earliest deeds."

Lord Oxford won a prize in another famous tournament ten years later, showing that he had kept up his interest in horsemanship through the intervening years. When he was in Paris in 1575, just beginning his sixteen months of travel, he sent his wife two horses, then among the choicest of gifts. On March 15, 1584-5, Sturmius, the great leader of Protestant thought in Europe, urged Elizabeth to send "some faithful and zealous personage such as the Earl of Oxford, the Earl of Leicester, or Philip Sidney" in command of an expedition into the Low Countries, owing to the low state of Dutch defence against Spain. A few months later the Earl of Oxford was sent in command of the Horse, the appointment showing recognition of his knowledge of horsemanship and the application he had made of it under war conditions while he was with Sussex in the campaign in the North.

It was only such a man who could make nearly three hundred references to horses in the Shakespeare plays, always with understanding, often with affection. It was only such a man who could "witch the world with noble horsemanship" (*I Henry IV*, iv.1.110), as we know from Giles Fletcher was true of the Earl of Oxford.

Eva Turner Clark

## Historical Manuscripts

The following is quoted from a recent issue of *The Times Literary Supplement* (London): "The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, in conjunction with the British Records Association and the Committee of the National Buildings Record, is making efforts to collect information concerning war damage to manuscripts of historical value, and the steps taken to prevent it. Inquiries made early this year of certain towns known to have suffered heavily from air raids produced on the whole a reassuring response, only a few cases of actual damage to manuscripts having so far been reported."

## The Painted Theatres

Wide currency should be given the facts set forth by Mrs. Clark in her article, *Elizabethan Stage Scenery*, in the October issue of the *NEWS-LETTER*.

One of the inexcusable blunders which ill-equipped "experts" in English dramatic history have forced generations of gullible students to accept is the assumption that "scenery was almost wholly absent" in the presentation of Elizabethan plays.

Not only do the official records of the Revels Office prove the contrary, as Mrs. Clark shows, but contemporary writers, such as Edmund Spenser, Thomas Nash, Sir George Buc, John Chamberlain and others give us first-hand comments on the luxurious settings in which the British populace was wont to see its drama produced.

In his "Teares of the Muses" (published 1591), Spenser laments the temporary closing of "the painted Theatres" designed to

"fill with pleasure

The listeners eyes and eares with melodie."

During the following year, Nash wrote a spirited defense of plays and players in his *Pierce Penilesse*, one of his most striking statements being:

" . . . our Sceane is more statelye furnisht than ever it was in the time of *Roscious*, our representations honourable, and full of gallant resolution. . . ."

The fact that Nash claims greater elegance for the mounting of such works as *Henry the Fifth* and *I Henry the Sixth* (both of which he describes) in the year 1592 than the Imperial Romans could match at the period of their greatest prosperity, speaks volumes.

If our orthodox "experts" would spend more time studying the original Elizabethan records and less time copying one another's conjectural blunders, the English-speaking peoples generally would have a truer understanding and appreciation of the golden age of our drama.

C. W. B.

## Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Shakespeare Fellowship, American Branch, was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. James Stewart Cushman, 815 Fifth Avenue, New York, on Saturday, November 29th, at four o'clock. An account of the proceedings will be published in the next issue of the *NEWS-LETTER*.