

News-Letter

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— AMERICAN BRANCH —

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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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(Continued from the December issue of the NEWS-LETTER)

There is a touchstone available for this type of comparative analysis. It is made up of those plays and poems that are considered most intimately autobiographical by competent critics and fellow-poets of unquestioned genius who have studied Shakespeare intensively.

Hamlet, the best-known drama in the language, will probably suggest itself to most readers at this juncture, though its full-bodied characterizations and richly patterned background of scholarship, mysticism, psychiatry and Court intrigue are so foreign to the recorded trivialities of the Stratford native's life that any attempt to reconcile them on realistically autobiographical grounds becomes absurd. It is quite impossible to imagine any Elizabethan poet with the intellect and outlook of the Prince of Denmark pursuing small-town debtors with venomous persistency, hoarding malt to secure advantage of famine prices, and allowing a daughter of his own blood to grow up unable to write her own name—in a day when the education of women enjoyed royal sanction, and while "Shakespeare" himself was thundering against ignorance as "the curse of God."

But when we study the career of Edward de Vere, the scholarly poet-peer, in direct comparison with the action and characterizations of *Hamlet*, we find the drama imitating life at every angle. In fact, the mirror that the unhappy Prince holds up to nature reflects so sharply the images of the Earl of Oxford and several of his close associates that it occasions no surprise to find so many of *Hamlet's* characteristic speeches anticipated in the personal letters of Oxford, while his father-in-law, Lord Burghley, provides the living model for Polonius, complete to

the last physical defect. The maxims that Polonius recites for the guidance of his son Laertes upon the latter's departure for the University of Paris are plainly a blank verse paraphrase of the maxims that Burghley prepared for his son Robert Cecil when that young man left England—also to enter the University of Paris. These parallels and many others of equally telling import will be taken up and discussed at length elsewhere.

The identification of Burghley's character with that of Polonius was made long before the Oxford theory of the authorship of *Hamlet* and the other works had been evolved. It is mentioned here merely to punctuate our line of argument and to symbolize the obstacles of negation that beset the Stratfordian student of "Shakespeare's" creative personality in contrast with the wealth of corroborative evidence that greets the well-informed Oxfordian seeking autobiographical elements in the creative structure of the plays and poems.

My own studies in this field prove that Lord Oxford's personal documentation speaks with most miraculous organ when compared to "Shakespeare's" *Sonnets*, those "divine and dangerous poems"—in the apt phraseology of Algernon Charles Swinburne—that have intrigued, inspired and frequently baffled the greatest minds in English literature since they were first published surreptitiously by the notorious literary pirate, Thomas Thorpe.*

*See Sir Sidney Lee's *Life of Shakespeare*, Appendix V, for full account of the "underhand brokery" in the publishing field of Thomas Thorpe and William Hall, the latter being identified as the mysterious "Mr. W. H. all," an associate of Thorpe, who secured or "begot" the manuscript of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* for unauthorized publication.

Such Shakespearean authorities as Professor Edward Dowden, Professor Sir Walter Raleigh, and Professor A. C. Bradley are agreed that the *Sonnets* are autobiographical.

"I believe," says the conservative Dowden, "that Shakespeare's *Sonnets* express his own feelings in his own person."

"To say that they do not 'express his own feelings in his own person,'" remarks Raleigh, "is as much as to say that they are not sincere. And every lover of poetry who has once read the *Sonnets* knows this to be untrue. It is not chiefly their skill that takes us captive, but the intensity of their quiet personal appeal. . . . These are not self-contained poems, like Daniel's sonnet on Sleep or Sidney's sonnet on the Moon; they are a commentary on certain implied events. If the events had no existence, and the sonnets are semi-dramatic poems, it is surely essential to good drama that the situation should be made clear. Moreover, the sonnet-form was used by the Elizabethans, who followed their master Petrarch, exclusively for poems expressive of personal feeling, not for vague dramatic fantasies. The greater poets—Sidney, Spenser, Drayton—reflect in their sonnets the events of their own history. Shakespeare's sonnets are more intense than these; and less explicable, if they be deprived of all background and occasion in fact. Like Sidney, Shakespeare is always protesting against the misreading which would reduce his passion to a mere convention. He desires to be remembered not for his style, but for his love. . . . The situations shadowed are unlike the conventional situations described by the tribe of sonneteers, as the hard-fought issues of a law-court are unlike the formal debates of the Courts of Love. Some of them are strange, wild, and sordid in their nature; themes not chosen by poetry, but choosing it, and making their mark on it by the force of their reality. All poetry, all art, observes certain conventions of form. These poems are sonnets. There is nothing else conventional about them, except their critics.

"The facts which underlie them, and give to some of them their only possible meaning, cannot, save in the vaguest and most conjectural fashion, be reconstructed. The names of the persons involved are lost. Two of these persons are described, a beautiful wanton youth, and a dark faithless woman. . . . The story that unrolls itself, too dimly to be called dramatic, too painfully to be mistaken for the pastime of a courtly fancy, is a story of passionate friendship, of vows broken and renewed, of love that triumphs over unkindness, of lust that is a short madness and turns to bitterness and remorse. The voice

of the poet is heard in many tones, now pleading with his friend, now railing against the woman that has ensnared him; here a hymn of passionate devotion, there a veil of strained innuendo—clear-sighted, indecent, cynical. The discourse passes, by natural transitions, from the intimacies of love and friendship to those other feelings, not less intimate and sincere, but now grown pale by contrast with the elemental human passions: the poet's hope of fame, or his sense of degradation in ministering to the idle pleasures of the multitude. The workings of his mind are laid bare, and reveal him, in no surprising light, as subject to passion, removed by the width of the spheres from those prudent and self-contained natures whom he has sketched with grave irony. . . .

