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THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP

—AMERICAN BRANCH—

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"Shake-speare's" Unknown Home On the River Avon Discovered

Edward De Vere's Ownership of a Famous Warwickshire Literary Retreat Indicates Him As the True "Sweet Swan of Avon."

How now, mad wag! what a devil dost thou in Warwickshire?
Falstaff to Prince Hal, *I Henry IV*.

In claiming positive identification of the native of Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, as the true and only "Mr. William Shakespeare," whose matchless comedies, histories and tragedies were issued in the royal crown folio of 1623, running to nearly one thousand double-columned pages, accepted authorities point with finality to the following circumstances:

1. Official documents of the town of Stratford and its environs record the baptism, marriage clearances, parenthood, business activities, suits at law and burial of one William Shakspere, Shaxpere, Shagspere, Shackespere or Shaksper. He can be certified as the eldest son of John Shakspere, etc., a butcher and wool-stapler of Stratford who also served as a burgess and chamberlain of the borough, but who, incidentally, was too illiterate to sign his own name to his municipal accounts or legal documents. The Warwickshire documentation covering the career of this Willm Shakspere—as he usually signed himself in halting and blotted characters—begins with his christening at the local church in April, 1564, and ends with his burial in the same edifice in April, 1616.

2. A mural memorial to the author of the Shakespearean works was affixed to the north wall of the chancel in Trinity Church, Stratford, at some unrecorded date, presumably between the year 1616, when the citizen of Stratford was buried, and the year 1623, when the First Folio was published.

3. The introductory pages to the First Folio contain two references to "Shakespeare" which unquestionably associate this name with both the town of Stratford and the River Avon. These references occur among the commendatory verses addressed to the Bard by Ben Jonson and Leonard Digges.

Toward the end of his panegyric Jonson exclaims:

> *Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were*
> *To see thee in our waters yet appear,*
> *And make those flights upon the bankes of Thames,*
> *That so did take* Eliza *and our* James!

Leonard Digges begins his tribute thus:

> Shake-speare, *at length thy pious fellowes give*
> *The world thy Workes: thy Workes, by which, out-live*
> *Thy Tombe, thy name must when that stone is rent,*
> *And Time dissolves thy* Stratford *Moniment,*
> *Here we shall view thee still.*

The notable gap in the Oxford-"Shake-speare" identification up to this time has been occasioned by the inability of investigators to resolve satisfactorily these Warwickshire associations which both Leonard Digges and Ben Jonson give the Bard.

It has been held that even if a confusion of personalities had been brought about by a deliberate conspiracy, such a claim by proponents of the Earl of Oxford would merit serious consideration only when it could be shown that the literary peer possessed credible *prima facie* right to the title of "Sweet Swan of Avon" which Willm Shakspere alone has enjoyed by virtue of geographical situation.

That Oxford did, indeed, have personal associations with the River Avon, I shall now undertake to prove by contemporary documentation.

We find, in fact, that the first mention of the Earl as a full-fledged public entertainer locates him directly upon the banks of the Avon in Warwickshire.

On Sunday, August 18, 1572, he had accompanied the Queen and her Court to Warwick Castle and on the evening of that day appears to have been chiefly responsible for the staging of a realistic mimic battle which attracted great crowds. An account of this affair is printed in *The Black Book of Warwick*, edited by Thomas Kemp.* That Oxford was the moving spirit in the show is evident from the fact that the *Black Book* chronicler mentions him more often than any other of the noblemen who participated in this spectacular presentation. The stage setting seems to foreshadow some of the battle scenes in *I Henry VI:*

> . . . there was devised on the Temple ditch a fort, made of slender timber covered with canvas. In this fort were appointed divers persons to serve (as) soldiers; and therefore so many harnesses as might be gotten within the town were had, wherewith men were armed and appointed to show themselves; some others appointed to cast out fireworks, as squibs and balls of fire. Against that fort was another castle-wise prepared of like strength, *whereof was governor the Earl of Oxford, a lusty gentleman, with a lusty band of gentlemen.* Between these forts, or against them, were placed certain battering pieces, to the number of twelve or fourteen, brought from London, and twelve fair chambers, or mortar pieces, brought also from the Tower, at the charge of the Earl of Warwick. These pieces and chambers were by trains fired, and so made a great noise, as though it had been a sore assault; having some intermission, in which time *the Earl of Oxford and his soldiers to the number of two hundred, with calivers and arquebusses, likewise gave divers assaults;* they in the fort shooting again, and casting out divers fires, terrible to those who have not been in like experiences, valiant to such as delighted therein, and indeed strange to them that understood it not. *For the wild fire falling into the river Avon* would for a time lie still, and then again rise and fly abroad, casting forth many flashes and flames, *whereat the Queen's Majesty took great pleasure . . .*

What would not the professional Stratfordians give if they could present a similar piece of attested local history, mentioning "Will. Shakspere, gent." as the leading light of such a show?

Unfortunately for their case, no such documentation can be located, however. Will never treated his fellow-townsmen to a single performance of any of the many plays that have been credited to him.

The latter portions of the chronicle which I have put in italics seem to have a very definite echo in Ben Jonson's verses which record Queen Elizabeth's great pleasure in a genius that had first come to light on the Avon.

Nor is this all. The 17th Earl of Oxford had an estate in eastern Warwickshire, overlooking the valley of the Avon, which can be proven to have been retained by him after most of his other properties and known residences had been sold.

The name of this favorite manor is Bilton Hall. And, strangely enough, it is mentioned in the history of English literature as the well-loved retreat of another famous writer of the 18th century. . . .

