

News-Letter

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"Shake-speare's" Own Secret Drama

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

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(Part Four—With Illustration)

During generations past, considerable time, money and reading patience have been expended in trying to make the realistic human elements in *Shake-speare's Sonnets* fit the baffling biographical data of William of Stratford. But these efforts have carried no conviction whatever. Not one single definite documentary fact has ever been turned up to prove that the Warwickshire native, in his own person, ever had any of the human contacts or actual experiences that provide the immortal warp and woof of these poems. As a matter of fact, in all essentials the Stratfordian biographical outline contradicts most significantly the generally admitted autobiographical elements that give the *Sonnets* such vital interest.

In discussing and endeavoring to interpret the poems from the orthodox angle, the situation long ago degenerated into a mere matter of Prof. So-and-So's conjecture. Heavy thinking and involved writing have been substituted for actual facts.

Cut off, as they have been from their real life background for more than three hundred years, and incidentally misread most scandalously by proponents of Sir Francis Bacon, whose

ridiculously exaggerated claims have done much to bring serious study of the authorship mystery into disrepute, it is no wonder that the *Sonnets* have baffled so many readers, despite the "plain, truth-telling" characterizations with which they abound.

It was not until the years subsequent to 1920, when Mr. Looney introduced us to Edward de Vere as the authentic Bard, that the long-hidden human groundwork and creative motives of the *Sonnets* could be brought to light with any degree of documented realism.

In 1930, Rev. Dr. Gerald H. Rendall, Hon. Canon of Chelmsford and former Headmaster of the Charter House School, published a scholarly work entitled *Shakespeare Sonnets and Edward de Vere*; followed in 1934 by another volume that should be read by every student of the Oxford authorship evidence, viz.: *Personal Clues in Shakespeare Poems and Sonnets*. In these works Dr. Rendall gives us many-sided proof of Edward de Vere's responsibility for the

Sonnets, as witnessed particularly by the deep Renaissance scholarship and cosmopolitan point of view which are known to have been characteristic

IMPORT OF THESE DISCOVERIES

Exploration of Edward de Vere's private life now makes it possible to identify through contemporary documentation a group of individuals with whom the poet Earl shared highly dramatic emotional experiences.

Persons of exactly the same character, physical appearance and social station are minutely described in *Shake-speare's Sonnets*. Moreover, the Bard pictures these persons as intimately associated with him in a series of circumstances identical with those that can be proven to have existed between the 17th Earl of Oxford, his dark-haired, dark-eyed mistress, Anne Vavasor, and their bastard son, later internationally admired as Sir Edward Vere, Lieutenant-Colonel of Lord Horatio Vere's famous British regiment that played an heroic role in the long struggle for Dutch independence.

The presentation of these hitherto unknown facts throws new light upon the *Sonnets*, gives them their long-sought human background, and at the same time strengthens enormously all previously published evidence that the head of the great Vere family in Elizabethan times was the authentic "Shake-Speare."

—The Editors.

of the literary Earl. Dr. Rendall did not attempt, however, to identify Anne Vavasor as the "Dark Lady," nor when he wrote these well-grounded studies did he have any inkling of the fact that Vere of Oxford had a bastard son who bore "name of single one" with him.

As a matter of fact, no Oxfordian investigator can claim the honor of having been the first to place the dynamic Anne within the Shakespearean creative orbit. This was done as long ago as the year 1852 by no less an orthodox authority than the indefatigable James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips, author of the *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*. Halliwell (as he was then known), published for the first time an Elizabethan manuscript copy of *Verses made by the earle of Oxforde and Mrs Ann Vavesor*. They are included in his rare volume, *Shakespeare's Reliques*, along with other poems known to the Bard and later drawn upon by him for situations and figures of speech in works issued under the name of "Shakespeare" or "Shakespeare."

So it will be observed that Anne Vavasor enjoys the full blessing of orthodox authority as a personal entity in the Shakespearean creative background.

However, in all honesty, we must admit that Halliwell-Phillips, despite his monumental labors in behalf of the Stratford native, ended his career as a Shakespearean scholar in a far less "orthodox" mood than he had begun. After serving for a period as custodian and collator of ancient records at Stratford-on-Avon, he finally resigned in high dudgeon and in 1887 issued a book denouncing the general atmosphere of the place in such words as these:

"STRATFORD-ON-AVON, UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF ITS OLIGARCHY, INSTEAD OF BEING, AS IT OUGHT TO BE THE CENTER OF SHAKESPEARE-BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH, HAS BECOME THE SEAT OF SHAKESPEAREAN CHARLATANRY."

Still, if he had but known it, Halliwell-Phillips had the key to the whole Shakespeare mystery in his hands when he found the ancient manuscript which appears to be the collaborative work of Edward de Vere and his dark-haired mistress. The rhymes were evidently composed prior to 1581, during the earlier days of their liaison. They read as follows:

*Verses made by the earle of Oxforde
and Mrs Ann Vavesor*

Sitting alone upon my thought in melancholy mood,
In sight of sea and at my back an ancient hoary
wood,

I saw a fair young lady come, her secret fear to
wail,

Clad all in color of a Nun and covered with a veil:
Yet (for the day was calm and clear) I might discern
her face,

As one might see a damask rose hid under chrysal
glass.

Three times with her soft hand full hard on her left
side she knocks,

And sighed so sore as might have moved some pity
in the rocks.