"The poems of Shakespeare in no way modify that conception of his character and temper which a discerning reader might gather from the evidence of the plays. But they let us hear his voice more directly; without the intervening barrier of the drama, and they furnish us with some broken hints of the stormy trials and passions which helped him to his knowledge of the human heart, and enriched his plays with the fruits of personal experience. . . .

"In the *Sonnets* Shakespeare gave expression to his own thoughts and feelings, shaping the stuff of his experience by the laws of poetic art, to the ends of poetic beauty."

Dr. A. C. Bradley, whose *Shakespearean Tragedy* is generally recognized as a classic of modern criticism, agrees with Sir Walter Raleigh that the *Sonnets* are largely autobiographical.

The opinions of these distinguished critics are echoed by many of Shakespeare's spiritual heirs, such as Shelley, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Swinburne.

Scorn not the sonnet (says Wordsworth)
 with this same key
 Shakespeare unlocked his heart.

Swinburne, impressed by the poet's frequent expressions of passionate but secretive devotion to one of the handsome young men described in the *Sonnets*, was of the opinion that the Bard was a homosexual type. As a protagonist of strange sins himself, Swinburne rather gloried in this belief. But the idea seems to have been violently repugnant to the moralistically masculine Browning, who wanted the whole business hushed up forthwith:

"With this same key

Shakespeare unlocked his heart" once more!

Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he!

"No whit the less like Shakespeare," Swinburne commented tartly, "but undoubtedly the less like Robert Browning."

The autobiographical motif of the sonnets, plus the seemingly implied sex aberrations of the Bard, have intrigued other writers too numerous to list.

Samuel Butler's *Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered* develops both of these arguments and the author of *The Way of All Flesh* leaves his readers with the impression that the poet was, "though only for a short time," more the decadent Greek than the normal Englishman.

Oscar Wilde also exploited the same sensational theory in his story, *The Portrait of Mr. W. H.*, in which he suggests a rather unholy alliance between Shakespeare and a mythical female impersonator of the Bard's stage heroines, one "Willie Hughes." No actor of that name or even of those initials can be identified among the thespians of the period, however. The homosexual theory, as a matter of fact, has never been anything more than a theory, lacking corroborative documentation so completely that it would not be mentioned here were it not for the fact that an aura of mysterious scandal hangs about the *Sonnets* and seems to have grown with the passing generations. Proponents of the Baconian theory of authorship have boldly made the most of the situation, as their candidate is definitely known from contemporary sources to have been given to unnatural sex practices. Bacon's cousin, Sir Symonds D'Ewes, historian of the British Parliament, speaks very plainly of the matter in his autobiography and says that he and other acquaintances of Sir Francis were surprised at the time of the Lord Chancellor's removal from office that Bacon was not put upon his trial "for his darling sin."

On the other hand, John Aubrey in one of his notebooks, compiled during the 17th century, makes a certain Mr. Lacey, one of the oldest actors of the period, his authority for the information that William Shakespeare of Stratford "was not a company keeper" and "could not be debauched."

This ticklish matter of the autobiographical elements in the *Sonnets* is one that must be either accepted fearlessly and pursued to a demonstrably reasonable conclusion, or else ignored completely as the puritanical Browning and his followers would have it. No half-way measures will answer the vivid challenge of these provocative poems. Many orthodox Stratfordian biographers of the present century evade the issue by adopting the extreme point of view of Sir Sidney Lee who blandly assumes that the *Sonnets* are *per se* mere flights of fancy, exercises in poetic technique. This assumption is generally approved by the brotherhood whose professional standing depends upon the maintenance of an in-

transigent Stratfordian front, because of the painful paucity of any personal documentation — as already pointed out—which can be shown to associate their shadowy hero with the personalities, relationships and events which the *Sonnets* adumbrate. The begging, in this wise, of a question so vital to a realistic understanding of the dynamics of the foremost creative personality of the Anglo-Saxon race, long ago seemed to me a weak avoidance of responsibility.

After reading Looney's exposition of the *Sonnets* in comparison with the documented life-facts of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford—"most excellent" of the Elizabethan Court poets whose mature literary "doings" were not to be "found out and made public with the rest"—it became plain that at last a personality had been discovered to match the vivid imagery of the verses that had so deeply impressed creative critics such as Dowden, Raleigh and Bradley, and geniuses such as Wordsworth, Shelley, Swinburne, Butler and Wilde.

Looney proves that the character, reputed talents and recorded idiosyncrasies—even some the surviving poems—of Lord Oxford equip him more convincingly for the mysterious role of author of the *Sonnets* than any other candidate for that high office that has been put forward. Where Shakespeare of Stratford is purely conjectural and where Sir Francis Bacon lacks verisimilitude except upon grounds of the most repulsive connotation, Oxford's credentials appear genuine and reasonable. Looney does not, however, develop the autobiographical leads of the *Sonnets* beyond a general surface outline. He shows the reflection of the Earl's personal image in the poems clearly enough—the nobleman who has lost both property and social prestige in the pursuit of art, the scholar carrying the handicaps of intense physical desire, loyalty to misplaced affection and a fatally pathetic tendency to encourage trespasses by over-readiness to forgive, if not to forget.

The point of view throughout, as Looney makes plain, is that of an aristocrat, steeped in the lore and usage of feudalism, a mind entirely out of sympathy with the materialistic trend of Elizabethan politics and commercial life, one inclined to pursue defaulting debtors with an open invitation to repeat their offenses in the name of love and *noblesse oblige*. Personal pride struggles with the weaknesses of the flesh and is vanquished. "High birth" and "true desert" are forced to adopt the role of "beggar born," and "art is tongue-tied by authority." All of these circumstances are known to have governed Oxford's career.

But at the time "*Shakespeare Identified*" was written, exigencies of space and lack of time from the main task in hand did not allow Looney to pursue research into the nooks and crannies of Lord Oxford's hidden career for the express purpose of matching the Earl's documentation with the detailed story—or *personal diary*, as other writers suggest—which is unfolded in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*.