But the story of Lord Oxford's Avon Valley home is of sufficient importance in the development of our argument to be told in orderly detail.

The ancient manor house is still standing amid its extensive gardens, about a mile and a half from the center of the town of Rugby, just off the road that connects with the lower Coventry highway. Although the 16th century boundaries of this property no longer exist, repetition of the name Bilton on present day land-plats suggests that the estate once included the actual banks of the winding Avon. Bilton Hall crowns a ridge of high land that slopes away for a mile or so to the river on the north and north-west. Some nineteen miles to the south-west is located Stratford-on-Avon.

From the statements of Sir William Dugdale in his *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656),* it appears that Bilton is one of the oldest residential seats in all Warwickshire. Dugdale describes it as "the freehold of one Uluuinus before the Norman invasion." In *Domesday Book*, the land survey compiled at the direction of the Conqueror, the holding is "certified to contain five hydes." As a "hyde" of land represented one hundred and twenty acres, the entire property took in some six hundred acres.

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*Selections reprinted by Ward, *Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, pps. 69-71.

*Ibid. pps. 18-20.

All of these "except one virgate," (thirty acres), continues Dugdale, "were then possesst by Roger de Montgomerie, Earl of Arundell and Shrewsbury." At that time the property was known as "Beauton."

Later, the Crafte and then the De Charnell families owned the manor, until finally a daughter of Thomas de Charnell received the estate as a marriage dower when she became the wife of a Trussell. For five generations the Trussells are recorded as owners. Then, during the reign of Henry VII, Elizabeth Trussell, heiress of Edward Trussell, married John de Vere, 15th Earl of Oxford, and Bilton, among other valuable Trussell properties, passed under the cognizances of the blue boar and the silver star. So far as can be determined from the records at present available, this beautiful estate is the only property ever owned in Warwickshire by the Earls of Oxford during Tudor times.

Under the terms of the will of the 16th Earl of Oxford, who died in August, 1562, Bilton appears to have been one of the estates set aside for the use or support of his widow, Margery Golding de Vere. It can be identified among the "divers manors, &c., in the Counties of Essex, Cambridge, Chester, Northampton, and Warwick," rentals of which are designated as "the jointure of the late Countess of Oxford" in the State Papers, Domestic, under date of February, 1570,* following her demise in 1568.

The Countess of Oxford had made a rather hasty remarriage with one Charles Tyrrell, an undistinguished but evidently handsome member of the Queen's Bodyguard. She and her second husband lived in unostentatious retirement. I can find no mention of their having appeared at Court, following their alliance, and whether or not some of their time was spent in the quiet isolation of the Warwickshire estate is a matter of speculation.

But circumstances indicate persuasively that Edward de Vere himself kept the place as a literary hideaway where he could carry on his creative work without the interference of his father-in-law, Burghley, and other distractions of Court and city life.

Most telling of these is the fact that he held on to Bilton "until late in the reign of Elizabeth"—after his fortunes had declined to the point where he was forced to relinquish other ancestral properties which had served him as personal residences.

During the early years of his married life with Anne Cecil, Lord Oxford's recognized country seat was the manor of Wivenhoe on the Essex coast, at the mouth of the Colne River. There are many mentions of Wivenhoe in his correspondence and the Cecil family papers, covering this period. The introductory letter to Thomas Bedingfield with which the Earl prefaces his 1573 publication of Bedingfield's translation of *Cardanus' Comforte*, bears a concluding sentence: "From my new country Muses of Wivenhoe . . ."

But when he lived apart from his wife, records show that he turned Wivenhoe over to her, and rentals from the property represented part of her allowance. Finally, in 1585, Oxford sold the Essex manor to Roger Townshend.

Castle Hedingham, Essex, the birthplace of the Earl, was largely in a ruinous condition during the 1580's and was deeded, first to Queen Elizabeth in 1587 and later to Burghley, in trust for Oxford's daughters. In fact, Oxford appears to have spent very little of his time here after his father's death in 1562.

Earl's Colne, another famous Essex residential seat of the Earls of Oxford, had been sold by the literary peer to Roger Harlackenden, one of his stewards, in September, 1583.

The poet's London dwellings do not particularly concern us here. But Oxford Court, his mansion in Candlewick Street, by London Stone, passed into the possession of Sir John Hart, Lord Mayor of London, between 1587 and 1589. And "Fisher's Folly," the great house in the parish of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, which was Oxford's property for some years, was sold by him to William Cornwallis in 1588. Some evidence suggests that Oxford spent part of his time at the old manor house in Stoke-Newington, one of London's northern suburbs, as early as 1585; and he is definitely known to have established a home there, following his marriage to his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, in 1591. But all of these places were either in or immediately contiguous to the city, and it must be remembered that Oxford was the type of Englishman to whom a real country retreat for recreation and contemplation might be considered a necessity. The mere fact that he designated Wivenhoe—before the place lost interest for him—"my new country Muses," testifies to his love of the unspoiled countryside.

Bilton Manor was in those days another spot that might appear to have been especially created to win the affection of a poet. Even up to the present century, we are told, the land was decked with many a noble forest tree and lovely prospect of the rolling hills and lush valley swales along the Avon. Toward the north and west, lingering outposts of

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***Cal. of State Papers Dom., Elizabeth*, Vol. 1, p. 364.

the ancient Forest of Arden were still visible in the 16th century when Edward de Vere owned Bilton.

Dugdale, the Warwickshire historian, states that Edward Earl of Oxford retained Bilton until "towards the latter end of Qu. Eliz. reign," when he sold it to "John Shugborough, Esq; then one of the six clerks in Chancery; which John dyed seized thereof in 42 Eliz. (1601)."

