

# News-Letter

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### "Shakespeare'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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(Part Three—Illustrated with Rare Portraits)

In previous pages of this inquiry I have emphasized the belief of many alert students of the Shakespearean creative mystery that the *Sonnets* provide the one master-key to their author's personality.

I have also pointed out the lamentable inability of orthodox Stratfordians to connect William Shakspeare of Warwickshire in any actual documentation with the personalities and events that are described so vividly in these poems.

Even when we give whole-hearted assent to the consensus of "authoritative" opinion which identifies the handsome young nobleman in many of the *Sonnets* as Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton, the same paragon of knightly perfections to whom the poet dedicated his *Venus and Adonis* in 1593 and his *Lucrece* in 1594, we find no connecting links between Southampton and the citizen of Stratford-on-Avon.

This statement may appear amazing to thousands of casual admirers of the Bard who have accepted as biographical gospel the conjectural declarations of the professional pundits that the shadowy William and the Adonis of Southampton "must have been" bosom friends. Nevertheless, it is true.

Not one scintilla of contemporary documentation exists to show that William Shakspeare of Stratford ever met Southampton. The late Mrs. Charlotte C. Stopes, one of the most indefatigable explorers of Elizabethan records, also wrote the life of the Third Earl of Southampton. Although she spent many years at the task, Mrs. Stopes was unable to find any historical warrant whatever for the assumption that the peer and the alleged "Swan of Avon" were personally acquainted. Towards the end of her career, this great student of the Shakespearean

period admitted to Capt. B. M. Ward, author of *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, that her own faith in the Shakspeare-Southampton legend had been decidedly shaken by this absolute lack of corroborative evidence. And there the case rests.

But we find an entirely different situation when we present the credentials of Lord Oxford, head of the Vere family, as the true William Shakespeare and author of those highly realistic poems addressed to the youthful peer of Southampton. Every element then assumes its proper proportion. Statements in the *Sonnets* that would be preposterous if written by a fortune-seeking young fellow from the provinces to a wealthy and enormously influential courtier who could make or break a dozen "parcel poets" in as many days, now become understandable. For Oxford was not only Southampton's social equal, he was considerably his superior in courtly rank, his senior by some twenty-three years and an outstanding master of most of the arts that the younger man admired. In other words, the head of the great Vere family, representing seventeen generations of nobility, could speak with a full mouth out of a full heart to the Third Earl of Southampton, whose title dated only from the days of Henry VIII.

This is exactly the spirit that we find animating so many of the sonnets which the authorities say were composed for the guidance or delectation of young Henry Wriothesley. The pervading mood of these personal messages is serious. They are patently designed to influence the youth's thinking and actions. Several are bitterly critical. The poet strips off his perfumed gloves to guide his quill with the bare fist. And so, while it is reasonable

and understandable to figure Lord Oxford ("most excellent in the rare devices of poetry" as his contemporaries describe him) as the author of the verses, it is quite illogical to believe for one moment that the Stratford commoner, endeavoring to make his way in Elizabethan London with his pen, would dare adopt such a course with the egotistical, high-spirited and hot-tempered Southampton—a man whom history proves to have loved his own way before all others.

Moreover, while the Stratford-Southampton dossier is empty, the records connecting the Veres and young Wriothesley are intimate and explicit.

During a period of some two years, from the winter of 1589-90 to 1592, efforts were made to secure Southampton's consent to a contract of marriage with the Lady Elizabeth Vere, eldest daughter of the poet Earl of Oxford.

We know this from a series of letters that passed between the little Lady Vere's grandfather, Lord Burghley, and Southampton's grandfather, Anthony Browne, Viscount Montague, corroborated by other documentation in the handwriting of Sir Thomas Stanhope and the Jesuit leader, Father Henry Garnet. Viscount Montague's letters state that Southampton's mother also heartily approved the match.

Born July 2, 1575, under circumstances that had brought about a long estrangement between her father and mother, Lady Elizabeth Vere was hardly fifteen years of age when the negotiations for her marriage with the boy Earl of Southampton were initiated. Southampton, on the other hand, had not reached his seventeenth birthday, as he had been born October 6, 1573. Child marriages were common in those days, for the coalition and maintenance of property rights seems to have been the main consideration among the nobility. Only in rare cases were the emotional reactions of minors, one to another, considered as controlling factors in such "arranged" marriages among the high aristocracy.

In this particular case a wedding did not eventuate, though determined efforts were made to bring it about. In his letter dated 1594, Father Garnet claims that the Earl of Southampton had been forced to pay a fine of 5,000 pounds—presumably to Lord Burghley—for "refusing the Lady Vere." While this statement cannot be taken literally, considering its source, for the Jesuits lost no opportunity to circulate gossip derogatory to the Lord Treasurer, it does prove that the attempts to bring about an alliance between the poetical Earl of Oxford's eldest daughter and the same handsome peer

who can be identified as the subject of so many of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, caused considerable comment during the early 1590s.

The first seventeen of these sonnets not only describe a young nobleman in terms that realistically match the youthful paintings and other contemporary word-pictures of the Third Earl of Southampton, but every one of them urges upon him the duty of marrying to insure that "eternity" for physical and mental excellencies which only self-reproduction can give. The whole spirit here is that of the intellectual veteran, addressing a youth with whom he seeks a permanent family connection:

Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,  
Which husbandry in honour might uphold  
Against the stormy gusts of winter's day  
And barren rage of death's eternal cold?

O, none but unthrifths: dear my love, you know  
You had a father; let your son say so.

(Sonnet 13)

The last line suggests that the young man's father is dead, as was true in the case of Southampton. He had been left an orphan at the age of nine.

Moreover, in tracing the Vere-Wriothesley lines of argument with which these immortal human documents abound, another set of facts must be kept in mind, to wit:

None of the surviving letters and documents relating to the wished-for marriage of Henry Wriothesley and Elizabeth Vere mentions in any way the young lady's father, although he was her only surviving parent at this time and her legal representative whose consent must have been required for any matrimonial negotiations of a serious nature.

This has been taken to mean by unthinking readers that the Earl of Oxford, who cared more for poets than for politicians and who sacrificed property to support playwrights, much to the disgust of obtuse historians—took no interest whatever in his daughter's welfare. But such was by no means the case, as can be amply proven by a whole mass of letters in the Cecil family collection at Hatfield House, dated three or four years later when Elizabeth Vere was engaged to marry William Stanley, Earl of Derby. From these, and others written by Lord Oxford during the early years of his daughter's life with Derby, it is apparent that the poet Earl not only loved his eldest daughter dearly, but that he worried much over her welfare, forced Derby to show her more consideration than he had been wont, and on occasion left a sickbed to tend to her affairs. All of these matters are on record,

though few of them have been published or even hinted at. Far from being the "bad father" that Oxford's foolish enemies have pictured him, his own words, frequently delivered with the true Shakespearean ring, prove him to have been most sympathetic and understanding in the problems that beset his eldest daughter's love affairs and matrimonial career. That he watched over her "tender years" with solicitude there can be no question. And that, lacking a suitable dowry for her, as he laments, he produced the magnificent spectacle of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to celebrate this "sweet little lady's" wedding to William Stanley on June 26, 1594,\* much excellent evidence testifies. But that is another story, to be told in another place.

The fact that Oxford penned no surviving correspondence of the ordinary kind to promote his daughter's alliance with the Adonis of Southampton in 1590 or thereabouts is of marked significance in this study of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. It would indicate that the first seventeen sonnets in the book are really the missing letters that Elizabeth Vere's father addressed to Southampton as his intended son-in-law, urging the youth to

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

In 1590, when the marriage negotiations were at their height, Southampton was seventeen years old, which gives the seventeen sonnets arguing matrimony additional point.

It is possible to date with considerable logic the composition of these marriage-promotion poems within the 1590-92 period. For, as Mrs. Stopes has pointed out, several of the most striking figures of speech that "Shakespeare" uses in urging the young aristocrat to marry and beget a son reappear in *Venus and Adonis*, published in 1593 with the dedication to Southampton. These repetitive exhortations are put in the mouth of the lascivious Venus, and Mrs. Stopes is certainly right in observing that the author of the *Sonnets* could hardly use them with any degree of sincerity or good taste *after* they had been given such wide publicity by the lustful queen of wantonness. *Venus and Adonis* is a satire on Southampton himself, a gorgeous commentary on his known refusal to follow the advice given him in the early *Sonnets*. There can be no other way to reconcile these parallel figures of speech.

In summing up this argument, let us repeat the conclusions of that super-conservative Stratfordian, Sir Sidney Lee himself:

\*This is the accurate date of the Stanley-Vere nuptials as given in Burke's *Peerage*. Note that the marriage celebration included June 24th, Midsummer Eve, which is the setting for Shakespeare's *Dream*.

"The opening sequence of 17 sonnets, in which a youth of rank and wealth is admonished to marry and beget a son so that his 'fair house' may not fall into decay, can only have been addressed to a young peer like Southampton, who was as yet unmarried, had vast possessions, and was the sole male representative of his family."

It should also be observed that Sonnet 2 in this opening sequence begins with these words:

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow  
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,  
Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,  
Will be a tatter'd weed, of small worth held.

In this same year of 1590 when Southampton was being pressed to engage himself to Elizabeth Vere, the poetical Earl of Oxford was *forty years of age*.