From sighs, and shedding amber tears, into sweet
song she broke,

When thus the Echo answered her to every word
she spoke.

Ann Vavasor's echo.

O heavens, quoth she, who was ye first that bred in
me this feavere? Vere.

Who was the first that gave ye wound whose scar I
wear for evere? Vere.

What, tyrant, Cupid! to my harm usurps thy golden
quiver? Vere.

What wight first caught this heart and can from
bondage it deliver? Vere.

Yet who doth most adore this wight, oh hollow
caves! tell true? You.

What nymph deserves his liking best, yet doth in
sorrow rue? You.

What makes him not reward good will with some
remorse or ruth? Youth.

What makes him show besides his birth such pride
and such untruth? Youth.

May I his favor match with love; if he my love will
try? Aye.

May I requite his birth with faith? then faithful
will I die? Aye.

And I that knew this lady well
Said, Lord how great a miracle,
To her how echo told the truth,
As true as Phoebus' oracle.

These verses bear the unmistakable evidences of combined authorship, Oxford's personality being apparent in the opening and closing movements. There is another manuscript version owned by the Folger Shakespeare Library, which not only credits Oxford as author in the heading, but which has the name "Vavasor" appended. In any event, it seems certain that Anne had a hand in this commemoration of a highly mannered intrigue which was to end soon after in major catastrophe for both of the "star-crossed lovers."

Shakespearean echoes of this echo ballad have been pointed out many times. They appear in

Juliet's balcony speech when she says:

Bondage is hoarse, and may not speak aloud;
Else would I tear the cave where Echo lies,
And make her airy tongue more hoarse than
mine,
With repetition of my Romeo's name.

Romeo!

Again, in *Venus and Adonis* we have a direct and unmistakable paraphrase of the verses bearing the joint superscription of the Earl of Oxford and Anne Vavasor. When Adonis rejects the advances of the goddess, leaving her as one deserted in "some mistrustful wood," Venus reacts in the same manner that Anne herself had reacted in the vicinity of "an ancient hoary wood":

And now she beats her heart, whereat it
groans,
That all the neighbor caves, as seeming
troubled,
Make verbal repetition of her moans;
Passion on passion deeply is redoubled:
'Ay me!' she cries, and twenty times,
'Woe, woe!'
And twenty echoes twenty times cry so.

V. & A. l. 829-34.

An Elizabethan scholar of unquestioned standing, Dr. Rendall says that the utilization of so much creative imagery from the then unpublished private verses of the Earl of Oxford and his mistress "constitute conclusive proof that the *Venus and Adonis* came from the hand of Edward de Vere."

It naturally follows that the same hand wrote the *Sonnets*; also it is logical to believe that the woman who had been the poet's inspiration and creative collaborator in the fullest sense of the phrase must figure prominently in these keenly autobiographical poems.

Study of Anne Vavasor's career, personal character and painted portraits, in parallel with Oxford's documentation and *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, leads me to identify forty-one of the sonnets unhesitatingly as written to or about this "whitely wanton with the velvet brow."

I will set these down in the same Arabic numerals that they bear in the original 1609 edition, as follows:

Nos. 38, 43, 57, 58, 61, 76, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 98, 109, 112, 113, 114, 115, 127, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151 and 152.

As all authorities agree, the original manuscript or "fair copy" of the *Sonnets* came into the hands

of Thomas Thorpe, the publisher, surreptitiously. The author, as Oxfordians know, was dead and all evidence indicates that no member of his family or other personal representative took any part in arranging or proof-reading Thorpe's printed version.

Therefore, the numerals that the poems bear cannot be accepted as representing the chronological order in which they were written. In fact, it seems to me that Nos. 153 and 154, the two last sonnets in the book, were probably among the first to be composed by Edward de Vere in the 1570's when he came back to England from Italy, bringing with him a touch of the Venetian ague which his letters from Venice tell us he had contracted there.*

On the other hand, many of the sonnets that bear low numerals, such as Nos. 19 and 22, addressed to the "fair youth," Edward Vere, bear every evidence of having been done late in Lord Oxford's life.

Analization in detail of *all* personal elements apparent in the sonnets written to or about Anne Vavasor calls for specialized study and more space than we can give the necessary documentation at this time. Several of the poems are dominated entirely by sex motives. These have been annotated quite extensively by Havelock Ellis and other psychologists. Sonnet 151, beginning, "Love is too young to know what conscience is" belongs to this group. I take it to have been written by Oxford during the early period of his affair with Anne, perhaps during 1578 or '79.

On the other hand, Sonnet 152 was written many years later, after the birth of Edward Vere the younger, some time after Anne had married John Finche; in fact, very likely after this untamable "haggard hawk" had drifted down the wind to rest on the arm of old Sir Henry Lee at Woodstock in 1590.

We will reprint Sonnet 152 in full, not only to instance the stark passion which springs from the very bottom of a human heart hard hit with jealousy—giving the lie direct to those followers of Sir

*In sonnets 153 and 154, "Shakespeare," "a sad distemper'd guest," visits a hot bathing spring located, like classic Hippocrene, in "a cold mountain valley," where he seeks "a healthful remedy for men diseased," etc. Commentators innumerable have stated that the poet is describing an episode at Bath, though the geographical characteristics mentioned do not match those of Bath. I would suggest, instead, that Oxford, the real author, had in mind Buxton Springs, in the High Peak country of Derbyshire, where the hot and cold thermal baths were much in vogue with "distemper'd" courtiers of Elizabethan days. Many of Oxford's known associates, including Lord Burghley and the Earls of Shrewsbury, Warwick, Leicester and Essex all took the cure at Buxton. One of the favorite medicinal springs in Buxton at that period was "St. Anne's Well."