This sale of the manor to John Shugborough or Shuckborough must have taken place in 1592, when the last of Oxford's ancestral lands passed out of his possession. Castle Hedingham was taken over by Lord Burghley, in trust for the Earl's three daughters, at the same time.

It will be recalled that in Sonnet 41, "Shakespeare" refers to his country place or "seat" when reproving the handsome youth (presumably the Earl of Southampton) for a surreptitious pleasure trip he has taken with the poet's mistress (presumably Anne Vavasor).

> Aye me! but yet thou mightst *my seat* forbear,
> And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,
> Who lead thee in their riot *even there*
> Where thou art forced to break a twofold truth,
> Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee,
> Thine, by thy beauty being false to me.

The episode referred to could have occurred in 1590 or 1591, when Southampton was seventeen or eighteen and Anne was approaching thirty. From the wording of this sonnet it is plain that the writer is particularly hurt because the personal retreat that has been invaded holds memories that he hates to have desecrated.

I take it that Bilton was the place where Oxford himself had passed many off-the-record hours with the Dark Lady after the bitterness engendered by the debacle of their early love affair had worn off.

It was well situated for such meetings, being just about midway between London and Anne Vavasor's home in Yorkshire. Even after Anne went to live with old Sir Henry Lee at Woodstock in 1590, the chronicles of her career state that she was anything but true to him, and it would have been easy enough for her to slip away occasionally to the adjoining county of Warwick when Oxford was at Bilton.

As has been frequently pointed out, William of Stratford had no known country seat that can be made to fit the picture evoked by Sonnet 41. His residence of New Place was located within the town of Stratford and was occupied by his wife and growing daughters, according to all biographical authorities, during Will's absences in London. It would have been about the most unlikely place imaginable for young Southampton to lead the Dark Lady in his "riot even there."

Moreover, the Shaksperes did not take possession of New Place until 1602. By that time Southampton had been sentenced to life imprisonment for his part in the Essex rebellion.

Memories of the Earl of Oxford's residence in the land where the River Avon takes its rise have been kept alive by one or two interesting circumstances.

At the junction of the Rugby-Bilton road with the lower highway to Coventry, there was still standing at the beginning of the present war a Tudor farmhouse called The Blue Boar. It is designated by the same name on early Warwickshire maps. Whether this property was a part of Lord Oxford's original holdings in the district cannot be determined at this time, but the reference to his family crest is unmistakable.

Also it appears from the 1862 engraving of Bilton Hall by W. Radclyffe* that the portico of the house bears the insignia of a single star. Later photographs of the entrance show this star design much more clearly. This is good evidence that the house was once the private residence of an Earl of Oxford, for the single silver "mullet" or star was an armorial device borne by all Vere members of the Tudor nobility.

There do not appear to be any direct allusions to Bilton in the Shakespearean works. Such references could hardly be expected if the manor were used as a hideaway by the poet-peer for the composition of some of those works—and the entertainment of sub-rosa guests. Neither are there any allusions to Stratford-on-Avon in the plays and poems. Their atmosphere and folklore are notably pan-British, not to say cosmopolitan in the broadest sense. In so far as provincial elements appear, these are predominatingly East Anglian, reflecting Lord Oxford's earliest and most lasting impressions of Essex and Suffolk.

From the creative-atmospheric angle, Bilton and the surrounding Avon countryside deserve and will undoubtedly have a more thorough investigation.

The adjoining town of Rugby—home of our latter-day poet, Rupert Brooke—is personified in the character of John Rugby, servant to Dr. Caius in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The name should really be written John *of* Rugby, for it is a distinct

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*Reproduced from *Graphic Illustrations of Warwickshire* by James Jaffray.

place appellation and does not appear in any history of British surnames, covering the period of the 16th century, that I have been able to consult.

On the other side of the Avon, between four and five miles north-by-west of Bilton Hall, is the very ancient parish of Newbold Revel, once the home of Sir Thomas Malory, author of the medieval *Morte d'Arthur*. In Elizabethan days, one of the leading families of Newbold Revel was the Skipworths.* "Henry Skipworth, third son of Sir Richard Skipworth," says Wotton, "took to arms in youth and rendered himself famous by many great and glorious actions. He was bred in the Netherlands, under the famous general, the old Lord Willoughby (Edward de Vere's brother-in-law), and afterwards saw extensive service in Ireland." This Henry Skipworth was also a cousin of Sir Thomas Heneage, Vice-chamberlain of Queen Elizabeth's Household and Treasurer of the Chamber, the official who approved vouchers covering payment for plays produced at Court, the aunt of Heneage having been a Skipworth of Newbold Revel. Lord Oxford's acquaintance with all of these persons can be taken for granted.

In her book, *Shakespeare Rediscovered*, Clara Longworth de Chambrun makes much of the fact that a few years ago a Warwickshire copy of the second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, the work that supplied "Shake-speare" with much of the data for his plays on English history, was discovered to contain many notes in Elizabethan handwriting which, she says, indicate that it was utilized by the author of the plays. The Countess de Chambrun also claims that certain monograms on the colophon page of the third volume of this Holinshed represent the initials "WS," or the name of the Bard.

At least it can be clearly established that this set of histories was once owned by the Skipworths of Newbold Revel, for a bookplate identified as that of Sir Francis Skipworth, a 17th century representative of the family, appears in the works. In tracing the early ownership of these volumes to the immediate vicinity of Bilton, the best of circumstantial evidence has been established that they are much more likely to have originally belonged to the playwriting Earl of Oxford, than to the bookless business man of Stratford. The whole subject should be given a more scientific investigation than the Countess de Chambrun, with her all-embracing Stratfordian claims, has accorded it.