Thus is the personal realism of the poems, long recognized by fellow poets such as Wordsworth, Shelley and others, maintained. Just as "Shakespeare" reiterates throughout the volume, it is a case of "mutual render, only me for thee."

●, let my books be then the eloquence  
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast;  
Who plead for love, and look for recompense,  
*More than that tongue that more hath more*  
express'd.  
(Sonnet 23)

Over and over again we have this emphasis upon the autobiographical nature of the poet's words. This highly personal strain also makes the sonnets doubly cryptic as they are usually read—without any key to the real personalities described herein.

For instance, it is quite impossible to fit William of Stratford into the logical chronology which starts with the 1590 efforts to find a wife for Southampton. For one obvious reason, the simile of "forty winters" immediately loses all literary force.

William of Stratford was then but twenty-six. And none of his rashest proponents have even attempted seriously to claim that the young "horse groom" was then in position to give intimate personal advice to Henry of Southampton.

The Earl of Oxford, seeking a son-in-law for his favorite daughter, is the only logical candidate for this office. "Most excellent" of the Court poets, though fallen on evil times, he answers all requirements of the case. And, incidentally, Francis Meres' (1598) comment on "Shakespeare's sugred sonnets *among his private friends*" becomes crystall-clear in its implications.

We have spoken of the failure to find an understandable place in this Southampton-Vere chronology for the runaway husband of Anne Hathaway.

Other unsatisfactory labors envisage attempts to picture William Herbert, later Earl of Pembroke, as the young nobleman here addressed. For, while, strange as it may seem, Herbert's parents sought to marry him to the Earl of Oxford's second daughter, Bridget Vere, in 1597, and a long letter has been found in Oxford's own hand, approving the match, William Herbert simply does not measure up to the realistic descriptions of the "faire youth" of the early sonnets. Far from being an Adonis with incandescent eyes and long blonde locks that curled into "buds of marjorum" like those that made Southampton the outstanding male beauty of his day, Herbert is described as stout and swarthy. And although he developed into one of the great personalities of his age, of stronger character-fibre than Southampton, he was the reverse of beautiful. There is no record of anyone writing sonnets to celebrate the glory of his person.

All circumstances considered, there can, I think, be little question that Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, was the real-life original of the young nobleman in this highly personal drama. Many pages of additional evidence can be submitted to prove this beyond reasonable doubt.

But for the present, we must take up the identification of the other young man in the *Sonnets*, together with the placing of his mother, that amazing and mysteriously enchanting "Dark Lady" whose personality has alternately fascinated and repelled the greatest critics of English literature, just as it exerted the same effects upon the poet Earl of Oxford, whose unmistakable hand appears in the composition of these great word-pictures from the long ago.

The dark lady who filled the same place in the life of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, that the "Dark Lady of the *Sonnets*" occupied in the career of "Shake-speare" was known in real life as Anne Vavasor.

Born about 1560-62, she was a daughter of Henry Vavasor, Esq., of Copmanthorpe near the city of York, and his wife Margaret Knevett, daughter of Sir Henry Knevett of Buckenham Castle, Norfolk.

The possessor of great physical magnetism, a keen, mocking wit and pronounced literary affiliations, Anne Vavasor, as she appears in the records gathered from widely scattered contemporary sources, was perhaps the most remarkable of all the aristocratic courtesans of the Elizabethan Age.

The Earl of Oxford seems to have met this magnetic girl with the dusky hair and eyes and disdain-

ful, falcon-like features some time during 1578 or 1579 when she was seventeen or eighteen years old, and was being introduced to Court life in London by her uncle, Thomas Knevett of the Queen's Household, or her older cousin, Lord Henry Howard. The latter was also first cousin of Edward de Vere.

At this time Oxford was living apart from his wife, Anne Cecil, daughter of the Lord Treasurer Burghley. Much documentary evidence, brought to light by Captain Ward and others, indicates that it was Henry Howard who caused the break between the Earl and Countess of Oxford by carrying tales and making poisonous insinuations regarding Anne Cecil de Vere's chastity. We also find him mentioned in letters that report meetings between Oxford and Anne Vavasor. In any event, Lord Henry Howard's long career of crime, espionage and double-dealing—ending with his implication in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury—makes him the perfect Iago of his age. It is very likely that he also played the part of the far-seeing pander in 1578-79, hoping to wreck the Vere-Cecil alliance beyond all repair, by encouraging Oxford's liaison with the country cousin from Yorkshire. He is known to have done just this sort of thing in the notorious Somerset-Howard-Overbury case.

By 1579-80, Anne Vavasor had secured the much-coveted billet of Gentlewoman of the Royal Bedchamber. Such positions at the Court of Gloriana usually meant marriage to a peer and "hie for high fortune" if the young woman made the most of her contacts and flattered the Queen assiduously enough. Anne Vavasor had not only great gifts along this line—as her later career proved—but her personal magnetism and keen brains seemed bound to insure her enviable position in life.

Yet all these fair prospects ended in sudden shipwreck. Anne found herself violently in love, carried away by the attentions of the nobleman famed for dancing, music and "the rare devices of poetry."

Finally, the catastrophe broke like a thunder-clap. We read this succinct account in a letter to the Earl of Huntingdon from Sir Francis Walsingham, head of the Elizabethan secret service, bearing date of March 23, 1581.

On Tuesday at night Anne Vavysor was brought to bed of a son in the maidens' chamber. The E. of Oxeford is avowed to be the father, who hath withdrawn himself with intent, as it is thought, to pass the seas. The ports are laid for him and therefore if he have any such determination it is not likely that he will escape. The gentle-

woman the selfsame night she was delivered was conveyed out of the house and the next day committed to the Tower. Others that have been found any ways party to the cause have also been committed. Her Majesty is greatly grieved with the accident, and therefore I hope there will be some order taken as the like inconvenience will be avoided.

Here is a pretty kettle of fish, indeed! All of the raw ingredients of Elizabethan drama—illicit love, betrayal, cruel vengeance by the powers that be, the cowardly disappearance of the man in the case who leaves the woman to face the music:

O, never say that I was false of heart,  
 Though absence seem'd my flame to qualify.  
 As easy might I from myself depart  
 As from my soul, which in thy breast doth lie:  
 That is my home of love: if I have rang'd,  
 Like him that travels, I return again;  
 Just to the time, not with the time exchang'd,  
 So that myself bring water for my stain.  
 Never believe, though in my nature reign'd  
 All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,  
 That it could so preposterously be stain'd,  
 To leave for nothing all thy sum of good;  
 For nothing this wide universe I call,  
 Save thou, my rose; in it thou art my all.  
 (Sonnet 109)

This sonnet seems to have been "Shake-speare's" reaction to the situation. "Rose" or "Rosalind" can be clearly shown to have been Anne Vavator's nickname—being the last four letters of her surname, spelled backwards.\* Vavator frequently appears in the records as Vavesor, also as Vavysor, Vavisor and later as Vavasour.

Walsingham's suggestion that the Earl of Oxford planned to flee the country to escape the consequences of his seduction of the Queen's personal servant may or may not have had basis in fact. There is no record of Oxford having been arrested. But a few days later he is known to have been committed to the Tower on her Majesty's order. Adultery in high places frequently resulted in condign punishment and equal disgrace for man and woman, under Elizabeth's system.

Although the Earl was released from the Tower on June 8, 1581, the repercussions of this unhappy

\*Mrs. Eva Turner Clark was the first to observe that Anne Vavator might prove to be the "Dark Lady"; see her study of *Love's Labour's Lost* (1933). Later, in *The Man Who Was Shakespeare*, Mrs. Clark shows that this same "northern lass" is the original of Spenser's Rosalind in *The Shepheardes Calender*.

affair, with its public humiliation and implications of cowardice, pursued him for many a long day. He seems, in fact, to have suffered more in reputation than Anne Vavator.

By the same token, we have here the essential groundwork for the plot of the Bard's *Measure for Measure*, a problem play that has piqued the curiosity of all of its editors who have tried to reconcile it with the Stratford canon. Says Dr. Henry N. Hudson, who edited the edition that I studied in school:

"The strongly-marked peculiarities of the piece in language, cast of thought, and moral temper, have invested it with great psychological interest, and bred a special desire among critics to connect it in some way with the author's mental history, —with some supposed crisis in his feelings and experience."

Exactly so. But the story of Claudio, who is put in prison and in jeopardy of his life because—"He hath got his friend with child"—cannot be made to fit the Stratford requirements. It belongs right here, in the personal history of Edward de Vere.

Some may object: "But Oxford would never write so sordid a commentary on his own experiences."

The answer is obvious. He never did—under his own name.

The son, born to Anne Vavator and Edward de Vere that night in the early spring of 1581 in the "maiden's chamber" at Greenwich Palace under such dramatic circumstances, lived to justify in full his own illegal entry upon the Elizabethan scene.

He was given the name of Edward Vere, undoubtedly for the express purpose of keeping him in the forefront of his father's attention. Oxford had no son by Anne Cecil and Anne Vavator may have hoped eventually to marry the Earl, for the estranged Countess of Oxford was in poor health at this time, as much documentation proves.

During the years 1580 to 1585, representing the conception and early infancy of this boy, Oxford sold no less than thirty-two of his estates to raise ready money. There can be no doubt that part of the proceeds went to the support of Anne Vavator and young Edward Vere.