That the poems issued surreptitiously by Thomas Thorpe in 1609 were considered a sort of personal testament seems clear from the first contemporary reference to them. Francis Meres, whose *Palladis Tamia* (1598) contains the initial listing of several of the Bard's plays, also mentions approvingly "*Shakespeare . . . his sugred Sonnets among his private friends.*"

This is positive evidence that the poems were not meant for public sale and could be fully understood only by those persons who enjoyed the writer's intimacy.

The corollary of biographical interest would seem to follow with geometrical precision.

And the problem before the investigator, seeking a solution of the "divine and dangerous" enigma posed by the lyrics also appears to be plainly in the realm of personal research. Find the acknowledged Elizabethan poetical genius whose personality, proven activities and private associations match throughout with those described in the pirated poems, and the man who represented the living entity of the hyphenated "Shake-speare" of Thorpe's title-page of 1609 may at last emerge into the light of day—provided it can be definitely shown that this furtive Lord of language was of an age to have completed those "sugred Sonnets" which Meres mentions in 1598.

Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, born April 12, 1550, reported dead on June 24, 1604, meets these requirements, as J. Thomas Looney suggests in "*Shakespeare Identified*. But the Looney evidence, covering this particularly vital phase of the Shakespearean mystery, is neither extensive enough nor sufficiently categorical to be conclusive, as previously stated.

With the solution of the personal story behind the *Sonnets* as a humbly "hoped-for" ideal objective and a lively curiosity to learn more about the private life of the literary nobleman with the great contemporary reputation, whose "doings" could not be "found out," I decided to take up the problem where Mr. Looney had been obliged to leave it.

This was the beginning of a seven years' search which has led through the dusty files of the Public Record Office and Somerset House, various Courts

of Chancery, Queen's Bench, Prerogative and Request, among the yellowing pages of many thousands of volumes of genealogical records, State Papers, personal letters, diaries, armorial devices, biographic commentaries, histories—and finally to privately-owned collections of Elizabethan and Jacobean portraits.

As a result of this gradgrindish pursuit of fact, I acquired much gray hair, permanent eyestrain and a bad disposition, but at the same time I may say without false modesty that I have emerged from the long continued paper-chase with documentation that appears to play a vital part in the permanent identification of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, with the creative life of "Mr. William Shakespeare."

Complete corroboration of Mr. Looney's pioneer discoveries is now available. And the secrets which the author of the *Sonnets* set down in his amazing diary more than three centuries ago can be interpreted in realistic detail. The creation of many of the poems can even be accurately dated.

Let us now briefly consider the *Sonnets* themselves for purposes of orientation, before exploring at leisure their vivid landscapes of the soul and the strange and tragic personalities that once dominated them in real life. Our documentation now guarantees us this long-withheld right. For we shall travel under the recovered passport of a forgotten genius, the ruined and socially-suspect literary peer whose "doings" could not in his own day "be found out and made public with the rest" of his fellow-poets, though he is admitted to have surpassed them all "in the rare devices of poetry."

Owing to the fact that the *Sonnets* were pirated, it is logical to assume that the order in which they were published by the unscrupulous Thorpe is not the order in which they were written.

The placement of the poems throughout the book may be taken as Thorpe's arbitrary arrangement. Much has been said by various editors about the "sequences," the general assumption being that the 154 sonnets are addressed in the main to two people. One of these, it is generally held, is "a noble and beauteous youth, beloved for his own sweet sake, not for his exalted rank;" the other "a dark-eyed Circe, the reverse of beautiful, bewitching men by the magic of her eyes, a dark-haired, pale-cheeked siren, drawing her victims despite their knowledge of her wiles; a very Cleopatra in strength, intellect and hedonism." These two, with the poet himself—it is usually stated—comprise the cast of characters of the secret drama so absorbingly and at the same time so enigmatically developed. Close, realistic, personal descriptions appear throughout, some

highly colored, some savagely unflattering. Names are obviously symbolized and played upon without being mentioned. And the writer does not spare his metaphorical scalpel in laying bare the most intimate reactions of his own mind and body. As studies in applied psycho-analysis, the *Sonnets* stand almost alone because of their subject matter as well as their peerless art. The Freudian dream world is given actuality.

Like many familiar wonders, however, these poems have not been fully understood because they have been taken for granted. The conventional pattern of orthodox commentators has prevented too many readers from making clear-sighted appraisals of their own, taking into account the admitted biographical elements of the verses and the surreptitious manner in which they were made public.

One does not have to believe in any theory of authorship, as a matter of fact, to see that *more than three persons*—including the author himself—are described and openly addressed here.

Two handsome young men are clearly discernible. One of these is younger than the other, a noble of impeccable birth, brilliant and given to impulsive generosity, but essentially undependable. The poet has first met him some three years before he has selected him as a subject for adulation. This is the young Adonis upon whom "Shake-speare" urges so eloquently and persuasively the desirability of marriage and self-reproduction—that "so fair a house" may not "fall to decay." But Adonis loves himself and his own freedom best. He does not heed the poet's pleas to settle down and

"Make thee another self, for love of me."

Instead, he meets and seduces or is seduced by the Bard's dark-eyed and insatiable mistress. The plans for a normal and respectable relationship between the older and the younger man, based on a marriage in which the poet has a vital interest, go up in sordid smoke and the two are for a period estranged. But the poet forgives the impulsive boy's transgressions, lays the blame on the dark lady—

"The bay where all men ride—"

and a friendship based on other mutual interests is continued with occasional breaks involving criticism, recrimination and philosophical forbearance. In the end, both men participate in an overwhelming tragedy. But it is the poet who holds the dominating position here and the power of "a tyrant" in estimating the "hell of time" through which his whilom friend has passed. Exercising the spirit of *noblesse oblige*, he decides that their mutual sufferings cancel one another and "ransom" is in order rather than revenge.