Sidney Lee who claim that these poems are mere "literary exercises"—but to bring out clearly the fact that both the writer and his promiscuous mistress are married, though not to each other. This was the situation with both Edward de Vere and Anne Vavasor during a considerable period of their intimacy.

In loving thee thou know'st I am forsworn,
But thou art twice forsworn, to me love swearing;
In act thy bed-vow broke, and new faith torn,
In vowing new hate after new love bearing.
But why of two oaths' breach do I accuse thee,
When I break twenty! I am perjured most;
For all my vows are oaths but to misuse thee,
And all my honest faith in thee is lost:
For I have sworn deep oaths of thy deep kindness,
Oaths of thy love, thy truth, thy constancy;
And, to enlighten thee, gave eyes to blindness,
Or made them swear against the thing they see;
For I have sworn thee fair: more perjured eye,
To swear against the truth so foul a lie!

Also, in Sonnet 143, a masterpiece of recrimination, Oxford accuses Anne of hypocrisy, a characteristic she is known to have possessed, and again he brings out the fact that she has made adultery a fine art. Authenticated records of her career prove this beyond all shadow of doubt.

O, but with mine compare thou thine own state,
And thou shalt find it merits not reproving;
Or, if it do, not from those lips of thine,
That have profaned their scarlet ornaments
And seal'd false bonds of love as oft as mine,
Robbed others' beds' revenues of their rents.

The name Vavasor means literally "a chief of vassals." "Shake-speare" very significantly plays directly upon this in two of his most outspoken sonnets addressed to the wayward "Dark Lady."

That god forbid that made me first your slave,
I should in thought control your times of
pleasure,

Or at your hand the account of hours to crave,
Being your vassal, bound to stay your leisure!

Sonnet 58

But my five wits nor my five senses can
Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee,
Who leaves unsway'd the likeness of a man,
Thy proud heart's slave and vassal wretch to be.

Sonnet 141

There is another sonnet (No. 91) which undoubtedly dates from the early period of Oxford's association with Anne Vavasor. This may very well be a commentary in remembrance of Anne's verses in the Echo Ballad wherein she refers to her lover's

"birth" and "pride" which she will "requite . . . with faith."

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,
Some in their wealth, some in their body's force;
Some in their garments, though new-fangled ill;
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their
horse;

And every humor hath its adjunct pleasure,
Wherein it finds a joy above the rest:
But these particulars are not my measure;
All these I better in one general best.
Thy love is better than high birth to me,
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost,
Of more delight than hawks or horses be;
And having thee, of all men's pride I boast:
Wretched in this alone, that thou mayst take
All this away and me most wretched make.

Here we have the nobleman speaking in the first person, present tense. I challenge anyone with ordinary knowledge of the meaning of the English language to put any other construction upon these words. If written by a commoner such as Willm Shakspeare, who had been a butcher's apprentice and a horse groom, as his biographers state, this sonnet would be the silliest example of "sour grapes" imaginable. But, as a matter of fact, it is a direct, clear statement, notable for its sincerity.

When this was written, Oxford possessed every one of the enviable adjuncts of social prestige which "Shake-speare" enumerates: "birth," "skill," "body's force," (athletic prowess), "hawks and hounds," while his reputation as a sartorial fop who introduced "new-fangled" fashions from the Continent was publicly satirized by Gabriel Harvey and other writers. Yet the poet scorns his material advantages:

All these I better in one general best.
Thy love is better than high birth to me,
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments'
cost . . .

We may well ask: What have the professionally orthodox Shakespearean commentators been doing with their eyes and their sense of logic all these years?

Perhaps Gilbert K. Chesterton offers the best answer to this scholastic mystery in his *Dream of Bottom the Weaver*:

Once, when an honest weaver slept
And Puck passed by, a kindly traitor,
And on his shoulders placed the head
Of a Shakespearean commentator . . .

Documentation relating to the movements of Anne Vavasor after she had officially expiated her

sin in giving birth to Edward Vere the younger in March, 1581, is not readily available. We know that Oxford, the infant's father, was released from the Tower on June 8th of that year and can naturally assume that Anne was allowed to quit the grim confines of the historic prison at the same time. She evidently went back to her parents' home in Copmanthorpe, Yorkshire, with her child.

Among the State Papers, Domestic, of Elizabeth's reign, are a series of letters written by Charles Arundel, a brother of Sir Matthew Arundel of Wardour, when Arundel was in confinement during 1580-81 as a result of charges that Oxford had made against him, Lord Henry Howard and others as Catholic conspirators paid by Spain to stir up trouble in England. Arundel's letters had been intercepted by secret service agents of the government.

In one of them he tells of a conversation he had had with Oxford in prison and of Oxford's efforts to draw him out with these words:

"Charles, I have ever loved you, and as you have already given me your word to my mistress, so now I crave it myself."

Arundel goes on to say that these conversations with Oxford took place "after long speeches in secret between him (Oxford) and my cousin Vaviser who was the means of our meeting."

Another of these Arundel letters is addressed to an unnamed lady, and as it contains derogatory references to Oxford, while the writer condoles with the lady regarding her "disgrace and banishment," we can readily believe that Arundel intended it for Anne Vaviser following her release from the Tower in 1581.