The boy had excellent blood in his veins—and not altogether from the Vere side. Anne Vavator was descended from the Dukes of Norfolk and the Knevetts who played a leading part in the establishment of the Tudor dynasty, while the great Vavator clan of Yorkshire was famous for its jurists, soldiers and beautiful women. Perhaps the

outstanding Roman Catholic family of its day, the Vavasors had been given special permission by Henry VIII to retain their own parish chapel at the time of the dissolution of Roman church properties. Anne may have been a motivating factor when Oxford turned Roman Catholic during the period of their early association.

The fact that the 17th Earl of Oxford had a bastard son who bore "name of single one" with him has never been known to historians and genealogists of the Shakespearean period. This is my own discovery and represents much grim sleuthing among the records. Its implications are vital to a full understanding of the highly complex character of the poet peer, and also to a comprehension of those sonnets in which "Shake-speare" tells a beloved youth:

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.

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.

This momentous decision of the poet's not to appear publicly with his namesake was probably reached in 1593 when Oxford's new Countess, Elizabeth Trentham, gave the peer a male heir, legally qualified to inherit the Earldom of Oxford. In the same year of 1593 the name "William Shakespeare" first appeared in English literature—on the dedicatory page of *Venus and Adonis*. Young Edward Vere was then in his thirteenth year. It thus becomes obvious that the playwright nobleman took a pen-name to cover the works that were so essentially autobiographical in structure that they could not help but revive old scandals and cause pain to his growing children and to his new wife whose whole purpose in life seems to have been to reestablish the fallen glory of the Earldom of Oxford.

Oxford may have wished to marry Anne Vavasor after his first wife died in 1588. That is to say, he may have considered taking up his life with her again, for legal marriage was by this time impossible. Anne had not only engaged in a whole series of liaisons of varying degrees of significance, she had gone through a marriage ceremony with one John Finche, identifiable as one of the captains employed in the Levantine trade. Finally, at about the same time that Anne Cecil de Vere passed away,

Anne Vavasor found herself again *exceinte*, this time evidently by the veteran soldier and Queen's Champion, Sir Henry Lee of Woodstock.

Throwing over Finche, her legal husband, and rejecting all possibilities of a final reconciliation with Oxford, she went to live with the wealthy and doting Lee who was Keeper of the Manor and Royal Forest at Woodstock. Her son by Sir Henry Lee—who was old enough to have been her father—was born in 1589. He was called Thomas Vavasor, but later in life took the name of Thomas Freeman. One of the most interesting and significant epigrams on Shakespeare that have come down to us from the early 17th century bears the name of Thomas Freeman.\*

That Anne took young Edward Vere with her to the Lee menage seems very probable.\* Many men adored this woman, including the Earl of Leicester and Edmund Spenser, and her sons were no exception, as later events bear witness. There is every reason to believe, also, that Oxford retained a deep and abiding interest in Anne Vavasor and that he spent much time in her company, even after his 1591 marriage to Elizabeth Trentham. That he was insanely jealous of her and that he objected passionately to the arrangements that allowed his brilliant and charming namesake to live under the roof of his successful rival would be quite natural. One thing we do know very definitely. The entire situation here is realistically described in the *Sonnets*.

Ah, wherefore with infection should he live  
And with his presence grace impiety,  
That sin by him advantage should achieve  
And lace itself with his society?  
Why should false painting imitate his cheek,  
And steal dead seeing of his living hue?  
Why should poor beauty indirectly seek  
Roses of shadow, since his rose is true?  
Why should he live, now Nature bankrupt is,  
Beggard'd of blood to blush through lively veins?  
For she hath no exchequer now but his,  
And, proud of many, lives upon his gains.

O, him she stores, to show what wealth she had  
In days long since, before these last so bad.

(Sonnet 67)

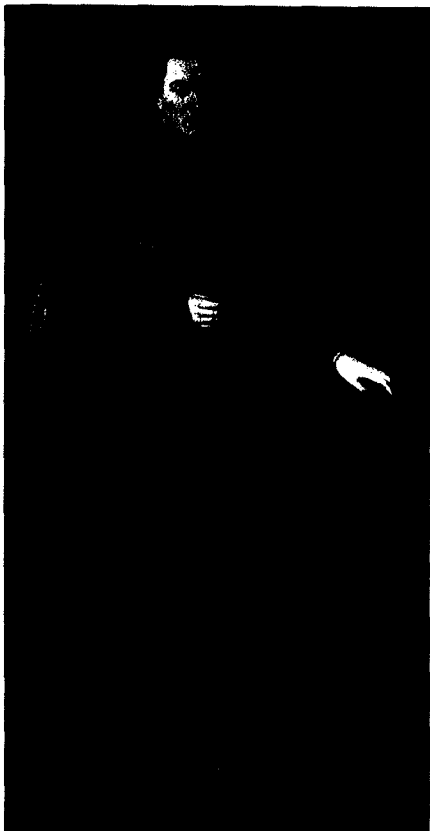
In succeeding chapters of this study we shall analyze others of the forty or more sonnets that are

\* This is from *Runne and a Great Caste* by Thomas Freeman (1614) and begins:

Shakespeare, that nimble Mercury thy brain  
Lulls many hundred Argus-eyed usleep.

\* Some time later Edward Vere gives testimony regarding his life in Sir Henry Lee's household.

*"A Woman's Face with Nature's Own Hand Painted"*



SIR EDWARD VERE (1581-1629).

Heretofore unidentified bastard son of Edward de Vere, the poet Earl of Oxford. Distinguished soldier, scholar, Parliamentarian, friend of Ben Jonson and closely associated with those behind the publication of Shakespeare's First Folio, Sir Edward Vere matches every characteristic of the "fair, kind and true" youth described in the Sonnets. Bearing "name of single one" with Edward de Vere, the real Bard, the deliberately hidden relationship of Sir Edward Vere to the father who never publicly acknowledged him is the subject of many of the Shakespearean Sonnets that have puzzled experts for centuries.



ANNE VAVASOR (1560c.-1653).

Mistress of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, and unmarried mother of Sir Edward Vere, the "fair youth" of Shakespeare's Sonnets. Gentlewoman of the Bed Chamber in Queen Elizabeth's Household, the "friend" of Edmund Spenser, Sir Henry Lee and other famous Elizabethans, Anne Vavasor figured in several epic scandals. Perhaps the most fascinating courtesan of the period, her dark hair and eyes and rose-blush complexion, together with many other personal circumstances, make it possible realistically to identify Anne Vavasor as the long-sought "Dark Lady of the Sonnets."

*"Hast Thou, the Master-Mistress of my Passion.."*

addressed to this bastard son, proclaiming his many excellencies although the poet laments:

*I may not evermore acknowledge thee*

*Least my bewailed guilt should do thee shame.*

For the time being let it suffice to say that Lord Oxford and his survivors so effectually concealed this interesting relationship that Edward Vere the younger has remained a mystery to British historians and genealogists up to this present writing.

In his fifteenth year, the boy was sent to the Continent and entered as a literary student at the University of Leyden. The discovery of this fact represents a little adventure in research which can be told later.

A year or two afterwards he appears as a soldier in the regiment of his father's cousin, the great Sir Francis Vere. Tall, strong and vigorous, he developed into one of the outstanding military heroes in England's Lowland campaigns against the Catholic powers.

By the year 1600, before he had reached the age of nineteen, Edward Vere became captain of his own company. Although there can be little question that his father's influence helped him, young Vere was a great soldier in his own right, "the captain jewel of (Lord Oxford's) carcanet." He is mentioned in military dispatches as a master "at push of pike." At the same time, he kept up his literary studies, translated the histories of Polybius from the Greek and was a friend of Ben Jonson. Excellent evidence exists (which will be considered elsewhere) that Edward Vere was in addition one of the noteworthy dramatists of the Jacobean period—one of those mystery playwrights whose real identity has never been made clear, beyond his close literary affinity to Shakespeare.

On April 15, 1607, this heroic son of the 17th Earl of Oxford was knighted at Newmarket by King James. Later he had charge of the English army in the Lowlands, when his cousin, Sir Horatio Vere, was leading an expedition into the Rhine country.

Sir Edward Vere's character and versatility is also witnessed by the fact that he was returned as a member of the British Parliament, representing Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, in 1623. Col. Josiah Wedgwood, historian of Parliament, speaks of him as one "whose identity is not absolutely clear."

Upon his death at the siege of Bois-le-Duc in Flanders, August 18, 1629, all the leaders of the English army attended his funeral and his regiment was taken over by Robert Vere, 19th Earl of Oxford.

Many letters, by and about Sir Edward Vere

have been preserved among the Sidney family papers and in the manuscripts of the Earl of Ancaster.

All told, the love and admiration which "Shakespeare" expressed for this splendid representative of young manhood seem to have been amply justified. The "crooked eclipses" which the father feared might obscure him never eventuated. In the world of action he added honor to the name of Vere, full measure, pressed down and running over. Oxford's own dreams of military fame had been thwarted. It must have been one of the great joys of his latter years to see these lost dreams come true in the person of his "other self," the living embodiment of the debonair and valorous Bastard in *King John*.

An interesting contemporary comment on this unusual man is to be found in a letter written in 1631 by the great John Hampden of Parliamentary fame to his friend, Sir John Eliot, while the latter was in prison for opposing the policies of Charles I.

