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He Is Dead and Gone, Lady

The Tragic Comedy of the Birth and Death of "Shake-speare's" Lost Heir

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> Why, then to-night
> Let us assay our plot; which, if it speed,
> Is wicked meaning in a lawful deed. . . .
> *All's Well*, III, 7, 44.

From a letter written to Lord Burghley in July, 1582, by John Lyly, novelist, playwright and long-time secretary-steward to the poet Earl of Oxford, we learn that Oxford and his wife, Anne Cecil, were then living together.*

The revenge duel that the poet had lost to Anne Vavasor's uncle, Thomas Knevett, in March of that year had without question rudely interrupted Oxford's efforts to readjust life with his wife (as candidly commented upon in Sonnets 56, 116 and 118). But by late summer he had sufficiently recovered from his hurts to resume the normal physical functions of a thirty-two year old husband. In brief, Oxford about this time conceived a child of Anne Cecil.

Matters of so intimate a nature as this would not be discussed here but for reasons vitally germane to the development of our case.

In the first place, we are endeavoring to prove through his own personal documentation that Edward de Vere was—not merely an eccentric Elizabethan nobleman with a flair for drama and poetry, marked vulnerability in all matters of personal thrift and the husbanding of material resources, together with a lamentable tendency to forget the sanctity of his marriage vows—but the greatest creative artist that the English-speaking world has produced.

As such, as the humanly identifiable "Shakespeare," every facet of his personality and every act of his life must inevitably become of interest to millions of readers maturely qualified to judge the cumulative value of our evidence.

Considerations such as these must govern the handling of all documentation (including historical gossip) relating to the 17th Earl of Oxford. And so, if we seem to pry with nothing less than vulgar effrontery into Lord Oxford's most intimate relationships and activities, we shall endeavor to conduct our investigation in the spirit of a medical or legal representative, interested only in assembling data upon which an intelligent diagnosis or *ex facto jus oritur* may be established.

Lastly, it should be borne in mind that "Shakespeare" himself gives us ample warrant for assuming this liberty. In several of the Sonnets (notably, Nos. 76, 110 and 111), he tells us that his work is autobiographical in texture and that he has drawn upon his own experience in literary creation far beyond the limits of polite etiquette.

The child that Oxford conceived of his wife in late August or early September, 1582, was a son, the only male child of the five known to have been borne by Anne Cecil de Vere.

We are concerned with Lord Bulbeck's conception rather than his birth during the earliest days of May in the year following, because this circum-

* *Works of John Lyly*, Bond, i, 28-29.

stance has a curious three-point bearing upon Oxford's relationship to his mistress, his wife and his father-in-law. Strange as it may appear, a scandalously piquant legend, involving all four of these personalities with the biological beginning of the heir apparent to the Earldom of Oxford is seriously set forth in Wright's *History of Essex,* one of England's best-known county chronicles.*

After reproducing several of the now demonstrably false statements, originally put afloat by Edward de Vere's personal enemies (and which have misled so many other historical writers) to the effect that the 17th Earl of Oxford had vowed to destroy his estates in order to revenge himself upon Lord Burghley and the latter's daughter, the Countess of Oxford, Wright goes on:

> "According to this insane resolution, he (Oxford) not only forsook his lady's bed, but sold and wasted the best part of his inheritance. . . . *The father of the Lady Anne, by stratagem, contrived that her husband should, unknowingly, sleep with her, believing her to be another woman, and she bore a son to him in consequence of this meeting.*"

Admitting that most of the gossip that Wright repeats about Edward de Vere can be shown to be based upon inspired slander, the paragraph that we have italicized should, nevertheless, be included with the other evidence that connects the literary Earl's personality with the Shakespearean creative background.

For all readers familiar with the plot of *All's Well That Ends Well* will at once recognize in the extraordinary "stratagem" which Wright attributes to Oxford's father-in-law, a climactic incident in the denouement of "Shake-speare's" play.

The young Count Bertram, having refused to live with his wife, Helena, makes an assignation with Diana, a beautiful Florentine girl with whom he has scraped acquaintance. But, unknown to him, Helena has arranged with Diana to take the Florentine's place in her bed, under cover of darkness; Diana's agreement with Bertram being that no word shall be spoken by either during their love tryst. As a result of this stratagem, the lawful wife, substituting for the casual flame, conceives a child and so finally wins her truant lord's approval.