Several years, evidently three or four times the length of the "three beauteous springs" and "three winters cold" mentioned in sonnet 104, cover the period of this friendship between the egotistical lordling and the aging poet.

The other young man, whose "face fills up the lines" of at least forty-two of the poems, is of a different stamp, "fair, kind and true," dependable and heroic, but the victim of a "crooked eclipse" that fights against his "wondrous excellence." He is specifically described over and over again as bearing the closest possible relationship to the writer of the *Sonnets*, both physically and spiritually,

For all that beauty that doth cover thee
Is but the seemly raiment of my heart,
Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me:
How can I then be elder than thou art?
O, therefore, love, be of thyself so wary
As I, not for myself, but for thee will;
Bearing thy heart, which I will keep so chary
As tender nurse her babe from faring ill.

(Sonnet 22)

Neither high-flown flattery nor pleas for sympathy and understanding of the type lavished upon the temperamental noble are addressed to this youth. He himself gives love and understanding, whole-souled admiration for the poet and his works in unstinted—even embarrassing—measure. The older man warns him against the dangers of such enthusiasm bringing disgrace upon an otherwise promising career. For although the two bear a "single name" and share an "undivided love"—the poet's mistress being obviously the boy's mother—there is between them a "separable spite." *Their relationship must be kept secret to avoid public scandal.*

*Let me confess that we two must be twain,
Although our undivided loves are one:
So shall those blots that do with me remain,
Without thy help, by me be borne alone.
In our two loves there is but one respect,
Though in our lives a separable spite,
Which though it alter not love's sole effect,
Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love's delight.*

I MAY NOT EVERMORE ACKNOWLEDGE
THEE,
LEST MY BEWAILED GUILT SHOULD DO
THEE SHAME,

*Nor thou with public kindness honour me,
Unless thou take that honour from thy name:*

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NEWS-LETTER
 THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP
 AMERICAN BRANCH

VOLUME III FEBRUARY, 1942 No. 2

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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.

War and the Fellowship

When the Axis partners forced England into war in 1939, the Shakespeare Fellowship quickly realized the impossibility of continuing activities in that country. American members of the organization decided that the time had come to form a branch in this country in order to try to keep alive the interest in the problem of Shakespeare authorship so ably begun in England, and the Shakespeare Fellowship, American Branch, was promptly organized, with assurances of coöperation and the good wishes of the parent society.

In order to keep members of the Fellowship in both countries informed as to the progress being made in the field, it was decided to issue periodically a NEWS-LETTER, as had been done in England. Many good articles have since appeared in the pages of our NEWS-LETTER, despite the difficulty of re-

search in these serious times, with England's repositories closed and most of our members too concerned with personal affairs to undertake research, if it were possible.

The entrance of the United States into the war, brought into sharp focus by the dastardly attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, has forced new and greater problems on our Government. In a very small way, the Shakespeare Fellowship—and each and every member—shares in the problems of the difficult days ahead. We shall all do our part, in whatever way necessary, to win through to victory, for only such an outcome can bring peace and freedom to a distraught world.

In the meantime, whatever contribution can be made to our cultural life should be continued. The experience of England, apparently completely preoccupied with war duties, gives us a pattern to follow. One of her librarians recently asserted that the nation is reading today as it has never troubled to read before, and with much more discrimination.

English members of the Fellowship have assured us of the American Branch that each issue of our NEWS-LETTER has given them a short respite from their troubles and anxieties. With rapidly increasing troubles and anxieties among American members, and in spite of them, we believe the same welcome will be accorded our small periodical here. Unless there come restrictions over which we can have no control, we shall try to carry on!

Annual Meeting

The Shakespeare Fellowship, American Branch, held its Annual Meeting on Saturday, November 29th, at four o'clock, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. James Stewart Cushman, 815 Fifth Avenue, New York. Although many of our members live in other places than New York, the meeting was well attended, there being about forty present, including all the officers, President Bénézet having come from Hanover, New Hampshire, in order to preside. A distinguished visitor was Miss Ada Comstock, President of Radcliffe College, Cambridge.

Mr. Cushman opened the proceedings with a speech of welcome to the Fellowship and then turned the meeting over to the President. Reports were given by Mr. Barrell, as Secretary-Treasurer, and by Mrs. Clark, on the progress of the NEWS-LETTER. The President then called for nominations of officers for the coming year. On a motion from the house, which was seconded, that the incumbents be continued in office, the motion was put to the

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Bacon versus Oxford Still the Great Debate

In two previous issues of the NEWS-LETTER, there have been articles dealing with the memorable debate over the authorship of the Shakespeare works which ran through three volumes of the *Arena* magazine in the early 90's.

Some of our readers may feel that enough space has been given to this controversy, but I cannot refrain from repeating some of the stronger arguments advanced in favor of Baron Verulam, because, to me, they apply to Oxford with even greater force.

Annual Meeting

(Continued from page 18)

members and the previous year's officers were unanimously reelected.

The business of the day having been expeditiously concluded, an interesting program of addresses on Shakespeare followed. Among the speakers were Professor Bénézet, Mr. Gelett Burgess, Mr. Charles Wisner Barrell, and Mr. Cushman.

Upon the adjournment of the meeting, Mr. Cushman announced that Mrs. Cushman had provided tea for those present and invited them to go into the dining room. This very pleasant feature of the afternoon gave members an opportunity to become better acquainted and to exchange opinions upon puzzling questions which often come into their minds on details connected with the problem of Shakespeare authorship.