It seems that Sir John Eliot had proposed to send his younger son to the Lowlands to learn the art of war in the train of Lord Horatio Vere. In his reply to Eliot's proposal, John Hampden says:

"... if Mr. Rich. Eliot will in the intermissions of action, add study to practice, and adorn that lively spirit with flowers of contemplation, he'll raise our expectations of another Sr. Edw. Vere, that had this character; 'all summer in the field, all winter in his study'; in whose fall fame makes this kingdom a great loser..."

Is it not possible that John Hampden knew that Sir Edward Vere was the son of the greatest writer of the Elizabethan period, and that he had carried on in his own person the classic traditions of the "courtier-soldier-scholar" which he had learned at first-hand?

Much remains to be written about Sir Edward Vere and his true place in the literary and military annals of his day.

Meanwhile, readers who have followed our biographical detective report thus far have a right to ask how we can be so sure that this man who bore the same combination of names as the 17th Earl of Oxford really was the son born to Anne Vavasor and the playwright nobleman on March 23, 1581.

The evidence in this particular is explicit and unimpeachable. It consists of personal testimony given under oath before masters of chancery by Sir Edward Vere himself under date of August 24, 1612, at a time when Anne Vavasor was being sued by the heir of her late paramour, Sir Henry Lee,



for the return of certain goods and chattels which the said heir claimed had been unlawfully withheld by Anne from the inventory of Sir Henry's estate.

As a witness for the defense, Sir Edward Vere describes himself as "aged 32 years or thereabouts" and in the body of his testimony—which, incidentally, bears his signature—refers to Anne Vavasor as his mother.

In the Public Record Office this documentary evidence is catalogued under "C. 24/379 Town Depositions."

As any son born to Anne Vavasor and Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, in March 1581, must of necessity have been "aged 32 years or thereabouts" on August 24, 1612, there can be no further question of Sir Edward Vere's identity.

In succeeding chapters we shall study and date many of "Shake-speare's" hitherto obscure sonnets that realistically match the combined chronology of the poet Earl of Oxford, Anne Vavasor and this long lost son.

The portrait of Sir Edward Vere, evidently painted at about the time he was knighted by King James, has never before been reproduced. It is owned by the Townshend family of Raynham, Norfolk, who very graciously allowed me to have it photographed for publication. The Townshends are lineal descendants of the famous Lord Horatio Vere of Tilbury who was Sir Edward Vere's commanding general for many years.

In his painting, which had been excellently preserved, at least up to two years ago, Sir Edward is shown to have been dark-eyed and black-haired. His resemblance to his mother is unmistakable, particularly in the wide-set eyes, the moulding of the brows and the sweep of the dark hair away from the forehead.

In the autobiographical *Sonnets* "Shake-speare" continually dwells upon the physical likeness that his "lovely boy" bears to the Dark Lady.

A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted  
Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;  
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted  
With shifting change, as is false women's fashion;  
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,  
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth.

(Sonnet 20)

Authenticated portraits of Anne Vavasor which were in existence at the outbreak of the war show her to have had dark hair and eyes, strikingly set off by a pale, damask-rose complexion. One of

these is owned by Viscount Dillon, the present day representative of the family that inherited the estates of the Elizabethan Sir Henry Lee. The other, which is reproduced in these pages, was also in the possession of Lord Dillon's ancestors for about three hundred years. Just prior to the war it had been purchased by Mr. Francis Howard of London. A striking composition, dominated by the gorgeous Renaissance costume, it is from the brush of Marcus Cheeraerts the younger, the same Elizabethan master who painted the portrait of the 17th Earl of Oxford owned by the Duke of St. Albans.

That all of these portraits will be used some day to illustrate a new and completely annotated Vere edition of the *Sonnets* seems reasonable to believe.

Charles Wisner Barrell

(To be continued)

## Macbeth

In its issue of February 23rd, the magazine *Life* headlines a brief article on *Macbeth*: "Maurice Evans converts 'hoodoo' Shakespeare tragedy into a hit." The article is illustrated with a series of photographs showing the highlights of the performance, the first one, of Maurice Evans and Judith Anderson in the principal rôles, being a full-page picture in rich colors, a triumph in color photography.

*Macbeth* has never been popular on the American stage until the past winter, but the Evans' production, recently ended, enjoyed a run of seventeen weeks in New York and has now begun a tour of the principal cities of the country.

## De Vere in San Francisco

Mr. Flodden W. Heron spoke on the Oxford theory at the Philotheia Club of San Francisco on January 28th. His presentation of the subject was pronounced "one of the highlights of the Club year." On February 7th, Mr. Heron addressed the Speech Arts Association of California at the Sorosis Club, his subject being "William Shakespeare, Association and Items Connected with His Work." Following the address, Dr. Guy Montgomery read scenes from Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies. On March 10th, Mr. Heron gave a similar address before the Literary Section of the California Club.

Mrs. Eva Turner Clark read a paper on "Oxford as Shakespeare" at a meeting, February 13th, of the Browning Society of San Francisco.

## NEWS-LETTER

## THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP

AMERICAN BRANCH

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

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

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

## April Twenty-third

Though the difficult times in which we live forbid the holding of a "birthday party," the date of April 23rd cannot be allowed to pass without a word of reminder. For many years, this day has been celebrated by the English-speaking world in commemoration of the birth of England's greatest poet. The Shakespeare Fellowship continues to mark the day because, while the birthday of Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, was recorded as April 12th, the later change of eleven days in the calendar makes it fall on April 23rd. While this change was not accepted in England and her Colonies until 1751, the reform in the calendar, instituted by Pope Gregory, was adopted in Roman Catholic countries in 1582, when our poet was thirty-two years of age.

## Despite the War

While some aspect of the war continues to be the subject of most books now being published in England, as it is in this country, it is amazing how many excellent volumes of literary and historical worth have recently been issued by English presses, especially when one considers the desperate shortage of paper and the drain of younger men from the writing and printing staffs, both serious problems to English publishers, and rapidly becoming so to American publishers.

From ghastly reports of battles, or from the horrors meted out to the civilian population nowadays, it is often a relief to mind and spirit to turn for relaxation to stories of long ago, whether in fiction or fact, in poetry or drama, in the hope of recapturing the belief that there was once a time when the world knew peace and quiet. A new edition of some alluring old work, replete with notes and editorial comment, sometimes giving a different slant from what one has previously known, or a quite new book on some Elizabethan subject, may prove to be the most helpful antidote for a case of weariness or high-strung nerves.

Members of the Shakespeare Fellowship, whose interest lies largely in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, will be glad to learn of some of the books of this type which have been published in England and America during the past year. The following list is by no means complete.

BEN JONSON. Edited by C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson. Volume VII. Oxford: Clarendon Press. London: Milford. The Times Literary Supplement (London), November 15, 1941, says of this seventh volume: "Mr. and Mrs. Percy Simpson here met with the most difficult part of their work, for the volume is mainly composed of masques and entertainments which have not before been critically edited; and texts, apparatus, introductions, illustrations, everything, more than satisfy the exacting demands of the highest English scholarship. . . . Anyone likely to make a serious study of the book is pretty sure to know more about King James I than Jonson could have known when he wrote each masque. Moreover, we cannot help seeing him through the later history of his line; and it is infinitely hard for us to remember what the rising of this sun meant to a distracted and heavy-hearted England. We may harbour no illusions about Queen Elizabeth; but the tradition of her royal divinity was so venerable, the chivalric worship of her womanhood so fragrant and powerful

an inspiration that no flattery of queen or virgin seems absurd. . . . The new volume of Jonson's masques and entertainments is disappointing only because Jonson is seen in it to be constantly labouring to do what even he could never succeed in doing. Within the conventions of the masque he could not make a complete and thorough work of art."

**THE WORKS OF MICHAEL DRAYTON.** Edited by J. William Hebel, Professor of English at Cornell University. Published by the Shakespeare Head Press, Oxford. After the publication of four volumes of this work, 1931-1933, and while engaged on a fifth volume, critical and biographical, the Editor died. Following this lamentable interruption, the fifth volume, the *Life of Drayton*, has been written by Bernard H. Newdigate, and under his supervision, Kathleen Tillotson has completed the remaining editorial work. This fifth volume has been published at Oxford by Basil Blackwell, 1941. Says the T. L. S. (London), October 4, 1941, "Why should people have lavished all this money and labour and devotion on a poet whom some have declared, above a whisper, to be a terrible old bore? Drayton, they say, wrote one great sonnet, 'Since thee's no help'; one bouncing Ballad of Agincourt, 'Faire stood the Wind for France'; one pretty good Ode to the Virginian Voyage, 'You brave Heroique Minds'; one tuneful love-lyric in the Elizabethan song-book-pastoral manner, 'Neare to the Silver Trent, Sirena dwelleth'; and one (for those who like such things) enchanting mock-heroic fairy poem, 'Nimphidia, the Court of Fayrie.' . . . The greatest sorrow of his life was the public neglect of his 'Poly-Olbiou.' . . . Yet here are Drayton's life and works in six very handsome volumes, and behind them the impulse of good Draytonians who want others to know how fine an old fellow the poet was and what a lot of good poetry he wrote." The sixth volume referred to is named below.

**MICHAEL DRAYTON AND HIS CIRCLE.** By Bernard H. Newdigate. Oxford: Blackwell. Some students have thought Michael Drayton was "the rival poet" of Shakespeare's sonnets.