Mention has been made of the fact that Edward de Vere's manor house of Bilton later became the home of a famous 18th century literary man. This was Joseph Addison, co-editor of *The Spectator*, creator of Sir Roger de Coverley, and author of *The Tragedy of Cato*, a drama which was compared by Addison's most enthusiastic admirers to "Shakespeare's" *Julius Caesar*.

Addison purchased Bilton in 1711 from William Boughton, Esq., for the sum of 10,000 pounds.* The Boughtons had then been in possession about a century, having acquired the property from the Shuckboroughs. Addison took great delight in this beautiful and restful spot. One of his letters to Dean Swift, dated October 1, 1718, urges that unique genius "to take my house at Bilton in your way . . . I would strive hard to meet you there, provided you would make me happy in your company for some days."

In describing Bilton, Smith, the Warwickshire chronicler, says it will always be approached with respect by lovers of genius, "for it contains a mansion that was once inhabited by the great and learned Addison, during a period to which he had looked with the warmest anticipations of joy—that of his matrimonial connection with the fair Countess of Warwick. . . .

"The situation is desirably retired, and the windows of the principal rooms command a fair prospect . . . on the north side of the grounds is a long walk, still termed Addison's walk, once the chosen retreat of the writer, when intent on solitary reflection. In its original state, no spot could be better adapted to meditation, or more genial to his temper; the scenery round is bounded by soft ranges of hills, and the comely spire and Gothic ornaments of the adjacent village church, impart a soothing air of pensiveness to the neighborhood."

Statements such as these, and there are many of them which describe Bilton, generations before the Oxford-"Shake-speare" evidence was compiled by Mr. Looney and his colleagues, seem to offer constructive testimony that the Elizabethan owner of Bilton also found it an ideal resort for a writing man. For at that time, the location was more remote and the beauties of nature even more apparent than in Addison's day. It seems to me that *As You Like It* and some of the Sonnets, in particular, may reflect many of Lord Oxford's reactions to the "sermons in stones and books in the running brooks" then to be conned in the more primitive woodlands which stretched away from his house to the banks of the Avon in the distance.

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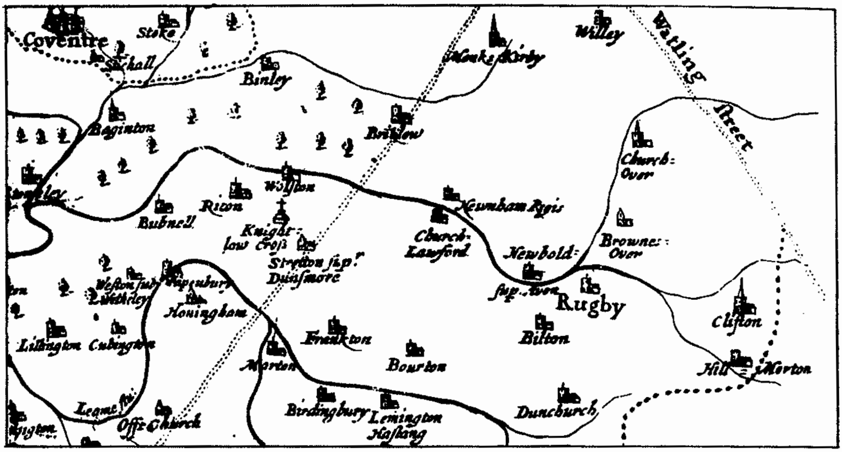
*Wotton's *English Baronetage*, Vol. 2. p. 532.

*William Smith, *History of the County of Warwick* (1830), p. 177.


Coventre
Stoke
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Watling Street
Baginton
Brinklow
Church Over
Wolston
Ryton
Bubnell
Newnham Regis
Knightlow Cross
Stretton sup. Dunsmore
Church Lawford
Newbold sup. Avon
Brownes Over
Rugby
Wappenbury
Honingham
Clifton
Lillington
Cubington
Frankton
Bilton
Marton
Bourton
Hill Morton
Leame
Offchurch
Birdingbury
Lemington Hastang
Dunchurch

Eastern Warwickshire and the valley of the River Avon, from Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656). Note the manor of Bilton, near Rugby, bordering the Avon. This quiet retreat was owned during the Shakespearean age by Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, hailed by his contemporaries as the foremost Court poet and dramatist—though none of his plays were ever publicly credited to him. Proof of Lord Oxford's possession of this Avon estate now clearly establishes his claim to the title of "Sweet Swan of Avon."

Upon Joseph Addison's acquisition of Bilton, William Somerville, the Midlands sporting poet and author of the well-known ballad of *The Chase*, welcomed the essayist and dramatist to the Avon countryside with a set of verses entitled, "To Mr. Addison, occasioned by his Purchasing of an Estate in Warwickshire."*

As would be expected, Somerville compliments Addison upon his selection of a home in the land over which the wings of the "Sweet Swan of Avon" had once hovered:

> To the gay town, where guilty pleasure reigns,
> The wise good man prefers our humble plains:
> Here he retires when courted to be great,
> The world resigning for his calm retreat.
> His soul with wisdom's choicest treasures fraught,
> And lives by rules his happy pen has taught.

* * *

> Say then, accomplish'd Bard! What god inclin'd
> To these our humble plains your gen'rous mind?
> Nor would you deign in Latin fields to dwell,
> Which none knew better, or describe so well.
> In vain ambrosial fruits invite your stay,
> And ductile streams that round the borders stray.
> Your wiser choice prefers this spot of earth,
> Distinguish'd by the immortal Shakespeare's birth;
> Where thro' the vales the fair Avona glides,
> And nourishes the glebe with fatt'ning tides;
> Flora's rich gifts deck all the verdant soil,
> And plenty crowns the happy farmer's toil . . .