At the same time, those present had the privilege of examining a unique book recently acquired by Mrs. Cushman. This was "Queen Victoria's Jubilee Book," which was prepared by the Duchess of Kent, mother of the present Dowager Queen Mary of England, as a present for Queen Victoria at the time of her Golden Jubilee, when so many other European royalties were present in England. The book was signed by all of them, the Royal Family of England, Kaiser Wilhelm, the Shah of Persia, many Indian Princes, the Comte de Paris, the Duc d'Orleans, and others. The only one of the present generation to have signed is Edward, Duke of Windsor, who signed it when he was in New York recently. The book was donated to be sold at the recent ball given for the Bundles for Britain and the British Naval Ball combined. Mrs. Cushman, who had bought a couple of books of "chances," was fortunate to have the lucky number.

Mr. Reed, the eminent Baconian, in explaining why a nobleman, although he might sponsor a company of players to perform for the benefit of his guests and family, in his own castle, would shun any contact with city playhouses, quotes the Lord Mayor of London, in 1597, as denouncing the theatre as a "place for vagrants, thieves, horse stealers, contrivers of treason, and other idle and dangerous persons." He reminds us of Taine's description of the stage in 1595 as "degraded by the brutalities of the crowd, who not seldom would stone the actors,"—"there were six-penny, two-penny, even penny seats" . . . "they . . . howl, and now and then resort to their fists." Hardly a company for a fastidious nobleman to enjoy.

One is reminded of the Stratford "authority," who, hard put to it to explain the entry in Henslowe's diary: "9 of June 1594 Rd at Hamlet . . . viii s" pounces on the eight shillings and declares, "That settles it. The play could not have been Shakespeare's Hamlet, for the house would have been packed," with SRO signs in evidence!

Next, Mr. Reed gives nineteen passages from Shakespeare with parallel quotations from the works of Bacon; intriguing, but not final. For example:

SHAKESPEARE

As the mournful crocodile
With sorrow snares relenting passengers.
Nothing almost sees miracles
But misery.

The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left.

BACON

It is the wisdom of crocodiles, that shed tears when they would devour.

Certainly, if miracles be the control over nature, they appear most in adversity.

The memory of King Richard lay, like lees, in the bottom of men's hearts.

Mr. Reed tells the story, found in Professor Gilbert Slater's *Seven Shakespeares*, of the portfolio containing some of Bacon's compositions, on the title-page of which is written "Rychard the II" and "Rychard the III," although there is no trace of the plays within.

He points out that there is not one mention of Stratford, nor of the Avon, anywhere in the plays, while there are several references to St. Albans, Bacon's home, and the plays are full of descriptions of Kent, "the home of his father's ancestry." Of course, Oxfordians remember that, as a royal ward, Oxford spent his youth in the homes of Lord Burghley, Master of the Court of Royal Wards; besides Cecil House in the Strand, where they lived when in London, there was the marvellous country

estate, Theobalds, in Hertfordshire, very near St. Albans, where a great deal of time was spent, and while at Theobalds, the young ward would have come to know St. Albans quite as well as Bacon. So far as Kent is concerned, a long letter (*S. P. Dom.*, xci.36) survives which complains that, on a road crossing Gad's Hill, between Gravesend and Rochester, Lord Burghley's men, perhaps on business connected with the Exchequer, were waylaid by three of "my L. of Oxenfordes men." What really happened is not clear, but the stir created by this incident would have been of high moment to their master, and it appears to have given the basis for the Gad's Hill escapade in *1 Henry IV* (I.ii.). Besides his extensive estates in Essex, Lord Oxford had inherited properties in Kent, Hertfordshire, and several other English counties, suggesting some familiarity with them.

Mr. Reed calls attention to the fact that Bacon's "appointment to high office" in 1604 marks the sudden termination of "the production of the Shakespeare plays, for several years at least." Here again he argues for the Oxford case, for the death of the Earl, in 1604, did mark this termination, the only plays appearing after this date showing every indication of having been finished off by an inferior hand.

Next, the reader's attention is called to the fact that Ben Jonson—he who, in 1623, declared that he so profoundly admired the "sweet swan of Avon"—in 1619 made out a list of the great minds of his own and the preceding century, and completely forgot to include the man whom, later, he hails as not of an age, but as of all time. Something very fishy here. Mr. Reed reminds us that, from Richard II to Edward VI, there is only one English king whose reign is not included in a Shakespeare play. The exception is Henry VII, whose history has been written, in prose, by Bacon.

Then we are reminded of the strange circumstances under which *Troilus and Cressida* was published. The preface boasts that the play had never been printed before nor played, and confesses that this manuscript had been filched from some "grand possessors" who own the other writings of this author. Three inferences, says Mr. Reed, are obvious: 1) that the author was indifferent to pecuniary reward, 2) that he was not an actor, and 3) that he was of high social rank. But Mr. Reed neglects to remind us that the pirates who stole *Troilus and Cressida* warn the English public that the manuscripts of this writer are soon going to be "rare and precious." Oxford is dead and no more of his writings are going to be available unless they can be stolen, as this one was, from the "grand possessors;"

but Shakspeare is very much alive, and there is no reason why he should not turn out another score of masterpieces before he dies, according to tradition, as the result of a spree with Drayton and Ben Jonson. But Bacon was to live seventeen years, during which the only contributions to the plays which appear are inferior additions to dramas left uncompleted by the genius, plus *The Tempest*, a play different, in a dozen ways, from the others.

Mr. Reed's next argument deals with the fact that most of the plays had first appeared anonymously, and that fourteen other plays, now pronounced spurious, were given to the world as Shakespeare's. "Geese and eagles coming helter-skelter from a single nest," at a time when Coke, the law officer of the government, declared poetasters and playwrights to be "fit subjects for the grand jury as vagrants." Next, Mr. Reed pays his respects to the First Folio and its editors. He shows that Heminge and Condell were singularly unfitted to display all the erudition shown in the dedication. For example, they use Pliny's epistle to Vespasian, not translated into English until 1635. "Not only are the thoughts of the Latin author most happily introduced, but they are amplified and fitted to the purpose with consummate literary skill." The Oxfordian will remember Dr. Rendall's work, in which he shows that Ben Jonson, hired by the "Grand Possessors," was the real author of the dedication and address to the public.