**THE JACOBAN AND CAROLINE STAGE.** By Gerald Eades Bentley, Professor of English at the University of Chicago. Published in two volumes, 718 pages. New York: Oxford University Press. Later volumes will follow. The work is intended to take up the story of the English stage in 1616, where Sir Edmund Chambers left off. Dr. Samuel C. Chew concludes his review in the New York

Herald Tribune Books with the following paragraph: "This arduous piece of work has been accomplished in accordance with the best traditions of American literary scholarship. It is a worthy successor and invaluable supplement to Chambers's great work and, like those volumes, will be the standard authority for many years to come. It may be recommended without reservation to all students of our literature."

**THE LIFE OF SIR FRANCIS DRAKE.** By A. E. W. Mason. Published in England by Hodder and Stoughton. The life of England's first great sailor has been often written, but there always seems to be something new to say about him, his explorations, his naval strategy, and a reassessment of his remarkable character. The T. L. S. (London), October 11, 1941, comments editorially (in part): "To recite the story of Drake at this momentous time in history is like sounding his drum to call his spirit from the deep. The parallels are many between then and now. Today as in Drake's there is a sudden burst of national vigour in England after a period of bewilderment and drift. The world of Elizabeth was rent by ideologies. The continent of Europe groaned under Philip of Spain's totalitarianism, which, like Hitler's, was planning to invade this country and claiming the Americas in its dominion. But in England the sentiment burst into flame. The people were stirred by a passion for liberty against the tyrannous blight that had fallen on Europe. . . . Drake was one of the chief embodiments of England's consciousness. . . . When he singed Philip's beard he set the strategy and tactics for our Navy and Air Force today."

**NOBILIS; OR, A VIEW OF THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A SIDNEY, AND LESSUS LUGUBRIUS.** By Thomas Moffet. Printed from a manuscript discovered at the Huntington Library in 1936 by Professor Virgil B. Heltzel. Edited by him and Professor Hoyt H. Hudson, the present book includes the Latin text, followed by its translation, a full commentary, notes and index. Dr. Thomas Moffet (1553-1604), a celebrated physician, was a pensioner of the Earl of Pembroke, who had married Sidney's sister Mary; he completed *Nobilis* at Wilton in the late autumn or early winter of 1593-4. The many new biographical details are a valuable addition to existing knowledge of the life of Sir Philip Sidney. (Huntington Library, Fourteenth Annual Report.) In a later issue, we shall comment on certain theories suggested by the Editors of this book.

## Bacon Was Not Shakespeare

Present day people past middle age, when first hearing that Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, was the author of what are known as the Shakespeare plays and sonnets, generally exclaim that during many years last past they have both heard and read the same claims put forward on behalf of Francis Bacon. Not all of these people are Baconians, far from it, but hearing and reading so much about it without any real proof to sustain the stories have caused them rightfully to become a little wary of any new claim to the authorship of the great English classics.

The greatest weakness, if I may use that statement in connection with the de Vere theory, is the ignorance of people regarding it. While some thirty odd books and pamphlets have been published on the subject since the discovery was announced by J. Thomas Looney in 1920, the fact remains that a comparatively small number, but a fraction of the number who know the Bacon story, are aware that Edward de Vere is the true author of the Shakespeare productions.

It is frequently asked how the Bacon theory spread so rapidly and had followers in all countries. Tracing out the story has been an interesting study and discloses several factors that could not be used in connection with any other individual.

The Bacon theory was announced in America in 1856, but for a century before that time many delving scholars had stated their conclusions that Willm Shakspeare of Stratford had had nothing to do with the writing of the plays. The lives of many educated individuals of the Elizabethan period were carefully analyzed and the outstanding philosopher, literary and professional writer was Francis Bacon. No one can truthfully deny his great contributions to science and learning and that he well-earned and deserved the many honours which came to him during his lifetime. He desired to create a new philosophy; he was one of the founders of the Rosicrucian philosophy; he interpreted nature as had no other. His *Essays* and *Advancement of Learning* were masterpieces of that period and these, together with his books on law, science, and his several publications in Latin, gave him a high and deserving place in the world's hall of fame as a scholar, a philosopher, a scientist, and one of the greatest legal authorities of his day. It is true that he was charged with bribery before the House of Lords, was thrown into the Tower and some of his honors taken from him, but there is no denying his great contributions

to philosophy, learning, and the legal profession.

In all that Bacon published, there is nothing on the drama or the theatre, except a short essay, "Of Masques and Triumphes," which he says "are but toys, to come among such serious observations." Nor did he, as did so many noblemen of the period, maintain a troupe of players. Without question, he was one of the small circle who knew that Edward de Vere had written poems and plays, some few of which were getting into print anonymously in the early 1590's and from 1598 under the *nom-de-plume* "William Shakespeare." While Bacon was a contemporary of Willm Shakspeare of Stratford, never once does he mention that individual in all his vast literary output.

Some may ask how it happened that the long search by scholars did not locate Edward de Vere as the author of the plays. Books of prose, verse, and music were dedicated to him, and amongst his contemporaries—Marlowe, Watson, Lyly, Greene, Spenser and others—he was openly proclaimed as the "most excellent" of Elizabethan Court poets. That statements of contemporary critics regarding Edward de Vere's writing have had so little attention from modern scholars is amazing. A number of noblemen of this period amused themselves by writing "poesie." I might add here that the discovery of Edward de Vere as the real author was made, not in a study of the Shakespeare plays, but from an analysis of the poems. That discovery led to the plays, of course, and then the facts unfolded rapidly.

One reason for not considering Lord Oxford as the possible author is because he withdrew from Court life in 1590 and devoted the balance of his days, about fourteen years, to writing in more or less obscurity, first at Stoke Newington and then at Hackney, both places near the theatres. The plays, being topical, have now all been proven to have been written previous to 1604, the year of de Vere's death. Many of them, though not all, were published prior to that date, but history shows that publication stopped suddenly in 1604.

At de Vere's death, his manuscripts and all of his literary property naturally passed into the hands of his wife and children, "the grand possessors" mentioned in the Address prefixed to *Troilus and Cressida* when that play was published in 1609. At his wife's death in 1612, his children's interest in the plays was asserted more strongly, in particular by his daughter Susan, now the Countess of Montgomery. Her husband, his brother the Earl of Pembroke, and their mother, the Dowager Countess of

Pembroke ("Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother"), constituted a literary circle of the first importance. It was to the two Earls, Pembroke and Montgomery, that the First Folio was dedicated in 1623, and they, rich favorites of King James, must have met the cost of printing that expensive volume. Following the practice of the author in publishing quartos of the plays under the *nom-de-plume* Shakespeare, "the incomparable brethren" had the Folio printed under the same name and, with the aid of Ben Jonson (who was deeply indebted to Pembroke), continued a deception which was perfectly logical then, but which, in our own day, has been the cause of much controversy.

Those making the Bacon authorship announcement stated that Sir Francis, the man who had written so much on philosophy and scholarship, was the only man of the period possessed of the broad knowledge necessary to the writer of the plays, so the authorship was attached to him. That statement is actually detrimental to the Bacon cause. The fact is that Bacon wrote so much that was published, all quite alien to the drama, that it was impossible for him to have written the many plays credited to Shakespeare.

Why was the Bacon theory seized upon so promptly and how was such a large following created in such a short period? There are certain definite reasons for this and these reasons could not have been attached to any other person:

1. If Bacon had written the plays, he would not have been loath to talk about it when the First Folio came out in 1623, because he was accustomed to having his name associated with publications. He was personally acquainted with Ben Jonson, the Pembroke family, and many friends of the late Edward de Vere (whose first wife was Bacon's first cousin), all of whom well knew who had written the plays. Bacon died in 1626, after publishing books since 1584, nearly all of which required a vast amount of study, experimenting, and research. A few years after his passing, certain writers in Holland and France, not knowing who had written the plays, published books which contained mystical illustrations showing a man reaching up or climbing toward fame. These publications in foreign languages did not receive much notice at the time, but two centuries later they came into wide publicity as part of the proof that Bacon wrote the Shakespeare plays.

2. Bacon was one of the founders of the order of Rosierucians. This society, somewhat like the Freemasons, made Silence one of its principles, and to

preserve secrecy in regard to its activities, members made much use of ciphers to communicate with each other, one of which was the invention of Bacon. Years after his death, with this knowledge in mind, followers of the Bacon theory worked out and published books on ciphers and cryptograms galore and applied them to the Shakespeare plays and sonnets in a weird and varied fashion.

3. A century after Bacon's death, Stratford-on-Avon began to feel growing pains as the home of William Shakespeare. Money-makers and fakers enlarged on the story and visitors began to come and gaze with amazement on the house where Willm Shaksper, the illiterate butcher's apprentice, had lived and died. The home of Aune Hathaway, the illiterate woman eight years the senior of Willm, whom he had been compelled to marry, was pointed out as a shrine. David Garrick, the great actor, was the first openly to condemn this Stratford farce as fiction, but the legend is still carried on there, even though anyone who reads may know it all to be purely a money-making scheme. Of course, no one claimed that Bacon had resided in Stratford, but the great publicity given the place magnified the importance of the Shakespeare plays and this publicity all fell upon the Bacon theory when in 1856 the announcement was made that Francis Bacon was the real author of these English classics.

4. During the past century, certain books have been published setting forth the most extraordinary claims. One of them states that the reason the original manuscripts of the plays have not been found is that Francis Bacon sent them secretly to America to prevent their destruction, that they were buried beneath one of the oldest churches in Virginia, that two attempts at excavating have taken place, without results, and that larger excavations have been planned for the future. (Anyone at all familiar with conditions in the Virginia of the 1620's will know the absurdity of this idea.)