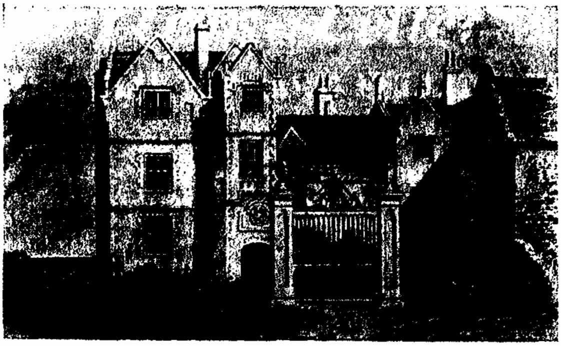
Even into the 19th century, this Avonside manor—owned first by the poet-dramatist, Edward de Vere, and then by the essayist-dramatist, Joseph Addison—retained in full measure its remarkable appeal as a writer's retreat.

After the death of Addison, his heirs and successors, the old place was the home of Charles James Apperley or "Nimrod" (1777-1843), author of those popular classics of English sport, *The Horse and the Hound*, *The Chase*, *The Turf*, and *The Road*. In his autobiography,* Apperley devotes many pages to the charms of Bilton, the following paragraphs being of especial interest:

> "In 1804 I became the tenant of Bilton Hall, between Rugby and Dunchurch, previously the property of . . . the great and ever-to-be-respected Mr. Addison, but then belonging to the Hon. Edward Simpson, brother of the Earl of Bradford. . . .

**The Poetical Works of William Somerville* (Ed. 1793).

**My Life and Times* by Nimrod (Charles James Apperley) Edited by E. D. Cuming (1927), pps. 168, 170, 179.

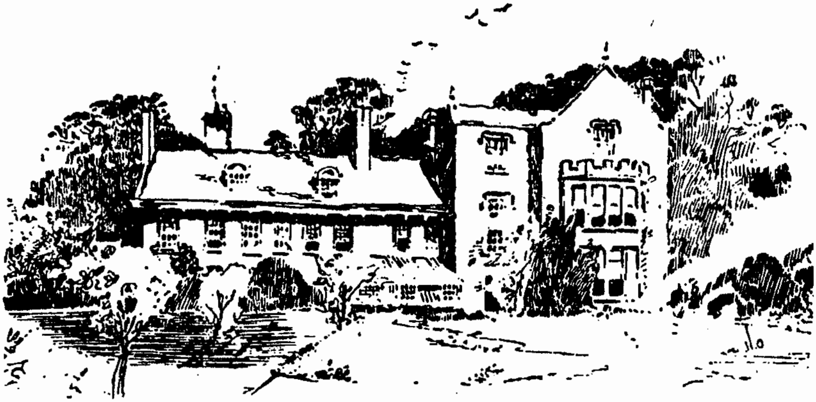


From an engraving by W. Radclyffe (1862).

Bilton Hall, the ancient manor house overlooking the Avon Valley, once owned by the playwriting Earl of Oxford. James Jaffray, authority on Warwickshire architecture, states that part of this structure goes back beyond the days of Edward the Confessor (11th century). The main entrance is shown here. Note the heraldic mullet—an emblem of the Vere family—outlined on the portico. Often extolled by famous writers as an ideal literary retreat, Bilton Hall now appears to have been the real "Shake-speare's" own creative hideaway.

"I much liked the house and the neighborhood. Some excellent land was attached to the former, the management of which occupied my leisure; I had an extensive manor to shoot over, good fishing in the Avon, as well as in the several fine ponds on the domain, full of carp and tench; in fact, I was here in the full enjoyment of domestic life. . . .

"From the period of my settling at Bilton, I may date the course of life which eventually enabled me to be known to the world as a writer on sporting subjects. . . . It was soon after this period that I became a member of the Stratford-upon-Avon Hunt Club, which was composed chiefly of the principal noblemen and gentlemen of the county of Warwick. . . .'



From a drawing by W. Harold Oakley—*English Ill. Magazine*, Aug. 1888.

Rear of Bilton Hall, with impressionistic view of the gardens that have been one of the chief charms of this spot for several centuries. Here Joseph Addison, creator of Sir Roger de Coverley, spent some of his happiest years. These walks have also been paced by Dean Swift, Walter Savage Landor, "Nimrod," Matthew Arnold, "Lewis Carroll" and Rupert Brooke. But today all of these names must be superseded by that of the Elizabethan owner—"Shake-speare," himself.

In our own day, Rupert Brooke—a true poet stemming directly out of "Shake-speare's" lyric vein—is said to have worked upon some of his earliest poetical problems while haunting these same woods and streams approved by Addison and Apperley and originally owned by the Elizabethan nobleman who ranked *first* "in the rare devices of poetry."

A poem by Walter Savage Landor, entitled, *On Swift Joining Avon At Rugby* also refers to the stimulation to creative work which the country contiguous to Bilton exerted upon his imagination when he was a schoolboy at Rugby:

In youth how often at thy side I wander'd;
What golden hours, hours numberless, were squander'd
Among thy sedges, while sometimes
I meditated native rhymes,
And sometimes stumbled upon Latian feet. . . .

These striking "coincidences," interweaving so aptly with the established Oxford-"Shake-speare" documentation, as it relates to Edward de Vere's own unquestionable interest in Bilton, must surely open new lines of investigation in the authorship mystery.