It has been noted by numerous writers, in addition to Mr. J. T. Looney, author of *"Shakespeare" Identified,** that the characterizations of both Bertram and Helena match the personalities of Lord Oxford and his wife, Anne Cecil, in too many essentials to be entirely accidental. It is not surprising therefore, that the scandalous tradition repeated by Wright should add so patly to the score.

It does not, as a matter of fact, detract from the significance of such parallels whether or not the present one is true. The noteworthy circumstance is that Edward de Vere figures in historical legend in an alleged situation that has been immortalized dramatically by "Shake-speare." Nor is it important that the author of *All's Well* may have taken the incident, originally from Boccaccio's story of *Giletta di Nerbona,* as editors of the play tell us. Nature, in Oscar Wilde's phrase, has been known to imitate art. And the Oxford-"Shakes-speare" connotations would remain quite as strong in this instance if it were merely that the playwriting Earl's name had become associated in certain minds with the most sensational episode of the stage piece.

As it happens, the Oxfordian legend preserved by Wright may be susceptible of more realistic proof than it could be granted on early 19th century face value only. For it can be shown that the scandal originated in the Shakespearean Age and was first set down with slight variations from the Wright version by an historian who had served as Master of the Horse to the household of Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery and husband of Lord Oxford's youngest daughter.

This chronicler is Francis Osborne, Esq., (1593-1659). In his *Traditional Memoirs of the Reigns of Q. Elizabeth & King James I,* Osborne tells of a quarrel that had taken place between Herbert and one Ramsey, a hanger-on at Court, in which the nobleman had been so humiliatingly worsted that Osborne remarks, he was

> ". . . left nothing to testify his manhood but a beard and children, by that daughter of *the last great Earl of Oxford, whose lady was brought to his Bed under the notion of his Mistress, and from such a virtuous deceit she* (the Countess of Montgomery) *is said to proceed.*"

Although unsparing in his criticism of certain great personages, Francis Osborne is now considered a shrewd source of inside information on men and manners of the late Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. His reference to the "virtuous" hoodwinking of the amorous "last great Earl of Oxford"

**The History and Topography of the County of Essex* by Thomas Wright (1836), Vol. I, p. 516.

*Looney, 280-81, et seq.

may be given full credence as one of the traditions of Elizabethan days. For Osborne, it must be granted, was excellently situated throughout many years of his life to accumulate such *sub rosa* folk-lore. Prior to serving Lord Oxford's son-in-law and daughter, he had been one of the stewards of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, (elder of the "Incomparable Paire of Brethren" to whom the First Folio is dedicated). Subsequently, Osborne was employed as a remembrancer in the Lord Treasurer's Office.

While there is a vast difference between tradition and documented fact, if any basis of truth resides in the Oxford-Bertram legend, Francis Osborne's version should be preferred to Wright's—particularly as it concerns the sex of the child conceived by the Countess of Oxford under cover of "virtuous deceit." For while it can be shown from various sources that Oxford and his wife were apparently on good terms during the late summer of 1582, when the Earl's only son by Anne Cecil came into being, other evidence indicates, as will be shown in a succeeding chapter, that the couple were not happily situated prior to the birth of Lady Susan Vere on May 26, 1587. The testimony of the Sonnets also suggests that Oxford had been making determined efforts to reestablish his liaison with Anne Vavasor at a time when his fortunes and reputation were at low ebb. And this would unquestionably be around the 1586 period, when he was forced to relinquish control of his proudest estates and accept a pension from the Queen. Sonnet 90, in particular, would seem to reflect the general circumstances through which the poet Earl was then passing. If he sought consolation outside the legalized conventions at such a time, who is now qualified to arraign him at the bar of public morality?

> Then hate me when thou wilt; if ever, now;
> Now, while the world is bent my deeds to cross,
> Join with the spite of fortune, make me bow,
> And do not drop in for an after-loss:
> Ah, do not, when my heart hath 'scaped this sorrow,
> Come in the rearward of a conquer'd woe;
> Give not a windy night a rainy morrow,
> To linger out a purposed overthrow.
> If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last,
> When other petty griefs have done their spite,
> But in the onset come: so shall I taste
> At first the very worst of fortune's might;
> And other strains of woe, which now seem woe,
> Compared with loss of thee will not seem so.