5. Lastly, one of the most important factors in spreading the Bacon theory, and not heretofore published, was the part played by publishers and book dealers. All book stores had plenty of books, both new and old, on their shelves that were written by Bacon. Publishers and dealers saw a great opportunity for business in this Bacon announcement and promptly proceeded to take advantage of it. They had the books for sale and now that Bacon was viewed as the genuine Shakespeare, everyone would want any books written by this same man. Try to imagine the publishers and retail book dealers throughout the world pushing sales on their

Bacon volumes, because now Bacon was really the man who wrote Shakespeare. The dealers did a good job of it and unloaded thousands and thousands of such books, and at the same time implanted the thought in the minds of millions of people, in every civilized land, that Francis Bacon was the real author of the Shakespeare plays. Money could not buy such world publicity today. Furthermore, the book dealers in all cities encouraged the founding of Baconian Clubs, to study Bacon and his works. Some very eminent scholars became members and Bacon clubs still exist in many cities.

From the above evidence it is clear that there were reasons why the Bacon theory became so universally known and why it still lingers in the minds of many. However, serious scholars who did their own investigating finally had to reach the one and only conclusion, "no proof," which is now the generally accepted opinion. Baconians are now flocking to the Edward de Vere standard because here they find concrete evidence and the necessary proofs to back it up.

*Flodden W. Heron*

## Lord Oxford as Shakespeare

*(The following paper by Eva Turner Clark was read by her on February 13th at a meeting of the Browning Society of San Francisco.)*

Chaucer wrote his *Canterbury Tales* about 1388 and two hundred years later Shakespeare was writing his immortal plays. Chaucer was already antiquated when Shakespeare began writing, yet today, three hundred and fifty years later, Shakespeare is as readable as ever. The introduction of movable type into England came only a century before Shakespeare's time and we may wonder if that was the chief instrument in fixing the language.

Shakespeare's own contribution to the language, in taking the thoughts of the ancients and of his own contemporaries, expressions from the law, religion, philosophy, medicine, music, and a thousand other sources, and weaving them into a tapestry of many colors with a thread of golden words, was another important instrument in fixing the English language so that it may be understood century after century, even though it is always growing.

Many passages in Shakespeare's plays, reminiscent of the Greek and Latin classics, indicate the author as a scholar of university training. That is a fact which makes it difficult to accept the Stratford provincial as the author, particularly since the most indefatigable research has failed to reveal that this young man had any education whatever, though it is probable that he attended the Stratford Grammar School for a few short years, as many scholars claim, though there is no *evidence* that he did so. Records of the great universities of England would tell us if he had attended one of them. Christopher Marlowe, a cobbler's son, came from an even humbler walk in life, yet we know how and where he secured his education and the brilliant use he made of it, thanks to the research of scholars. Far greater

research has gone into the effort to learn something of the education of William Shakspeare of Stratford, entirely without success. All that can be learned about him is that his father was in financial difficulties when the lad was about twelve, so serious that it is believed he could no longer attend school. Absolutely nothing is known of his intervening years up to eighteen, though there is a tradition that he was apprenticed to a butcher. At eighteen he was married to a woman eight years older than himself. When he was twenty, there were three children (two being twins) to provide for as well as his wife and himself. This poverty-stricken situation left no time for the study of Greek, Latin, French and Italian, nor for the universal knowledge displayed in the dramatic works of Shakespeare. What sent him to London shortly after the birth of the twins is not known. It may have been a search for work to meet his financial necessities, or it may have been to avoid prosecution for poaching on Sir Thomas Lucy's preserves, of which we have heard so much. Tradition says his first employment in London was as a groom outside a theatre, holding horses for play-goers.

The argument of greatest weight in the attribution of the plays to the Stratford man is that his name was very similar to that of the dramatist as published on the title-pages of play quartos and folios, poems and sonnets, though the spelling is slightly different. Warwickshire records of this family and William's signatures show the spelling to have been generally "Shakspeare," though often "Shaxper" and "Shacksper," indicating "Shäxper" as the pronunciation. The dramatist's name is

printed "Shakespeare" and in a few cases with a hyphen separating "shake" and "speare," which indicates the clearly definite pronunciation we know today. The little hyphen seems a small matter, but in reality, it suggests a pen-name, a pseudonym.

There is a small point in this connection which may bear investigation. The gentlemen pensioners of Queen Elizabeth's Court, of whom there were about a hundred, were sometimes called "speares." There are allusions in the plays which suggest that the author sometimes prodded members of the Court circle in such a way as to disturb their equanimity, that is, the "speares" were "shaken." I am reminded of what Jaques says when he sees the Fool:

O that I were a fool!

I am ambitious for a motley coat.

Invest me in my motley; give me leave  
To speak my mind, and I will through and through  
Cleanse the foul body of th' infected world,  
If they will patiently receive my medicine.

About a century ago, students of Shakespeare began to doubt that the plays had been correctly attributed. The known facts about the Stratford man were so few and they were so inconsistent with the learning shown in the plays that a new theory was projected. The belief gained ground that some man of great learning, some man familiar with the Court and courtly ways, must have written them. As Sir Francis Bacon was such a man, he became the choice of a number of students for the personage behind the mask and the theory then propounded is still followed by many. There are three arguments against this theory. First, Francis Bacon lived a very full life in his profession of the law, which eventually carried him into the office of Lord Chancellor, and in experimenting in scientific matters, the results of which he published in his books. Second, Lord Bacon's prose is very prosy, there is no swing, no music in it such as a lyric poet unintentionally puts into his prose, and Shakespeare was a great lyric poet. Third, my own study of the plays shows that some of them were written too early for Bacon, born in 1561, to have had a hand in them.

Not until 1920 did a better theory come to take its place. An English schoolmaster, J. Thomas Looney, dissatisfied with both the Stratford and the Bacon theories, began a study which culminated in his publication of a book which all readers have found fascinating, "*Shakespeare*" Identified in *Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*. This book, I regret to say, is now difficult to pro-

cure, as the stock remaining in the publisher's hands was burned in the great fire in London in December, 1940.

Edward de Vere was born in 1550 at Castle Hedingham in Essex, home of the de Veres from the time of William the Conqueror. He was the only son of John de Vere, sixteenth Earl of Oxford, a famous sportsman, and his second wife, Margaret Golding. In 1562, John de Vere died and the twelve-year-old Edward succeeded to all his father's titles and estates, properties scattered in twelve English counties. Edward, as seventeenth Earl of Oxford, became a royal ward and went to live with the Master of Royal Wards, Sir William Cecil, later Lord Burghley, Lord Great Treasurer of England, at Cecil House in the Strand, where a household of eighty persons was maintained.

Cecil drew up for his ward a schedule of study and exercise to be followed each day and secured as tutors men who were recognized scholars. Lawrence Nowell, Dean of Lichfield, was one—he quickly noted the precocity of his pupil; another was Arthur Golding, the child's uncle, translator of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which was published in 1567; as he was tutoring young Edward through the years previous to its publication, it may be assumed that his brilliant pupil assisted with the translation, even possibly helped to turn it into English verse. This would account for many passages in the plays which are reminiscent of Ovid. Except Golding, no one knew Ovid as well as the pupil.

The young Earl spent some time at St. John's College, Cambridge University, receiving his M.A. degree there at the age of fourteen. He received a similar degree from Oxford University at the age of sixteen and at seventeen was admitted to Gray's Inn for the study of law.

A Cecil account book is extant which lists a number of items purchased for the Earl of Oxford in 1570, when he was twenty. Among the items are a number of books, books which were necessarily familiar to the author of the Shakespeare plays. One was a Geneva Bible; Carter shows that it was that version of the Bible with which Shakespeare was most familiar. Another item is Plutarch's works in French, that is, Amyot's translation from the Greek, from which Thomas North a few years later made his translation into English. The Roman plays are supposed to have been based on North's translation, yet the dramatist was already acquainted with Amyot's French version. There are other sources than Plutarch, however, for some of the

references in the Roman plays; for example, in *Julius Caesar*, Antony's sarcastic iteration of "honourable," as applied to Brutus and Cassius, was suggested by passages in Cicero's *Second Philippic*, of which there was no translation in Shakespeare's time. Some commentators find this an impediment and do not think this bit of sarcasm came from such a source, for they believe the Stratford man was dependent on English translations, as he assuredly would have been if he had written the plays. In the young Earl's purchase of books in 1570, we find "Tully's works" listed; "Tully" is but another name for Cicero, and we thus learn that young Oxford knew the *Second Philippic*. "Plato's works" is an item also listed, but whether in the original Greek or in a Latin translation is not indicated. There are passages in several plays which show familiarity with Plato. As Lady Cecil made Greek her favorite study, it seems more than probable that Greek was a subject studied by Oxford while a member of her household.

When his Cambridge tutor, Bartholomew Clerke, published his translation from Italian into Latin of Castiglione's *Courtier*, the young Earl wrote a delightful Latin preface for it, in which he states, as translated by Ward: "To me indeed it seems, when I read this courtly Latin, that I am listening to Crassus, Antonius, and Hortensius, discoursing on this very theme." The names of these old Romans are all found in the plays.