Mr. Reed says that one of the most astonishing features of the whole question is that of the great men who make the Age of Elizabeth famous, not one, except Jonson, and he only late in life, long after the author's death, has taken any notice of Shakespeare. "Imagine the inhabitants of Lilliput paying no attention to Gulliver!"

He quotes two eminent authorities: "Of his eminent countrymen, Raleigh, Spenser, Sydney, Bacon, Cecil; Coke, Walsingham, Camden, Hooker; Drake, Hobbes, Inigo Jones, Herbert of Cherbury, Laud, Pym, Hampden, Selden, Walton, and Donne may be properly reckoned as his contemporaries; and yet there is no evidence that he was personally known to any one of these men, or to any others of less note among the statesmen, scholars, soldiers, and artists of his day." Richard Grant White.

"Since the constellation of great men who appeared in Greece in the time of Pericles, there was never any such society; yet their genius failed them to find out the best head in the universe." Ralph Waldo Emerson.

This closes Mr. Reed's second paper. His third deals with possible objections to the Baconian case

which may be brought up; he tries to anticipate the arguments of the Stratfordians. He explains the anonymity, or rather pseudonymity, of the plays by quoting from a writer in the German *Allgemeine Zeitung*: "The question why Bacon, if he were the composer of the plays, did not acknowledge the authorship, is not difficult to answer. His birth, his position, and his ambition forbade him, the nephew of Lord Burghley, the future Lord Chancellor of England, to put his name on a play bill. In the interest of his family and of his career, the secret must be so strictly preserved that mere anonymity would not be sufficient." He reminds us that Sir Walter Scott kept the authorship of his Waverley Novels a secret for more than twelve years, because he deemed the writing of fiction beneath the dignity of a landed proprietor. But the German quotation applies even more strongly to the premier Earl of the kingdom, the son-in-law of Lord Burghley, and the Lord Great Chamberlain of England.

Next, Mr. Reed says that the Stratfordians will probably point out errors in the plays that so learned a man as Bacon would not have made: a Trojan quotes Aristotle, a clock strikes, and burials are spoken of in Caesar's time. He replies to this criticism by stating that the plays were written for the English stage, where there was no scenery to create the illusion of ancient times.

He quotes Goethe: "Shakespeare turns his Romans into Englishman, and he does right, for otherwise his nation would not have understood him." Incidentally, where had the Stratford actor "picked up" his knowledge of Aristotle? This is one of many touches which stamp the author as university trained.

In the next issue of the magazine, Mr. Reed takes up the matter of the "internal evidence" of the plays. First, he calls attention to Bacon's contributions to the English language, new words which he has added, most of them from the Latin, and says that only one man has surpassed him in this particular, namely, the Bard of Avon, who gave us five thousand words, "inclusive of old words with new meanings!" He notes that these words, like Bacon's, are chiefly from the Latin. "They were such as only a scholar could impose upon the king's vernacular." He quotes Hallam on Shakespeare's "scholar's instinct to keep our language true to its Latin roots," giving six examples of words used by the Bard in their distinctly classical sense.

A very significant touch comes from *Titus Andronicus*: "Knock at his study where, they say, he keeps." This is slang from Cambridge University, where students do not live, but "keep," in rooms. Bacon, Mr. Reed reminds us, was educated at Cam-

bridge, and only a Cambridge man would have used this expression. But Oxford, too, was educated at Cambridge.

Mr. Reed tells us that the noblemen who were interested in the work of Shakespeare were friends of Bacon: Southampton, Pembroke, and Montgomery, and that Bacon had no love for Lord Cobham, whose ancestor, Sir John Oldcastle, had been caricatured as the original of Falstaff; that Bacon's bitterest enemy, Sir Edward Coke, is hit in the reference, in *Twelfth Night*, to "if thou thou'st him thrice."

But Oxford was much closer to these friends of Bacon's than was Lord Verulam himself. Montgomery (later succeeded his brother as Earl of Pembroke) was his son-in-law, and the other two were both, at times, affianced to his other two daughters. As for the reference to Sir Edward Coke, it disappears when we remember that he used the expression, "I thou thee," at the trial of Raleigh, many years after the production of *Twelfth Night*.

Mr. Reed next reminds us that the plays, like the prose works of Bacon, "overflow with citations from classical literature." He says that a partial list of the ancient writers whose works have left unmistakable echoes in the plays includes the names of: Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus, Lucian, Galen, Ovid, Lucretius, Tacitus, Horace, Vergil, Plutarch, Seneca, Catullus, Livy, and Plautus, all of them "known to Bacon." He quotes two lines from *Henry VI*, Part I:

Thy promises are like Adonis' gardens,

That one day bloomed and fruitful were the next,

and tells how this reference, after puzzling commentators for three hundred years (Richard Grant White declaring that "no mention of any such gardens in the classic writings of Greece or Rome is known to scholars"), was finally discovered in Plato's *Phaedrus*, a work that had not been done into English in Shakespeare's time.

He quotes Hunter on the "ease and naturalness with which the classical allusions are introduced": "They are not purple patches sewed on a piece of plain homespun; they are inwoven in the web. . . . Shakespeare had a mind richly furnished with the mythology and history of the times of antiquity, an intimate and inwrought acquaintance, such as few profound scholars possess."

But, granting Mr. Reed's contention that it is ludicrous to say that a call-boy, prompter, and actor could have "picked up" all this wonderful familiarity with the classics around a London theatre, we recall the education given Oxford by his scholarly tutors, Arthur Golding, Sir Thomas

Smith, and the learned Dean Nowell, and contend that every argument advanced in behalf of Bacon on this point applies with even greater force to the young Earl.