Charles Arundel was one of the most sinister traitors that the Elizabethan period produced. He received a substantial salary from the King of Spain for many years, was finally forced to flee England to save his neck, and died abroad, disgraced and unmourning of honest men. The fact that he was one of Oxford's bitterest enemies is all to Oxford's credit. The most regrettable feature of their relationship is that a long catalog of criminal charges, that Arundel listed against Oxford in an effort to distract attention from his own sins, have been solemnly adopted by prominent but careless historians as a true evaluation of Oxford's character. This is about as sensible as it would be to accept at face value a German-American Bund leader's commentaries on the personality of Mr. J. Edgar Hoover.

Capt. B. M. Ward has identified Charles Arundel

as one of the turncoat Elizabethans responsible for the writing and circulation of that scurrilous classic of anti-English propaganda, *Leycester's Commonwealth*, which caused such a furor in 1584. The Earl of Leicester is described in this book as the real ruler of England, a monster of depravity whose leisure is entirely devoted to the seduction of the ladies of the Court:

Neither contented with this place of honor, he hath descended to seek pasture among the waiting Gentlewomen of her Majesties great Chamber, offering more for their allurements, than I think *Lais* did commonly take in Corinth, if three hundred pounds for a night will make up the sum: or if not, yet will he make it up otherwise: having reported himself (so little shame he hath) that he offered to another of higher place, an hundredth pound lands by the year with as many Jewels as most Women under her Majesty used in *England*: which was no mean bait to one that used traffic in such merchandize: she being but the leavings of another man before him, whereof my Lord (Leicester) is nothing squeamish, for satisfying of his lust, but can be content (as they say) to gather up crumbs when he is hungry, even in the very Laundry itself or other place of baser quality.

In the margin of this 1584 publication, opposite the reference to "another of higher place" who has been offered "an hundredth pound lands by the year," we find printed in type the name of "Anne Vaviser."

Whether Anne had actually become a member of Leicester's harem at this time we cannot be positive, for the authors of *Leycester's Commonwealth* are not to be accepted as trustworthy historians. Nevertheless, the book had some basis of truth; otherwise officials of the day would not have taken such vigorous action to prevent its circulation.* In any event, many of the sonnets addressed to the "Dark Lady" mention her intrigues with other men and the stratagems she employs to make material advantage of her charms.

Why should my heart think that a several plot†

Which my heart knows the wide world's common place?

*The book was ordered to be suppressed by letters from the Privy Council, in which it was declared that the charges against the Earl were to the Queen's certain knowledge untrue; nevertheless they produced a very strong impression, and were believed in by some who had no sympathy with Jesuits long after Leicester's death.

Ency. Brit.

†"A several plot," an enclosed field.

But we are getting ahead of our narrative.

Although Anne evidently returned to her Yorkshire home in 1581, she was not forgotten. Her friends at Court championed her cause in true cloak and sword fashion. Oxford was obliged to fight a duel.

The Earl had been confined to his house on the Queen's order after leaving the Tower and debarred from Court circles for two years. But on March 3, 1582 we learn from the diary of the Rev. Richard Madox:

"My lord of Oxford fought with Master Knyvet about the quarrel of Bessie Bavisar. . . ."

Despite the garbled name, the woman in the case was Anne Vavasor, "Master Knyvet" being her uncle, Mr. Thomas Knevett of the Privy Chamber.

In a letter written by Nicholas Faunt to Anthony Bacon a day or two later, we are also told:

"In England of late there hath been a fray between my lord of Oxford and Mr. Thomas Knevett of the privy chamber, who were both hurt, but my lord of Oxford more dangerously. You know Mr. Knevett is not meanly beloved in court; and therefore he is not like to speed ill, whatsoever the quarrel be."

Incidentally, it is worthy of note that Mr. Knevett survived to become one of England's unique heroes. As Sir Thomas Knevett, he led the party that captured Guy Fawkes red-handed amid the powder kegs in the cellar of The House of Parliament. In recognition of this feat, he was raised to the peerage as Baron Knevett of Escrick.

When great men meet on the field of action, the sparks are apt to fly. This was the case on March 3, 1582. Oxford was so badly wounded that he seems to have been physically handicapped for the rest of his life. In letters written to his father-in-law, Lord Burghley, and to his brother-in-law, Sir Robert Cecil, a few years later, he speaks of "mine infirmity" which prevents him from getting about quickly on his feet; again he says: "I am sorry that I have not an able body which might have served to attend on Her Majesty in the place where she is. . . ."

"Shake-speare" mentions the same kind of physical disability several times. In Sonnet 89 he pleads with his mistress:

Say that thou didst forsake me for some fault,
And I will comment upon that offence:
Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt,
Against thy reasons making no defence.
One of the finest tributes that the poet pays to his

bastard son is in Sonnet 37, where the contrast between the boy's physical perfection and the father's lameness is used with telling effect.

*As a decrepit father takes delight
To see his active child do deeds of youth,
So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite,
Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth:
For whether beauty, birth, or wealth, or wit,
Or any of these all, or all, or more,
Entilled in thy parts do crowned sit,
I make my love engrafted to this store:
So then I am not lame, poor, nor despised,
Whilst that this shadow doth such substance give
That I in thy abundance am sufficed
And by a part of all thy glory live.*

Look, what is best, that best I wish in thee:
This wish I have; then ten times happy me!