About the time he came of age and later, several authors and translators dedicated their works to Lord Oxford in terms which testified to the young man's love of learning and his early reputation as a scholar.

The year 1571 was an important one in the Earl's life. He took his seat in the House of Lords at a time when the troubles with the Queen of Scots were beginning to be extremely serious, a situation in which the Spanish King was much embroiled, and when France was trying to steer a middle course between the Guises and the Huguenots. In a famous tournament of this year he won the chief prize, though the other contestants were older and more experienced. One observer remarked at this time, "There is no man of life and ability in every respect in the Court but the Earl of Oxford." Another described his beautiful riding; like Henry V when Prince of Wales, he could "witch the world with noble horsemanship."

In December, he was married to Lord Burghley's daughter, Anne Cecil, an alliance which greatly pleased her father, but it did not prove to be a

happy one. It is impossible in a short paper to go into the details, the pros and cons, of this unhappy marriage, though it naturally had an influence on the lives of both. Nor can we take time to tell of the trial for treason and the execution of the Duke of Norfolk, first cousin of Lord Oxford, who was much embittered over the tragic affair, as he did not believe the Duke guilty. Again, we cannot tell the story of Christopher Hatton's jealousy of the young Earl, who was now uppermost in the Queen's affections, a place Hatton was striving for.

Again and again, the Earl requested that he be given something active to do in her Majesty's service, but failed to secure an appointment. He was told that he was too young. Finally, in 1574, he ran away to the Low Countries where Spain was waging war against the Flemish, hoping to see some military action. The Queen was furious with him for going without license and sent Thomas Bedingfield to bring him home. He returned promptly. Since he could not secure an appointment in the service of his country, he decided travel was the next best thing and at last prevailed upon the Queen to grant him a license. With quite a retinue, he left England in January, 1575, and spent the next sixteen months traveling in France, Germany, and Italy, most of the time in Italy. He was the person who could later write—

Tranio, since, for the great desire I had  
To see fair Padua, nursery of arts,  
I am arriv'd for fruitful Lombardy,  
The pleasant garden of great Italy.

Other plays whose scenes are set in Italy with a vividness which suggests visual knowledge can be understood when it is known that their author spent a year in that land of charm and Renaissance learning.

Owing to a libellous tale about his wife told him in Paris on his way home, the Earl refused to have anything to do with her or her father when he arrived in England, an unhappy estrangement which lasted five years. Meanwhile, he seems to have spent his time writing plays and verses, all the while growing into renewed favor with the Queen.

The first playhouse in England, called the Theatre, was built in 1576, the year of his return from Italy, and was soon followed by others. Plays given in these theatres were supposed to be rehearsed there for eventual production at Court.

The records of the Court Revels for the next few years list plays whose titles are very suggestive of plays later known as Shakespeare's. The titles of ten plays given by companies with which Lord Ox-



ford is known to have been associated in some way will now be given, with my interpretation of each title.

"The historie of Error" . . . . *The Comedy of Errors*  
 "The historie of the Solitarie Knight"

*Timon of Athens*

"The historye of Titus and Gissippus"

*Titus Andronicus*

(In parenthesis, I shall here say that the permanent accounts of the Court Revels were written down from day-to-day slips of paper, often almost illegible, so illegible that the copyist sometimes unintentionally altered a word and again was forced to omit part of a title because he could not read it. In writing "Titus and Gissippus," it is probable that the copyist knew Boccaccio's tale and had never heard of "Titus Andronicus.")

"A history of the creweltie of A Stepmother"

*Cymbeline*

"A Morrall of the marryage of Mynde and Measure"

*The Taming of the Shrew*

"The historie of the Rape of the second Helene"

*All's Well That Ends Well*

(An extraordinary episode in *All's Well* is told in all seriousness in Wright's *History of Essex* as having happened to Oxford.)

"A double Maske—A Maske of Amasones and an other Maske of knightes" . . . *Love's Labour's Lost*

(In this case the transcription omits the name of the play and mentions only the Mask at the end.)

"The history of the Duke of Millayn and the Marques of Mantua" . . . *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

"The history of Portio and Demorantes"

*The Merchant of Venice*

("Demorantes" is a mistranscription for "the merchant.")

"The history of Serpedon" . . . *Antony and Cleopatra*

(The mistranscription of this title calls for a more lengthy explanation than I can now enter into.)

After I had made this suggestive list from the records, I began a study of the history of several months preceding the date of each play listed and found, in what I considered the equivalent Shakespeare play, frequent allusions to events of the period under question. In some of the plays there are many remarkable allusions. These plays were all written before Bacon was twenty and before William Shakspeare of Stratford was seventeen.

At the end of 1580, Lord Oxford revealed to the Queen that some of his acquaintances were engaged in an intrigue against her, the object being to place Mary Stuart on the throne in her stead. The men concerned were fanatical Roman Catholics and

friends of Spain, even though they were Elizabeth's courtiers and men of whom she was fond, though none of them at the time stood as high in her favor as the Earl of Oxford. They trumped up serious counter-charges against him and the Queen knew not whom to believe. All were put under restraint.

Unfortunately, the Earl became involved in an affair of the heart about the same time with one of the Queen's Maids of Honour, a matter which seems to have incensed Elizabeth against him even more than the conspirators' counter-charges. He was forbidden the Court and it was two and a half years before he made his peace with her. There was some compensation in his banishment for at some time during this period his wife and her father performed such friendly services in his behalf that their estrangement came to an end, and the Earl and his Countess resumed their life together at Castle Hedingham.

Plays continued to flow from his pen, though—and this is very interesting—nothing is listed in the records of the Court Revels which remotely suggests a Shakespeare play. His plays, as well as the man himself, were banished from Court.

Having established by topical allusions that ten Shakespeare plays were the same as plays of suggestive titles given before 1581, it is possible to place in chronological order the remaining plays by allusions alone, and that I believe I have done. It is impossible to comment on all of these plays in the allotted time, especially as there are other matters to mention.

In 1579 appeared John Lyly's *Euphues, or the Anatomie of Wit*, forerunner of the novel, a book filled with affected writing, similes and alliteration, which immediately became popular. The first volume was followed the next year by another written in the same strain, *Euphues and His England*, which was dedicated to the Earl of Oxford. About the same time, Lyly became secretary to Lord Oxford, a position he held for more than a decade. The Shakespeare plays which I place in the early 1580's, according to the topicalities found in them, reflect a moderated euphuism, euphuism tempered by a finer taste than Lyly's. As this affected language lost its vogue after a few short years, we may be sure that no author would have revived it fifteen or twenty years later, where the Stratfordian chronology would place it. Our own experience with fads and fashions will prove that.

Thomas Watson's *Hekatompathia: or the Passionate Century of Love*, published in 1582, was dedicated to Lord Oxford. The hundred sonnets of

which this work is composed are accompanied by learned annotations indicating a knowledge of classical authors that is remarkable and are believed to have been written by the Earl. There are a few echoes of Watson's thought in Shakespeare's plays which I place in this period, one line a direct quotation: "In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke," found in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

The first edition of Montaigne's *Essays* came out in 1580, a second in 1582, and there are many suggestions of Montaigne in Shakespeare plays of this same period. The dramatist was evidently much impressed by the homely philosophy set forth in the *Essays*.

Batman *upon Bartholome* was published in 1582, a semi-scientific work frequently reflected in Shakespeare plays at this time. A very little later Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* was published and, again, we find it reflected in the Shakespeare plays. A less important work of 1582 was published by Oliver Pigge, a Puritan minister who had a good many followers. This book was *A comfortable treatise upon the latter part of the fourth chapitre of the First Epistle of Saint Peter and Touchstone's line in As You Like It*—"A most wicked Sir Oliver, . . . a most vile Martext"—is directly traceable to this work. Oliver Pigge marred the text as Lord Oxford knew it in his Geneva Bible. An obvious reference to an obscure publication would never be included in a play written twenty years later. It must be topical to mean anything to playgoers.

Malone, writing at the end of the eighteenth century, has this to say: "From some words spoken by Polonius in *Hamlet*, I think it is probable that there was an English play on Julius Caesar before Shakespeare commenced as a writer for the stage. Stephen Gosson, in his *Plays Conjured in Five Actions*, published about 1582, mentions a play entitled *The History of Caesar and Pompey*. . . . It should also be remembered that our author has several plays founded on subjects which had been previously treated by others. Of this kind are *King John*, *Richard II*, *1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Richard III*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Measure for Measure*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Merchant of Venice*, and, I believe, *Timon* and *2 and 3 Henry VI* [and he might have mentioned several others, like *Hamlet*], whereas no proof has hitherto been produced that any contemporary writer ever presumed to new-model a story that had already employed the pen of Shakespeare." This is a naive admission for Mr. Malone to make. Apparently, in his opinion, it was quite all right for Shakespeare

to take over other people's plays and rewrite them but it would have been presumption if later dramatists had written on subjects Shakespeare had cribbed from others. Malone and commentators who have followed him can only think of the Stratford man as the writer of the plays, too young to have written them in the 1580's. It does not occur to them that the plays were written by an older man and that, when they began to appear in print some ten or fifteen years later, they were issued under the pen-name "Shakespeare."