While the autobiographical Sonnets give us no outright suggestion that the "Dark Lady" to whom so many of them are addressed ever connived with the Poet's wife to practise "lawful deceit" upon him in the manner set forth by Helena and Diana, it is easily susceptible of proof that Anne Vavasor was exactly the type of keen-witted and dissembling siren who might have participated in such a Boccaccian plot with keenest relish. She took delight in plaguing and hoodwinking her lovers, even venturing upon outright bigamy, as her later records prove. In Sonnet 142, "Shake-speare's" comments upon this same Dark Lady's genius for deceit is climaxed with a reference to the many times she has

> *Robb'd others' beds' revenues of their rents.*

And so, whether or not truth may actually be at the basis of the traditional gossip which connects the 17th Earl of Oxford with the love-episode that adds spice to the widely divergent pages of *All's Well*, Francis Osborne and Thomas Wright, of one thing we can be certain: Oxford's mistress was amply qualified to enact her role in any such real-life comedy with conviction. Neither, we may venture to declare, would she have refused any worth-while honorarium that may have been held out to her by Burghley, the crafty puppet-master, for her part in such a fraud.

Anne Cecil's only son did not survive to inherit the Earldom of Oxford. An entry in the Parish Register of the Church at Castle Hedingham, Essex, under "Burials," reads as follows:

> 1583. May 9th. *The Earl of Oxenford's first son.*

We do not know exactly where and when this child was born, but we learn from other sources that he "died soon after his birth."*

By far the most interesting references to the infant Lord Bulbeck are those written by his own mother, Anne Cecil de Vere. These are to be found in a series of "*Epytaphes, made by the Countess of Oxenford after the death of her young Sonne . . .*" which are included in John Soothern's *Pandora*,† a book of verse done in imitation of Ronsard, Pindar and Anacreon, and printed in 1584 with dedicatory odes, "To the ryght honourable the Earl of Oxenford, & c."

Pandora is one of the rarest volumes in the Eng-

*See letter in Birch, *Memoirs of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, Vol. I, p. 31, quoted by Ward, p. 232.

†*Pandora* by John Soothern. Reproduced from the Original Edition, 1584, by The Facsimile Text Society, Columbia University Press, New York, 1938.

lish language, only two copies being known to exist at the present day, and one of these, the property of the British Museum, lacks the title-page. The other, perfect copy, is now owned by the Huntington Library of California. Owing to the extreme rarity of Soothern's work, as well as the "mingle-mangle" of Gallic words which weaken the clarity of his English, *Pandora* has been accorded scant attention by students of Elizabethan poetry. It is, however, an important source of Oxfordian documentation, containing illuminating references to the personal accomplishments of Edward de Vere. The Earl's wisdom and "vertue" as a favorite of the Muses is loudly proclaimed in Soothern's eccentric black-letter lines. Oxford's knowledge of astronomy, of music and "the tongues" is also emphasized. Finally, students of the Oxford-"Shake-speare" research will probably not be surprised to discover that Soothern's reference to his patron's skill in horsemanship is curiously paraphrased in *Hamlet.*

King Claudius tells Laertes of a horseman of Normandy who

> . . . grew unto his seat
> And to such wondrous doing brought his horse,
> As had he been incorpsed and demi-natural
> With the brave beast.
>
> *Hamlet,* IV.7.83

This is a Shakespearean clothing of exactly the same thought that Soothern expresses in admiration of "*Dever's*" prowess "in the Centaurian art of Thrace," whereby the Earl,

> Half-horse, half-man, and with less pain,
> Doth bring the Courser, indomitable,
> To yield to the raynes of his bridle . . .
>
> *Pandora,* p. 5

Soothern's references to Edward de Vere's unusual combination of talents, together with their bearing upon his fitness for the role of the true "Shake-speare" can be taken up in detail later.

But for the moment, let us consider the verses contributed to *Pandora* by the Countess of Oxford. While her lines cannot be said to constitute great or even memorable poetry, they provide illuminating sidelights on her psychology during a period of great unhappiness. That the wife of Edward de Vere should turn to verse as an outlet for her feelings is a significant circumstance, in line with our general argument that the Earl's own literary work—whether it survives today under his own "posy" or initials, or under the pen-name of "Shake-speare"—can be shown to be so largely personal in inception. It would be most natural for the Countess to follow her husband's lead in this respect.