Our sketch of Bilton Manor, and of Edward de Vere's relationship to this part of Warwickshire, is by no means complete. But it is plain that he had a personal predilection for the estate, for he retained it after some fifty of his ancestral properties had been sold. Additional study, especially among Bilton records and local Elizabethan correspondence, diaries etc.,—if any such survive—should throw more light on this new avenue of approach to the Oxford-"Shake-speare" case.

We have, in any event, I think, amply proven that the play-writing peer answers the technical requirements of Ben Jonson's descriptive phrase, "Sweet Swan of Avon."

Leonard Digges' reference to "thy Stratford Moniment" unquestionably connotes the carefully worked out plan of Lord Oxford's surviving children—or their representatives—to confuse the Earl's literary remains with the human remains of Willm Shakspere in order to avoid the re-opening of the old scandals and painful family memories of which Edward de Vere had made indiscreet literary capital.

As the evidence of such a conspiracy is extensive, it will have to be considered in another chapter.

Charles Wisner Barrell.

Famous Reference Book

Mr. Flodden W. Heron, San Francisco bibliophile and ardent member of the Shakespeare Fellowship, has recently become the proud possessor of a first edition of BATMAN UPPON BARTHOLOME, a book cited by all editors of Shakespeare and sometimes described as "Shakespeare's Encyclopædia." It was printed in 1582 by Thomas East, "dwelling by Paules wharfe."

Stephen Batman, Professor of Divinity, was chaplain to Henry Carey, Baron of Hunsdon, Knight of the Garter, and cousin to Queen Elizabeth. In his dedication of the book to Lord Hunsdon, Batman dilates upon the value of wisdom and knowledge, closing it with the following *Vesper:* "Accept the travaile of him that wisheth prosperitie to his Countrie: for the gift of knowledge is greater than the patrimonie of many friends."

While Batman bases his work mainly upon that of Bartholomew Glantvyle, the book contains excerpts from the works of other early writers, as he explains on his title-page and in his address To the Reader.

Batman's final paragraph summarizes briefly the history of "Bartholome's" original manuscript, its translation into English, and its first printing:

> "Barthelmew Glantvyle descended of the noble familye of the Earles of Suffolke, he was a Franciscan Frier, and wrote this worke in Edward the thirds time, about the year of our Lord, 1366. In the yeare 1397, 37 yeares after, was this sayd worke translated into English, and so remained by written Coppie, until Anno Domini 1471, at which time printing began first in England, the 37 yeare of the raigne of King Henrie the 6, sithence which time this learned and profitable worke was printed by Thomas Barthelet, the 27 yeare of the reigne of King Henrie the 8, which was the yeare of our Lord God, 1535. And last of all augmented and enlarged, as appeareth, for the commoditie of the learned and well disposed Christian, by me Stephan Batman, professour in Divinitie, and printed by Thomas East, Anno 1582, the 24 yeare of the reigne of our most happye and prosperous Sovereigne, Queene Elizabeth, whom God fortifie in the numbers of his mercies for ever. Finis."

"Shakespeare Without Tears"

An Open Letter to Miss Margaret Webster:

I have been reading your very valuable and engrossing volume, *Shakespeare Without Tears.* I am impelled to take issue with statements therein. No discourtesy is intended. No one can quarrel with your vast knowledge of applied Shakespeare, and your keen understanding of the plays themselves. Still, because I have "faith" in "logic" there are some things I must ask you, although it is my humble opinion that your own words have already unintentionally answered.

In your opening chapter, "First Person Singular" you write:

"Let us assume, to begin with, that Shakespeare was Shakespeare. This new card will have no place under 'Bacon, Sir Francis,' nor under 'Oxford, 17th Earl of.' Fashions in Shakespearean pretenders change, and, at the time when all playwrights and historical novelists favored Lord Leicester as the hero of Queen Elizabeth's secret love life, Shakespearean mystics pinned their faith to the dry and mighty Lord Bacon. Nowadays the Earl of Essex has won the allegiance of the historical romanticists, and the Earl of Oxford has secured a large following of literary devotees. In the meanwhile, however, painstaking scholarship has unearthed and codified a numberless array of tiny records which, taken together, form an impressive, one would almost say an impregnable, case for the despised player from Stratford-on-Avon. But there is no arguing with a Baconian or an Oxford addict. You cannot dispute logically with an act of faith, nor tear down a religion with puny extracts from the tangled records of minor litigation around the year 1600. Players and playwrights and theatre people as a whole will naturally prefer to believe that the writer of the thirty-seven plays was a member of their own craft. Let us assume that Shakespeare was Shakespeare."

This is a very interesting paragraph. By all means let us assume that Shakespeare was Shakespeare, but then let us set out honestly and intelligently to discover who Shakespeare actually was. I am not conscious of any "changing fashions in Shakespearean pretenders." What I am aware of is an increasing dissatisfaction with the orthodox Stratfordian answer to the authorship question, and a consequent advancement of the claims of various men. But we who are seeking the true identification of the author are the realists, and not in any sense "Shakespearean mystics." Not for us, not in my own belief, did the plays spring full-panoplied from the brain of the player of Stratford. We seek a man who knew the matter of the plays. We disavow your statement that "you cannot dispute logically with an act of faith." We are doing just that, and will continue to do so.

A little quarrel here, and we have done. "Painstaking scholarship," you say, "has unearthed and codified a numberless array of tiny records which taken together, form an impressive, one would almost say impregnable, case for the despised player from Stratford."