We have the word of contemporary critics that Lord Oxford was first among the playwrights of the 1580's. William Webbe, writing in 1586, says: "I may not omit the deserved commendations of many honourable and noble Lords and Gentlemen in Her Majesty's Court, which, in the rare devices of poetry have been, and yet are, most skilful; among whom the Right Honourable Earl of Oxford may challenge to himself the title of the most excellent among the rest." In 1589, Puttenham, in "The Arte of English Poesie," writes: "And in Her Majesty's time that now is are sprung up another crew of Courtly makers [poets], Noblemen and Gentlemen of Her Majesty's own servants, who have written excellently well *if their dotings could be found out and made public with the rest*, of which number is first that noble gentleman *Edward Earl of Oxford*."

I have not the time to tell you the evidence of Lord Oxford's personal attention given to the acting companies, the Queen's and Paul's, through this decade. Nor can I go into detail about the grant in 1586 by the Queen to the Earl of Oxford of £1,000 a year, for a purpose not disclosed in the document, discovered only a few years ago. It is sufficient to remark that an old tradition says that Shakespeare spent at the rate of £1,000 a year, yet it is known that the Stratford man could never have had one-third of that amount yearly. One must believe that it was the person behind the pen-name "Shakespeare" who spent at the rate of £1,000 a year.

Through the decade of the 1580's, John Lyly served as secretary to Lord Oxford, yet we learn from Gabriel Harvey that Lyly was at the same time acting as "Vicemaster of Paul's and Foolmaster of the Theatre," that is, he was directing the company known as Paul's Boys (also known as Oxford's Boys) and the Queen's Company which generally played at the Theatre. This is a very important fact. That Lyly was directing these companies at the selfsame time that he was secretary to

Lord Oxford brings the latter into a very close personal connection with the playing companies. Why his name was not mentioned was probably due to a convention of the period which did not permit a nobleman to engage in such an occupation—the acting profession was not then as highly regarded as it is now—and Lord Oxford was the premier earl, Lord Great Chamberlain of England.

About the time of the defeat of the Armada in 1588, there arose a controversy between the growing Puritan faction and the Church, as represented by Archbishop Whitgift, called the "Marprelate controversy." Many pamphlets, secretly printed, were issued and the affair created a great stir, being political as well as religious. John Lyly and Thomas Nashe, followers of Lord Oxford, were charged with being the authors of some of the anti-Puritan pamphlets. In 1589, the company known as the Paul's Boys (otherwise Oxford's Boys) was dissolved for showing Martin Marprelate on the stage as an ape. At the same time, the Queen's Company was under restraint for a similar infraction of the religious code of the times. These were the two companies with which Lord Oxford was most closely connected, as we know through his secretary Lyly's direction of them. This stage crisis of 1589 was followed the next year by the Lord Chancellor (Hatton again) declaring the Earl of Oxford bankrupt. All that remained to him were entailed properties which could not be touched by the courts and of these, through Lord Burghley, he alienated to his three daughters (his wife had died in 1588) his ancestral estate of Castle Hedingham.

In 1591 was published Spenser's "Teares of the Muses," in which the lines given to Thalia comment sympathetically on the situation:

Where be the sweete delights of learnings treasure,  
That wont with comick sock to beautifie  
The painted theaters, and fill with pleasure  
The listners eyes, and ears with melodie;  
In which I late was wont to raine as queene,  
And maske in mirth with graces well becene?

O, all is gone! and all that goodly glee,  
Which wont to be the glorie of gay wits,  
Is layd abed, and no where now to see;  
And in her roome unseemly Sorrow sits,  
With hollow browes and greisly countenance,  
Marring my joyous gentle dalliaunce.

After several stanzas complaining that these pleasures have been replaced by Barbarism and Ignorance, Thalia continues:

But that same gentle spirit, from whose pen

Large streames of homnic and sweete nectar flowe,  
Scorning the boldnes of such base-borne men,  
Which dare their follies forth so rashlie throwe,  
Doth rather choose to sit in idle cell,  
Than so himselve to mockerie to sell.

Allusions in the plays show that Lord Oxford wrote no plays after 1590 (with the possible exception of *Henry VIII*, written about the time of Queen Elizabeth's death in 1603, which is very un-Shakespearean). Shortly after 1590, garbled quartos of Shakespeare plays began to be published by pirate printers but with no name attached. Not until 1598 did the name Shakespeare appear on the title-page of a play quarto. Its first use, however, was in 1593, when it was signed to a letter addressed to the Earl of Southampton as a preface to the poem, *Venus and Adonis*, and in the next year it was signed to a similar letter prefacing *The Rape of Lucrece*.

Three years after his first wife's death, Lord Oxford married Elizabeth Trentham, one of the Queen's Maids of Honour. Henceforth, he made his home near the theatres, first at Stoke Newington, near Shoreditch, and from 1596, at Hackney (now a part of Greater London), where he died in 1604.

Although no new plays were written, it seems probable that he spent much of the intervening time in revising his old plays and giving them the literary form we know today. That his interest in the stage was revived after a brief period is apparent, but it is also apparent that, after the crisis of 1589 and 1590, he masked his personal participation more carefully than ever. Many pages would be required for a re-interpretation of the events of the 1590's which would indicate Lord Oxford's further connection with the stage.

Of the men whose names are most closely associated with that of Shakespeare, the Earl of Southampton was betrothed to Lord Oxford's eldest daughter at the time *Venus and Adonis* was published; they did not marry, however, and little more than a year later she was married to the sixth Earl of Derby, when *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was produced in celebration. One student of Shakespeare believes this Earl of Derby was the author of the plays. A few years later, Lord Oxford's second daughter was betrothed to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke; they also did not marry, possibly because of Lord Pembroke's involvement in a scandal with Mary Fitton, whose name is sometimes linked with Shakespeare's. During the Christmas season of 1604, six months after the death of Lord Oxford, his third and youngest daughter was mar-

ried to Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery, an event which gave great joy to his brother of Pembroke.

Nearly twenty years later, in 1623, the Shakespeare First Folio was published and dedicated to the "Incomparable Paire of Brethren," William Earl of Pembroke and Philip Earl of Montgomery, the two sons of Philip Sidney's sister Mary, Countess of Pembroke. That these intimate connections of Lord Oxford were also intimate with Shakespeare cannot be a mere coincidence. Summed up with all we know of the life of Oxford, the conclusion can only be that "Shakespeare" was a pseudonym for the Lord Great Chamberlain of England.

There remains to be explained the part Ben Jonson played in the publication of the First Folio, a part difficult to make clear in a few lines. Although Jonson claimed to be a great friend of the dramatist, he did not mark the death of William of Stratford in 1616 by any eulogistic verses and he was the master of epitaphs—some one has said, "There are no epitaphs like Jonson's." No one else marked the passing of the man who died in 1616, a remarkable fact if he was really the dramatist. Trying to live by his pen, at a time when authorship was not highly rewarded, Jonson was the recipient of generous gifts made by those more highly placed, among them, the Earl of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain to King James. In recognition of his obligations, Jonson was quite willing to assist Pembroke and his brother Montgomery in continuing the deception regarding the authorship of the plays begun in the lifetime of Lord Oxford. The two men to whom the Folio was dedicated and the wife of one of them, daughter of Lord Oxford, wished to preserve the plays by having them published, but, since play-writing was not then honored as it would be today, they decided to respect the anonymity Lord Oxford had himself assumed.

The most recent additional proof that Lord Oxford was "Shakespeare" appeared two years ago in the pages of *The Scientific American* in an article by Mr. Charles Wisner Barrell. By means of X-Ray and Infra-Red photographs, Mr. Barrell shows that, under the surface coat of paint of three of the best known Shakespeare portraits, the Earl of Oxford, with identifying symbols, has been revealed. In his article, Mr. Barrell describes in particular, and illustrates with photographic details, the Ashbourne portrait, which hangs in the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D. C.

It is an interesting and curious fact that a portrait, which hangs in Warwick Castle and is pointed out to visitors because of its resemblance to Shakespeare portraits, is that of Robert Bertie, Earl of Lindsay, son of Lord Oxford's sister Mary, Lady Willoughby.

## Mr. Cushman's Addresses

It is gratifying to report that Mr. James Stewart Cushman spoke on the Oxford-Shakespeare problem at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, the first week in February. His talk was well received except by one hostile Professor, who continues to bombard him with supposedly unanswerable questions. The Professor will find that every Stratfordian question has a perfectly reasonable answer.

Mr. Cushman also spoke at Rutgers College, New Brunswick, New Jersey, on Thursday evening, March 12th. He has been invited to speak at Bryn Mawr College in May, where he will undoubtedly meet the distinguished Elizabethan scholar and literary critic, Dr. Samuel Chew.

Addresses like these arouse a new interest in the plays of Shakespeare as well as in the problem of authorship. The plays come to life when one can picture the personality of the author as a man of university training who was closely identified with all of the important individuals of Elizabeth's reign, of Court, of Council, and of the dramatic and literary world. Classical scholarship, cultural environment, and familiarity with contemporary thought and events are obvious all through the plays.

## April News-Letter

Though the Fellowship's usual April meeting will not be held this year, the NEWS-LETTER is celebrating the birthday month by publishing a twenty-page number instead of the regular twelve pages.

The continuation of Mr. Charles Wisner Barrell's "sonnet story" arrives at a dramatic climax in this issue. He ties the *Sonnets* in so closely with the life of the Earl of Oxford that the mystery which has always puzzled students seems at last to have been correctly solved. It must be remembered that these fascinating verses were not written for publication. They were "Shakespeare's sugred sonnets among his private friends," as stated by Meres.