Two of the most magnificent sonnets in the English language are those numbered 73 and 74, both written late in Lord Oxford's life, and both addressed to the son that he loves more dearly as he feels his time draw nigh. The second of these contains what I take to be a direct reference to the permanent injury that the poet-peer had received at the hands of Thomas Knevett in 1582:

When thou reviewest this, thou dost review
The very part was consecrate to thee:
The earth can have but earth, which is his due;
My spirit is thine, the better part of me:
So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,
The prey of worms, my body being dead;
*The coward conquest of a wretch's knife,
Too base of thee to be rememberéd.*

The Oxford-Knevett duel developed later in 1582 into a full-blown feud, Anne Vavasor's Catholic relatives representing the one "house" and Oxford's Protestant relatives and retainers the other. During a period of several months, battles royal with sword and dagger were fought in the highways and byways of London.

They resulted in the killing and wounding of several men, in addition to Oxford and Knevett, the principals. Finally the Queen herself had to step in and put a stop to the senseless butchery which had grown out of Edward de Vere's ill-starred love affair with Anne Vavasor.

Does this footnote to Elizabethan history awaken a familiar echo in the memory of any lover of the Shakespearean drama?

At least it so affected the Elizabethan scholar, Albert Feuillerat in 1909 when he wrote his finely documented study of *John Lyly* (the poet Earl of



ANNE VAVASOR

Evidently painted between the years 1595 and 1605 when the "Dark Lady" of Shakespeare's Sonnets was between thirty-five and forty-five years of age. This picture was originally published in *The Connoisseur Magazine* for September, 1912 as a portrait of an unidentified lady of the Elizabethan period. No satisfactory identification could be made at that time. Since then, comparison of the reproduction of this ancient wooden panel with the portraits of Anne Vavasor that have been owned by Viscount Dillon make it possible to identify the picture with considerable confidence. While the face, as shown above, is somewhat fuller than the one in the full-length canvas by Marcus Gheeraerts the younger, printed

in our April issue, the features are similar in all other respects. Characteristics of bearing and dress, such as the mischievously upturned lips, the appraising eyes, the flat reticella lace cap, the dark hair puffed over the ears, the delicately embroidered French ruff, the square-cut ring, all match perfectly either with the Gheeraerts canvas or the half-length panel of Anne Vavasor which was still in Viscount Dillon's possession two years ago. We have here the more mature, subtle and emotionally experienced "Dark Lady" to whom Lord Oxford, under the pen-name of "Will Shakespeare," addressed many of his most realistic, passionate and critically devastating poems. Our reproduction is by courtesy of the Frick Art Reference Library.

Oxford's secretary and stage manager). Referring to the private war of 1582 between Oxford's retainers and Anne Vavasor's relatives, Feuillerat remarks:

"The streets of London were filled with the quarrelling clamors of these new Montagues and Capulets."

As Oxfordian research brings to light the hundreds of parallel incidents, personal characterizations and clear-cut echoes in literary imagery which connect Edward de Vere and his circle of intimate associates with the creative structure of the Shake-

spearean works, these circumstances should be borne in mind:

1. Such parallels have always received foremost consideration by critics and biographers of the world's greatest creative artists. To prove this, read any good life of Edmund Spenser, Oliver Goldsmith, Lord Byron, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Count Tolstoy of Russia, etc., etc. Great art usually stems from the artist's own experience. The denial of this truism constitutes the greatest weakness of all "orthodox" Stratfordian biographers and convicts them of fundamental lack of logic and common sense.

2. If a single one of the documentary parallels which illuminate the case for Lord Oxford as "Shake-speare" had ever been traced home to Willm Shakspeare of Stratford there would never have been any such thing as an "authorship mystery."

3. The multitudinous parallels between Oxford's career and personal documentation and the Shakespearean plays and poems could be set down merely as interesting "coincidences" but for one final significant fact:

Oxford is specifically referred to many times by his contemporaries as the "first" or "most excellent" of all the Elizabethan poets and comedy writers, but is also characterized as one "whose doings" cannot "be found out and made public with the rest."

4. The inevitable conclusion must be that Oxford supplies the long-sought human entity with all the qualifications of natural genius, taste, education, training, association and contemporary reputation as poet and playwright to account for the masterly Shakespearean works. These cannot be attributed to the Stratford business man on the same realistic grounds of general fitness, training and first-hand corroborative testimony of known associates.

Charles Wisner Barrell

(To be continued)

Mister V

Leslie Howard's film, "Mister V," gives wide publicity to the Oxford-Shakespeare evidence in a way that will interest everybody. Playing the part of an English archæologist excavating so-called "Aryan" remains in Germany just before the outbreak of the present war, Mr. Howard's impersonation of Prof. Smith gives us a delightful modern version of the "Scarlet Pimpernel."

The Oxford-Shakespeare references are worked into the dialogue during verbal encounters between the Professor and one "Herr Reichminister Graum," whose beefy outlines and general characterization show him to be a satirical study of Goering.

Prof. Smith remarks that ever since he has been in Germany he has felt like Alice in Wonderland.

"Ah, but Germany is a wonderland," says Graum.

"Oh, it is—it is."

"But we have one problem. 'To be or not to be,' as our great German poet says."

"German! But that's Shakespeare."

"What?" splutters Graum, "you do not know?"

"I know it's Shakespeare and I thought Shakespeare was English."

"Oh, no, no! He is a *German*. Prof. Schwartzbacher has proved it once and for all."