That array of tiny records is not numberless. You can number them upon both your hands. They do make a case for the player from Stratford (and he is not despised), but they do not make a case for the writing of the plays. Their very weakness seems to have occurred to you, for you state almost immediately following that "you cannot tear down a religion with puny extracts from the tangled records of minor litigation around the year 1600."

Are these then, these "puny extracts from tangled records of minor litigation" among those "numberless array of tiny records' which form the impressive case for the player?

They are, of course. And later, on Page 27, when you are "Introducing an Englishman," you tell us about the other records.

"By 1592, he was well-known as an actor. There are several contemporary references to him in that capacity, as well as a large number of small personal records, engagingly human."

One of the "engagingly human" references cited is that the tax collectors could not find him in St. Helen's Ward.

A few years later, you will have it, he "offered to lend money to a fellow townsman from Stratford." To that I will give you back the answer of the borrower-to-be's brother:

"I will like of, as I shall hear when, where and how."

I trust I have not been rude. You know more of the dynamics of the Shakespearean stage than ever I can hope to know, but what you do not know is who wrote the plays.

James McKee.

NEWS-LETTER
THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP
AMERICAN BRANCH

VOLUME IV DECEMBER, 1942 No. 1

President
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.

Our Fourth Year

One year ago, when the first number of our third volume was issued, the war seemed yet remote from our shores, even though our minds were absorbed by the news from many fronts and our country was girding itself to assist those nations that were being battered by the might of Axis enemies. One week later, we were stunned by the dastardly attack upon Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. The war no longer seemed remote.

By that one fell stroke, our people were united by the thought that the war must be won. Our young men flocked to the colors and now, in less than a year, are to be found fighting on every front. At home, the factories are turning out immense quantities of equipment for our soldiers and sailors and for our Allies. Of equal importance is the impetus given to transportation—ship, train, and plane. It is a major effort.

A major effort is a costly one, costly in lives—most precious of all—and costly in the changes wrought in our ways of living. Our great hope is that, whatever sacrifices have been found necessary for the winning of the war, the coming year will see the end of bloodshed and horror so that peace-loving people may return to the paths of peace and may begin to pick up the strands of orderly living, now so rudely tangled.

No person, no organization has escaped the impact of the war. Even our American Branch of the Shakespeare Fellowship, bent only on solving the problem of Shakespeare authorship, is beginning to feel the pressure of the advancing cost of printing the NEWS-LETTER. But your editors feel that the little magazine must be continued, if possible.

There comes an end to war, and we begin to see glimmerings of a righteous end to this one. Art endures, and the study of Shakespeare's plays and poems belongs in that category. The threads of our study should not be lost and, by the help of those of us who are older or otherwise unfitted for war activities, need not be lost. As long as we can continue our research and publish the results of our findings, we shall do so. We hope our members will agree with our decision. We count on your support. Let us make our fourth year the best of all!

The News-Letter

Article in chief of the NEWS-LETTER, which ran serially through the past year, was Mr. Barrell's interpretation of the Sonnets. Many students of Shakespeare have essayed an attempt at solving the mystery behind those enigmatic verses. No one has approached the verisimilitude attained by Mr. Barrell, who, believing that the Earl of Oxford's career held the secret, made a determined research into a dark page of the dramatist's life and learned the identity of his and Anne Vavasor's son. This knowledge was the key by which Mr. Barrell could unlock the door of a mystery which has intrigued the whole tribe of Shakespeare students.

Mr. Barrell's comparison of Sonnet lines with facts in the life of Lord Oxford and in the lives of those who played a vital part in his career is a challenge to scholars who still believe in Shakspere of Stratford as the author. No stretch of the imagination can fit the latter into any part of the Sonnets, but they fit Lord Oxford like the proverbial glove.

With his talent for research, Mr. Barrell has now uncovered another page in the great Earl's life which is presented in this issue of the NEWS-LETTER. Readers will be astonished to learn of Lord Oxford's retreat on the banks of the River Avon. The full significance of this newly disclosed fact will be forthcoming in a later issue.

The present and recent important revelations in the NEWS-LETTER contribute so heavily toward the solution of the mystery of Shakespeare authorship that they merit a wider circulation than our small periodical is at present giving them. Can we increase that circulation? It should be done. The world should know the truth.

From England

The October number of The Shakespeare Fellowship NEWS-LETTER (English) was received with interest and pleasure by members of the American Branch. Its publication testifies to the calm assurance with which Fellowship officers and members follow their usual occupations of writing, lecturing, and adding to their membership list, despite the continued threat of enemy bombs. It is an amazing fact to record and we, who live far from such a threat, in all humility, wish to express our deep respect, our great admiration, for our heroic friends.

Under date of August 25, 1942, Mr. James J. Dwyer, Honorary Treasurer of the English Shakespeare Fellowship, wrote to Mr. Barrell (in part): "I shall await with eagerness, as you will easily believe, my copy of your August NEWS-LETTER, with a further unfolding of this fascinating interpretation of the Sonnets. . . . You will be pleased to hear that recently we have had a few more additions to our Fellowship, despite the intense preoccupation of everybody with the dreadful struggle." On September 3rd, after receipt of the August NEWS-LETTER, Mr. Dwyer wrote again (in part): "May I, through you, present my compliments to your distinguished President and tell him that through a lucky chance I have been able to pass his test (pp. 67-68) with more than 70%? I at once identified all but 12 lines: the first 6 and the 6 beginning: 'What worldly wight can hope for heavenly hire.' That works, I think, about 83%. The reason is that I have just recently written a paper on certain points of resemblance between the poems acknowledged to be by Edward de Vere and certain passages of Shakespeare and therefore it was all fresh in my memory. I hope to use this paper as a lecture when we get going again, later on."