Aiding the Oxford case also are Mr. Reed's arguments that "the plays, almost without exception, have their movement in the highest circles of society. The common people are kept in the background, and are referred to in terms, often bordering on contempt, that show the author to have been of a higher rank."

After quoting even prominent Stratfordians on the surprising and flawless knowledge of law shown in the plays, which, as we know, applies as well to law-student and jurist Oxford as to lawyer Bacon, Mr. Reed reminds us that two physicians, Bucknill and Chesney, have written long books on Shakespeare's knowledge of medicine. He answers the Stratfordians, who claim that their man learned this from his son-in-law, the "eminent physician," Dr. Hall, by pointing out that the latter married Susannah nineteen years after the first appearance of *Hamlet* on the stage and three years after many of the biographers have the Bard retire to his native town. Next, says Mr. Reed, the "eminent doctor" wasn't so eminent, if we are to judge by his notebook, which has survived. "Conspicuous among his remedies are powdered human skull and human fat, solutions of goose guano, frog-spawn water, and swallows' nests, straw, sticks, dirt and all."

Next, Mr. Reed calls attention to the remarkable knowledge of natural history shown by the author of the plays. He names six books that deal with Shakespeare's Ornithology, his Animal Lore, his Plant Lore, and his knowledge of insects. Only Bacon of living men could have matched this erudition, says Mr. Reed.

Speaking of Shakespeare's religion, he explains the Catholic atmosphere found in many of the plays and the author's tolerance, by the fact that the Bacons, under Mary, had been good Catholics, switching to Protestantism under her half-sister. But we recall that Oxford became a Catholic convert in Elizabeth's hey-day, and only recanted ("And purest faith unhappily forsworn"—Sonnet 66) after the discovery of the plot against the Queen in 1581 had directed suspicion toward him.

It is not easy to prove that Bacon was a skilled musician, but Mr. Reed asks where the Stratford actor learned the names of instruments which are unknown to all save professional musicians of today. He quotes Ulrici, who points out that in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Lucetta and Julia discuss singing in terms that would be used only by trained musicians. This is true: the word "descant" is

enough to prove it. Of course, we recall the words of John Farmer in dedicating his book of madrigals to Oxford, to the effect that the Earl, as an amateur, "hath overgone" most of those who have made music a profession.

Shakespeare's seamanship, the fact that he "knows his ropes" and what to do in case of a storm, and his familiarity with "the dialect of the fore-castle" is noted. Mr. Reed says that Bacon "investigated the art of navigation," and quotes Richard Grant White as saying that of all the negative facts in the Stratford man's life, none is surer than that he never went to sea. But he does not explain how investigating the art of navigation would familiarize Bacon with the dialect of the common sailors. Oxford, as we recall, expressed himself at the age of twenty-two as desirous of naval service ("to which service I bear most affection"), he crossed the North Sea and the English Channel several times, and in 1588 commanded a ship against the Spanish Armada.

Mr. Reed closes his plea by saying, for Bacon, what applies even more strongly to his cousin Oxford: "Here, then, is our Shakespeare. A man born into the highest culture of his time, the consummate flower of a long line of distinguished ancestry: of transcendent abilities, dominated by a genius for work; in originality and power of thought, in learning, in eloquence, in wit, and in marvellous insight into character, the acknowledged peer of the greatest of the human race."

He then asks why the world has been so blind, all these years, to worship at the shrine of a man "of whose life it knows, almost literally, in a mass of disgusting fiction, but one significant fact; *viz.*, that in his will, disposing of a large property, he left to the wife of his youth and the mother of his children nothing but his *second-best bed!*"

He again quotes Richard Grant White, who says that this bequest, after his wife's name had been omitted from the original will, would indicate that his attention had been called to the omission and that, for the sake of decency, he would not have the mother of his children go unnoticed. "The lack of any other bequest than the furniture of her chamber is of small moment in comparison with the slight shown by that interlineation. A second-best bed might be passed over; but what can be done with second-best thoughts?"

Mr. Reed closes by saying that the Sonnets will lose none of their sweetness, and the plays none of their magnificence, by a change in the ascription of authorship, but that the world will gain much in noting that grand effects can come only from corresponding causes. Such works as these can only be

produced by years of reading and research and reflection and high-born experiences. *Ex nihilo, nihil fit*.

Louis P. Bénézet

In a subsequent number of the NEWS-LETTER, I hope to analyze the reply of the 1893 Stratfordians to these Baconian arguments.

L. P. B.

Shake-speare's Own Secret Drama

(Continued from page 17)

But do not so; I love thee in such sort,
AS THOU BEING MINE, MINE IS THY
GOOD REPORT.

(Sonnet 36)

It would be difficult to find clearer expression of a heart-broken father's renunciation of the open pride of parenthood in a charming and worthy son born out of wedlock! Considering the conventions of the age, it is plain that the writer of these lines was primarily interested in dissociating the scandals and mistakes of his own career, as far as possible, from the boy's future. He himself is an admitted failure:

Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminat.

Who can make these secrets of the confessional fit the optimistic claptrap of the Stratford man's official biographies?

*O, how thy worth with manners may I sing,
When thou art all the better part of me?*

WHAT CAN MINE OWN PRAISE TO MINE
OWN SELF BRING?

AND WHAT IS'T BUT MINE OWN WHEN I
PRAISE THEE?

Even for this let us divided live,

AND OUR DEAR LOVE LOSE NAME OF
SINGLE ONE,

That by this separation I may give

That due to thee which thou deservest alone.