"Dear, dear," replies the archæologist, "how very upsetting. But you must admit that the English translations are most remarkable."

Graum grunts, disgustedly:

"Good night."

"Good night—good night. 'Parting is such sweet sorrow.'"

"What is that?" asks Graum.

The Professor smiles gravely.

"One of the most famous lines in *German* literature."

Highly suspicious of the Professor's activities coincident with the many escapes that have occurred from concentration camps, Graum has Gestapo agents on the archæologist's trail when the latter turns up in Graum's own office. The Professor tells Graum that he has been doing research work on the identity of Shakespeare.

Graum snorts.

"I'd like to know how you spent this afternoon."

"What's the matter with you?" counters the Professor. "I spent the afternoon in the Library of the [British] Embassy." He presents a book to the Reichminister. "Now this—this proves conclusively that Shakespeare wasn't really Shakespeare at all."

"No?"

"No. He was the Earl of Oxford. Now you can't pretend that the Earl of Oxford was a German, can you? Now *can* you?"

Steinhof, another Reich official breaks in.

"Pah! Anyway, I didn't come here to discuss Shakespeare."

Graum looks baffled by the turn of events, as the Professor goes on:

"The Earl of Oxford was a very bright Elizabethan light. But this book will tell you that he was a good deal more than that."

"Mister V" is so exciting and entertaining a story that the plot should be left to the discovery of its audiences.

It is a British production, financed by Mr. Edward Small of New York and Hollywood, and released in this country by United Artists. As Mr. Howard was responsible for both the production and direction of "Mister V," it seems likely that the inclusion of the Oxford-Shakespeare scenes was due mainly to his own interest in "*Shakespeare*" *Identified*. Mr. Howard's many friends and admirers will be interested to learn that at present he is serving as an officer in the British Navy.

The Red Rose

*Call him my king, by whose injurious doom
My elder brother, the Lord Aubrey Vere,
Was done to death? and more so, my father,
Even in the downfall of his mellow years,
When Nature brought him to the door of death.
No, Warwick, no: while life upholds this arm,
This arm upholds the house of Lancaster.*

Henry VI, Part III, Act 3, Sc. 3.

The devotion of the author of the above lines to the Red Rose of Lancaster, as pointed out long ago by Mr. Looney, indicates that they were written by some one who had a personal interest and sympathetic understanding of the part played in the Wars of the Roses by John de Vere, thirteenth Earl of Oxford, son and brother of the two de Veres named in the lines quoted. What dramatist of Elizabeth's day but one of John's successors, Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl, could have written them so feelingly?

John de Vere's courage and genius carried him through great dangers both before and after the fall of Henry VI and, eventually, through his undaunted aid, Henry, Earl of Richmond, of the House of Lancaster, was crowned as Henry VII. The war between the two Houses came to an end with the marriage of Henry to Elizabeth, surviving heiress of the House of York, a culmination devoutly to be wished by all of England.

That the King valued the assistance he had had from John de Vere in gaining the throne is shown by many acts soon after. Besides being restored to all his family's possessions, the King bestowed many lands and honours on the Earl and created him the first Knight of the Garter in his reign. The Earl was granted his hereditary office of Lord Great Chamberlain. The King further showed his trust in Earl John by having him stand as godfather to his son, later Henry VIII.

There is, however, another story to tell of their relationship. The Earl spent much time at his ancient seat of Castle Hedingham where he lived "in great splendour." At one time, when he was honored by a visit from the King, the entertainment was so sumptuously arranged that the latter was astounded by the magnificence displayed. On his departure, he said to the Earl, "My lord, I have heard much of your hospitality, but I see it is greater than the speech. These handsome gentlemen and yeomen which I see on both sides of me, are surely your menial servants?" The Earl smiled, and said, "It may please your Grace, they are not for mine ease;

they are most of them my retainers, that are come to do me service at such a time as this; and chiefly to see your Grace." The King started a little, and rejoined, "By my faith, my lord, I thank you for my good cheer, but I may not endure to have my laws broken in my sight; my attorney must speak with you." The attorney spoke, and to some purpose; for the graceless guest positively caused his hospitable entertainer to be mulcted of £10,000, for having, in his desire to do honor to his Sovereign, ventured to exceed the number of retainers prescribed to him. (*The Battle Abbey Roll*, by the Duchess of Cleveland).

The great fine, which must be multiplied by at least twelve for the modern mind to realize how large it was, and the cost of the entertainment, which, being magnificent, must have been large, bore heavily upon the Earl, in spite of his vast landed possessions, and by many have been thought to have been the beginning of the financial disintegration of this ancient house of de Vere. The King's act was surely a very ungracious return for the devoted aid which, more than from any one else, had placed Henry VII on the throne.

Does this mistreatment of the thirteenth Earl of Oxford by his King account for the fact that the reign of Henry VII was not dramatized? Would not the seventeenth Earl have felt the injustice dealt the thirteenth Earl, after his tireless devotion to the seventh Henry, was unforgivable? Though a partisan of the Red Rose, could Edward de Vere have dramatized the reign of the last Lancastrian with the whole-hearted support he had given to Henry VI?

Eva Turner Clark

London Letter

The following appreciative letter, dated April 18, 1942, has been received from Mrs. Arthur Long, a member of the Shakespeare Fellowship of England:

"I have just received the December and February numbers of your invaluable NEWS-LETTER and I want to thank you most sincerely for your great kindness and courtesy in sending me these copies. We are rather starved in England just now of this kind of thing and you can perhaps hardly realise the pleasure it is to receive your extraordinarily interesting publication.