Mrs. Arthur Long wrote us from London recently, "I might mention, apropos of an author being able to conceal his identity during his lifetime, that I have myself been in 'Who's Who' under three pen names without the editor discovering the fact until I pointed it out myself." Mrs. Long, an ardent Oxfordian, wrote this statement to show that an author's identity *can* be kept secret, even the author of the Shakespeare plays.

The *New York Times* Book Review (October 18, 1942) has the following to say about our distinguished member:

> Joseph Shearing is just another name for Mrs. Gabrielle Margaret Vere Campbell Long, and so are "Marjorie Bowen," "George R. Preedy," "John Winch," and "Robert Paye." The information concerning the real identity of Joseph Shearing is made for the first time in "Twentieth Century Authors," edited by Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, a book which will contain more than 1,850 biographical sketches and portraits of contemporary writers. It is to be published on Nov. 1 by the H. W. Wilson Company. Mrs. Long has written more than a hundred books under these five pseudonyms, and she has given each of her five pseudonymous authors a personality and style of his own. The year 1940 saw the publication of six of her books: two by "Marjorie Bowen," three by "George R. Preedy," one by "Joseph Shearing." Mrs. Long was born in Hayling Island, England, in 1886, and her most frequently used pseudonym has been "Marjorie Bowen." Her most successful book, however, has been "General Crack," for which she used the pen name of "George Preedy."

Caroline Spurgeon

Dr. Caroline F. E. Spurgeon of Sussex, England, died October 23rd at Tucson, Arizona, where, on account of illness, she had made her home for the past three years.

Dr. Spurgeon was appointed to the chair of English Literature at the University of London in 1913 and in 1920-'21 was a visiting professor at Barnard College, New York. She was the first president of the International Federation of University Women, 1920-'24, and in this capacity became widely known to various groups of University women in several countries. She was a member of the Royal Society of Literature and received honorary degrees from a number of important universities.

A prolific writer on literary subjects, Dr. Spurgeon's best known work is perhaps "Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us," which took ten years to prepare and was published in 1935. An important and profitable task awaits that member of the Shakespeare Fellowship who will study and analyze the many images set forth in this book. It will be found that they are far more applicable to the life of the Earl of Oxford than to the little that is known of the life of Shakspere of Stratford.

New Books

Students of Elizabethan literature and the stage will find the following books, recently published, of unusual interest.

GEORGE GASCOIGNE, ELIZABETHAN COURTIER, SOLDIER, AND POET. By C. T. Prouty. Published in New York by the Columbia University Press. 1942. $3.75.

Dr. Cunliffe, W. C. Hazlitt, and Professor Schelling have all had something to say about George Gascoigne and his place in English literature, as has also our own Captain B. M. Ward. Professor Prouty has spent seven years in original research on the life of this versatile poet, whose writing career was interspersed with the activities of a court gallant and then as a soldier in the Low Countries. One omission in the book has been premeditated and that is the mystery of the publication of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowers*, of which Captain Ward issued a Reprint with Foreword a few years ago. The present author promises his own solution of this problem in a later book, in which he expects to show that Ward's hypothesis rests on misapprehensions. When that book does come out, we shall hope to hear from Captain Ward in rebuttal.

THE GLOBE PLAYHOUSE, ITS DESIGN AND EQUIPMENT. By John Cranford Adams. Published in Cambridge, Massachusetts, by the Harvard University Press. 1942. $5.00.

In this first attempt at a reconstruction of the Globe Playhouse, Mr. Adams has gathered data from every extant play written between 1540 and 1663, other contemporary records, and specialized inquiries of stage historians. From these sources, the author has deduced his theories regarding the plan and the appearance of the famous playhouse, which, it will be remembered, was rebuilt on the Bankside in 1598 and 1599 from materials taken from the demolished Theatre, built in 1576 at Shoreditch, near Finsbury Fields. He believes that the frame of the new building was substantially if not piece for piece the frame of the Theatre, probably of sturdy oak with many years of life remaining, but that the interior was modernized in many ways. He assumes the inner stage of the Theatre was very cramped and the rebuilding of the materials into the Globe gave an opportunity to increase the size of it, though, considering how little is known about the plan of the Theatre, this assumption seems unwarranted. He bases his belief on the types of plays given there, yet not too much is known of them. At least, Mr. Adams establishes for the Globe a far more important stage and more elaborate scenery than has hitherto been accepted by Elizabethan scholars.

PSEUDONYMS. Robert Green, in his "Introductory Address to the Gentlemen Students of Both Universities," refers to poets "which from their calling and gravities being loath to have any profane pamphlets pass under their hand, get some *Batillus* to set his name to their verses. Thus is the ass made proud by this underhand brokerie. And he that cannot write true English without the help of clerks of parish churches will neede make him selfe the father of interludes."

It is this kind of pseudonym, which Robert Greene pointed out in 1592, that we maintain the Earl of Oxford employed when he used that of "William Shakespeare," its first appearance in print coming the following year when *Venus and Adonis* was published. Certainly, as Lord Great Chamberlain of England, Oxford's calling and gravity made him loath to have his verses come out under his own name.

NEWS-LETTER. Twenty copies of Volume III of the NEWS-LETTER have been bound and are now available at $2.00 a copy at the Shakespeare Fellowship office, 17 East 48th Street, New York. A few copies remain of Volumes I and II, listed at the same price. These indexed volumes, uniformly bound, give permanence to many valuable articles covering research into the problem of Shakespeare authorship which, due to the casual treatment usually accorded small periodicals, might otherwise be lost.