(Sonnet 39)

It is surely one of the most amazing anomalies of English literature that this realistic acknowledgment of a father's relationship to his bastard son was not sensed by the earliest students of Shake-speare's autobiographical poems. The "homosexual" implications of Malone, Browning, Swinburne, Oscar Wilde, Samuel Butler and the Baconians at once become vicious and arrant nonsense—the fantasies of prurient imaginations and faulty observation. Moreover, the Stratfordian case, with its vacuum of personal documentation, also disap-

pears into the limbo of irrational vagaries, and we suddenly find ourselves face to face with one of the most dramatic and magnificently written personal tragedies in all literary history. The poet's secret "up-locked treasure," the "captain jewel of the carcanet" which he may not wear in public, is the beloved boy who has been named for him!

*How careful was I, when I took my way,
Each trifle under truest bars to thrust,
That to my use it might unused stay
From hands of falsehood, in sure wards of trust!*

*But thou, to whom my jewels trifles are,
Most worthy comfort, now my greatest grief,
Thou, best of dearest and mine only care,
Art left the prey of every vulgar thief.
Thee have I not lock'd up in any chest,
Save where thou art not, though I feel thou art,
Within the gentle closure of my breast,
From whence at pleasure thou mayst come and part;*

*And even thence thou wilt be stol'n, I fear,
For truth proves thievish for a prize so dear.*

(Sonnet 48)

Here, at long last, we have uncovered—or more properly—*read with open eyes* the one great personal secret of "Shake-speare's" life. And it is possible to see at once the reason why the poet gives his "better spirit" such explicit directions to bury in oblivion the name that he (the elder) has brought low, but which the young man himself may make honourable again in the new generation.

Nay, if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it; for I love you so,
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe.
O, if, I say, you look upon this verse
When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
DO NOT SO MUCH AS MY POOR NAME
REHEARSE,

But let your love even with my life decay;
LEST THE WISE WORLD SHOULD
LOOK INTO YOUR MOAN,
AND MOCK YOU WITH ME AFTER I AM
GONE.

(Sonnet 71)

O, lest your true love may seem false in this,
That you for love speak well of me untrue,
MY NAME BE BURIED WHERE MY BODY
IS,
AND LIVE NO MORE TO SHAME NOR ME
NOR YOU.

For I am shamed by that which I bring forth.
And so should you, to love things nothing
worth.

(Sonnet 72)

Or I shall live your epitaph to make,
Or you survive when I in earth am rotten;
From hence your memory death cannot take.
Although in me each part will be forgotten.
Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
**THOUGH I, ONCE GONE, TO ALL THE
WORLD MUST DIE:**

The earth can yield me but a common grave,
When you entombéd in men's eyes shall lie.

(Sonnet 81)

When thou reviewest this, thou dost review
The very part was consecrate to thee:
The earth can have but earth, which is his due;
My spirit is thine, the better part of me.

(Sonnet 74)

The passionate candor and essential realism of these lines is above all question. I read them as categorical statements of the poet's desire to insure permanent anonymity to his own widely exploited personality in order that the family name which he shares with his unacknowledged son may not prove a handicap to this youth who has himself added heroic lustre to their jointly-held patronymic. To strain for dark and sinful connotations here is absurd. Equally so is the effort to make the situation fit the known facts of the Stratford business man's career, unless we are to assume that Willm Shakespeare wished to discard an appellation that had become burdensome! Some may claim that there could have been *two* Willm Shakespeares of Stratford. But not an atom of contemporary documentation can be produced to back up any such surmise.

In any event, bearing in mind the import of the sonnet-form as a medium of personal expression, the problems discussed in these verses take form as intensely human ones, of vital concern to two Elizabethans bearing identical names. And instead of wasting time in the barren fields of Stratfordian conjecture, let us seek for enlightenment among the heretofore neglected records of the foremost Court poet of the age, whose spirit "was ever sacred to the Muses," the eccentric nobleman who squandered vast estates in the cause of learning and who was the acknowledged leader of the most dynamic crew of mountebanks, poets, playwrights, musicians and writers of the whole Shakespearean era, one who, according to his contemporaries, could only be evaluated at his true worth if his "doings could be

found out and made public with the rest"—Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.

Let us see if the recovered facts in the private life of the remarkable man fit the circumstances so clearly and dramatically stated in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. If they do, if documentary evidence can be produced which proves beyond all question that most of the situations and relationships which are described in the *Sonnets* are realistically paralleled in the personal career of the playwright Earl, then it may well be that the age-old riddle of the *Sonnets*, as well as the authorship of the Shakespearean works in general, has been solved at last.

I propose to present such documentation, buttressed and particularized from many contemporary sources.

Charles Wisner Barrell

(To be continued)

Letter from Geneva

My previous letter told you about the lecture I held for the Historical-Archæological Society of Geneva, illustrated with lantern-pictures derived from the Scientific American of January, 1940, on the subject of the Shakespeare Problem and the faked portraits. This manifestation led to others of similar nature and brought correspondence with literary people in Switzerland, Holland, and France; in the latter country I had the good fortune to bring my paper under the notice of a most distinguished dramatist, Mr. René Lenormand, who declared himself much interested and prepared to take the matter up. Since Mr. Abel Lefranc's "Sous le Masque de Shakespeare" (1918) and Mr. Georges Connes' "Le Mystère Shakespearien" (1926) the press in France has been silent on the subject of the great problem of Shakespeare's identity. Louis Gilet's "Shakespeare" (1931), otherwise a delightful book, ignores it. Let us hope that René Lenormand will espouse the cause of Edward de Vere in the paper he is to read this winter in Paris. . . .

The annual report of the History & Archæology Society of Geneva is about to be issued. I send you enclosed the summary of my lecture, published in that volume. It is far less positive and conclusive than I expressed in my paper, but the Editor claims that the Society has to maintain on such controversial subjects an objective and neutral attitude. . . .

Yours faithfully,

Ch. Boissevain.