"I hope that this letter reaches you, with my profound acknowledgments for your great kindness."

NEWS-LETTER

THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP

AMERICAN BRANCH

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Louis P. Bénézet, A.M., Ph.D.

Vice-Presidents

James Stewart Cushman

Mrs. Eva Turner Clark

Secretary and Treasurer

Charles Wisner Barrell

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

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

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

Shakespeare's Day

Reprint (in part) of an editorial which appeared in the New York Sun, April 23, 1942.

That man of mystery who is popularly known as William Shakespeare has popped into the news again because of a letter to Mayor LaGuardia in which "Hamlet" is quoted. But the Bard has a little publicity coming to him as a matter of course, for today is generally accepted as his birthday.

The popular identification of the great dramatist brings a loud snort from those who affirm that Shakespeare was Bacon and from those who, following J. Thomas Looney, proclaim that he was Edward De Vere, Earl of Oxford. A proponent of the Oxford theory, Charles Wisner Barrell, who

once X-rayed portraits of Shakespeare and found underneath the lineaments of Oxford, has recently written an article in which he adduces proofs that the same Oxford wrote the sonnets.

Among these proofs is the opening sequence of Sonnet II, "When forty winters shall besiege thy brow. . . ." If, as some authorities hold, the sonnets were composed for the guidance of Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton, it may be extremely significant that "in 1590, when Southampton was being pressed to engage himself to Elizabeth Vere, the poetical Earl of Oxford was 40 years of age." There must have been a lot of people who were 40 then. It is only fair to say, however, that we have taken as a sample only one of the parallels and coincidences in a very intricate chain. Perhaps Mr. Barrell has found the truth.

Mrs. Ward

Mrs. Bernard Rowland Ward, widow of the first Honorary Secretary of the Shakespeare Fellowship, died several months ago at her home in Hertfordshire, England, though news of her passing was received in this country only recently. Mrs. Ward was always keenly interested in the activities of her husband and her son in connection with the solving of the problem of Shakespeare authorship and her analytical mind often helped them to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion on some special phase of their investigations.

Colonel B. R. Ward, C.M.G., who directed the air defense of London, 1914-1918, was a man of broad intellectual interest. When Mr. Looney's "Shakespeare" Identified was published in 1920, Colonel Ward was immediately attracted to the theory there presented and began some research on his own account, which resulted in his publication of *The Mystery of "Mr. W. H."*, a book of great value in connection with a study of the *Sonnets*. In the meantime, he had aroused the interest of a group of friends in the new theory of authorship and was more instrumental than any one else in founding the Shakespeare Fellowship. Upon his death in 1933, his son, Captain Bernard M. Ward, succeeded to the post of Honorary Secretary which he held until the present war began. It is to Captain Ward that members of the Fellowship are indebted for his indefatigable research into the life of Lord Oxford, the results of which were published in 1928 under the title *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*.

John Chamberlain's Letters

In 1939, a new edition of *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, edited with an Introduction by Norman Egbert McClure, was published by the American Philosophical Society, Independence Square, Philadelphia. The editor says, "Despite the value and interest of the letters, it is only in fragmentary and inaccurate form that they have hitherto been available to the student who does not have access to the originals. The present edition provides the complete text of all of Chamberlain's letters that are known to be extant—a total of 479." The letters are fully annotated, which makes them particularly helpful to the student.

John Chamberlain was born in 1554 and lived through the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James, dying at the age of 74, three years after Charles came to the throne. His extant letters cover the period from 1597 to 1626, most of them addressed to Dudley Carleton (knighted 1610), who lived abroad for many years as ambassador, first at Venice and later at The Hague. They are filled with the gossip of the day, political and social, and throw a great deal of light on the personalities of the times.

"Of the theatre Chamberlain wrote little," says the editor. "In an age when great drama was made possible by the support of the unlettered crowd and of courtiers and gallants, he shared the half-hostile, half-tolerant view of the sober, respectable middle class." He mentions the rebuilt Globe Theatre in 1614, the riots in the Cockpit in Drury Lane, the burning of the Fortune in Golding-lane, and Edward Alleyn, "the old player," but apparently seldom attended a play. "Interesting as these glimpses of the theatre are," says Mr. McClure, "they disappoint: they omit what modern readers would value most. . . . Nowhere in the letters is there any indication that Chamberlain even so much as knew of the existence of Shakespeare."

For the year 1604 only two letters are given, dated August 14 and December 18, the last one to Sir Ralph Winwood. If more letters of that year had survived, we might have learned something about the writer of the Shakespeare plays, for on June 24, 1604, occurred the death of Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford. A gossip like John Chamberlain could not have omitted a reference to the death of the Lord Great Chamberlain of England and would very probably have commented on his writing. It is strange and it is tantalizing to note what is practically a blank in the one year of Chamberlain's correspondence that would prove of greatest interest to believers in the Oxford

theory of Shakespeare authorship.

Later letters to Sir Dudley Carleton contain references to the widow and children of Lord Oxford and excerpts are here given:

17 June 1612. . . . The King hath ben comming and going to Eltham all the laste weeke . . . is this night to lie at Wanstead . . . from thence he goes to Havering which is in the custodie of the Countesse of Oxford, who intertains him likewise at her owne charge. (Elizabeth Trentham, Countess of Oxford, second wife of the Earl, died about six months after this letter was penned).

27 Feb. 1621. . . . On Saturday they lost onc of their members Sir Henry Portman a younge baronet of Somersetshire of great living that married a daughter of the earle of Darbies and died of the smallpoxe or purples. (Sir Henry Portman of Orchard, Somersetshire, married Anne, daughter of William Stanley, sixth Earl of Derby. Her mother was Elizabeth de Vere, daughter of the seventeenth Earl of Oxford and Annæ Cecil).

9 Mar. 1622. The other paper (enclosed) are certain bitter verses of the Lord Dennies upon the Lady Marie Wroth, for that in her booke of Urania she doth palpable and grossely play upon him and his late daughter the Lady Hayes, besides many others she makes bold with, and they say takes great libertie or rather licence to traduce whom she please, and thinckes she daunces in a net: I have seen an aunswer of hers to these rimes, but I thought yt not worth the writing out. (Mary, daughter of Robert Sidney, first Earl of Leicester, and widow of Sir Robert Wroth, wrote *The Countess of Mountgomerie Urania*, 1621. S.T.C. 26051. The Countess of Montgomery was Susan de Vere, youngest daughter of the seventeenth Earl of Oxford and Anne Cecil, and wife of Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery. It was to the brothers, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery, that the Shakespeare First Folio was dedicated in 1623).

1 July 1622. . . . The countesse of Darbie is come up to sue for her brother of Oxford who is in the same case [in prison]: though the Lady Willoughby had no successe in the suit. . . . (Elizabeth de Vere was the wife of William Stanley, sixth Earl of Derby, and half-sister of Henry de Vere, eighteenth Earl of Oxford, who was in the Tower "for ydle and unfit speeches touching the King and his government." Lady Willoughby was Mary, sister of Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, and widow of Peregrine Bertie, eleventh Lord Willoughby of Eresby).

Carolyn Wells

Carolyn Wells, mystery story writer and author of juvenile and humorous verse, died in New York, Thursday, March 26th. Miss Wells, widow of Hadwin Houghton, was known for her gayety and wit. Despite several years of invalidism, she continued to write steadily. She attributed her interest in mystery stories to the fact that she had always loved puzzles.

Miss Wells had the good fortune to read Mr. Looney's "Shakespeare" *Identified* soon after it was published and declared it "one of the best detective stories ever written." She was ever after a fervent believer in the theory of Shakespeare authorship there set forth. For the October number of the NEWS-LETTER, Miss Wells testified to her belief in a letter, from which we quote:

"Our mission should be—must be—to teach that the Earl of Oxford wrote the plays and that he used the name William Shakespeare as a pen name, with the full knowledge and willingness of the Stratford man who bore that name. . . . So I ask that when members of our Fellowship explain our beliefs to novices, that they dwell on the fact that the name of William Shakespeare is not thrown into the discard, but is the acknowledged pseudonym of Edward de Vere, and instance the case of Lewis Carroll."

In the death of Miss Wells, the Shakespeare Fellowship has lost a devoted member, the world a valiant soul. The NEWS-LETTER records her loss with deep regret and profound sorrow.

News-Letter from England

With particular pleasure we welcome the arrival of the April number of THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP NEWS-LETTER from England, which has been received as we go to press, the first of only two numbers to be issued this year. Despite the sufferings our English friends have had to endure for the past three years, the subject of Shakespeare authorship continues to have a vital interest for them.

Among the articles is one by Mr. Percy Allen which announces the destruction by fire on February 14, 1942, of the Elizabethan wing of Melford Hall. On her Progress of 1578, the Queen stayed at Melford Hall, when it was in the possession of Sir William Cordell, Master of the Rolls. Allusions in certain Shakespeare plays, especially *Cymbeline*, appear to refer to Melford Hall.

Other interesting articles are by Rear-Admiral H. H. Holland and Mr. J. J. Dwyer, and Mr. J. T. Looney's reply to a question by Mr. Gerald Mann, "How did Lord Oxford pay his way?" This reply we would like to quote in full, but at this late hour, space forbids.

English Archives

It is good to learn that little actual damage to historical manuscripts and documents has been reported. We hope that the present interest in the value of these old papers will continue unabated. The removal to places of greater safety may bring to light documents of untold value which have lain hidden for centuries under the accumulations of later years. While public archives are naturally the most important, there are private archives and muniment chests in family homes in England, some of which contain original evidence of infinite historical value, inherited perhaps by individuals who know little or nothing about them, but who will now, with the public interest aroused, see that they are made safe from war damage and possibly examine them. It is not too much to hope that such an examination may discover papers which have a bearing on the Shakespeare mystery.

A New Book

SHAKESPEARE WITHOUT TEARS. By Margaret Webster. New York: Whittlesey Press, 1942. A director of Shakespeare plays in both England and America, Miss Webster has made a profound study of the plays from the standpoint of acting and stage setting, the theatre for which Shakespeare wrote and the theatre "wherein he must live now if he is to live at all." Her findings have been incorporated in this recently issued volume, which Professor Mark Van Doren pronounces "one of the best books written about Shakespeare in this century." Miss Webster, however, is careful to note that she clings to the Stratford theory of authorship, though for her special study of stage direction, the identification of the author is of less importance than with most books on Shakespeare. From the standpoint of management and direction, the Earl of Oxford and his secretary Lyly were as closely associated with the stage as the actor from Stratford, and probably knew a great deal more than he about the intricacies of production.