One outstanding feature of the Epitaphs is their complete lack of any allusion whatever to the consolations or sustaining hopes that the Christian religion might be supposed to offer a British mother of the 16th century who had lost her only son. The pagan imagery of Greek and Roman mythology predominates throughout every one of the poems, giving them a strange, pseudo-literary effect. At the same time, the notes of passionate grief which continually break through Anne Cecil de Vere's stilted metaphors make it impossible to question the sincerity of her purpose in self-expression.

As we go over these threnodies, we shall take occasion to point out the Countess of Oxford's use of a number of highly significant images and word-patterns which are also employed by "Shake-speare" to express emotional reactions identical with those here voiced by the Countess. For the convenience of the general reader, much of Anne Cecil de Vere's blackletter spelling has been modernized. Otherwise, her verses appear as follows in the pages of Soothern's *Pandora:*

Four Epytaphes
made by the Countess of Oxenford
after the death of her young Sonne,
the Lord Bulbecke, & c.

> Had with morning the Gods left their wills undone,
> They had not so soon 'herited such a soul:
> Or if the mouth, time, did not glutton up all,
> Nor I, nor the world, were deprived of my son,
> Whose breast Venus, with a face doleful and mild,
> Doth wash with golden tears, inveying the skies,

And when the water of the Goddess's eyes,
Makes almost alive, the Marble, of my Child:
One bids her leave still, her dolor so extreme,
Telling her it is not her young son Papheme,
To which she makes answer with a voice inflamed,
(Feeling therewith her venom, to be more hitter)
"As I was of Cupid, even so of it mother:
And a woman's last child, is the most heloved."

Epy. 1, lines 1-2: ... *the Gods .. 'herited* such a soul.
King Lear (IV, 6, 128) : But to the girdle do *the gods inherit.*

Epy. 1, line 3: Or if the mouth, time, did not *glutton up all* ..
Sonnet 75: Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day,
Or *gluttoning on all*, or all away.

Special attention should be accorded the parallel use, above, of the substantive noun *glutton* as an intransitive verh. This will he recognized as an interesting discovery by philological experts. For Murray's *New English Dictionary*, the foremost chronological authority on the dated usage of all words in our language, credits "Shake-speare" in the 1609 printing of the *Sonnets*, with initial use of the word *glutton* or *gluttoning* as an intransitive verh.

Yet here we find the wife of the poet Earl of Oxford antedating the Bard's employment of this unusual term—to express his identical meaning—by some twenty-six years. What is the most rational explanation?

No documentation exists to prove that Willm Shakspere of Stratford ever owned a book. Not even *one copy* of all the many works attributed to him can be traced in ownership either to himself or to any member of his family. Are we to believe, then, that this hookless wonder secured a copy of the rare edition of John Soothern's *Pandora* of 1584 for the express purpose of familiarizing himself with the Countess of Oxford's vocabulary and tricks of expression? Under the circumstances, it seems hardly likely.

In line, however, with all other evidence which connects Lord Oxford and his immediate circle with the Shakespearean creative background, such parallels in the usage of unusual words and metaphorical imagery would seem to offer excellent supporting evidence that those closest to this gifted nobleman have left their marks most indelibly impressed, in one way or another, upon the works that hear the magic name.

In doleful ways I spend the wealth of my time:
Feeding on my heart, that ever comes again.
Since the ordinance, of the *Destins*, hath heen,
To end of the Seasons, of my years the prime.
With my Son, my Gold, my Nightingale, and Rose,
Is gone; for 'twas in him and no other where:
And well though my eyes run down like fountains here,
The stone will not speak yet, that doth it inclose.
And *Destins* and Gods, you might rather have ta'en,
My twentie years: than the two days of my son.
And of this world what shall I hope, once I know,
That in this respect, it can yield me hut moss:

Or what should I consume any more in woe,
When *Destins*, God, and worlds, are all in my loss.

Epy. 2, line 1: . . . I spend the *wealth of my time.*
Mer. of V. (III, 5, 63) : Wilt thou show the whole *wealth of thy wit* . . .

Epy. 2, line 3: Since the *ordinance of the Destins* hath been . . .
Cymbeline (IV, 2, 145) : Let *ordinance come as the gods forsay* . . .

Epy. 2, lines 5-6: . . . my son . . . *my Rose*, is gone . .
K. John (III, 1, 53) : . . . the *half-blown rose.*
(Constance's description of her young son.)

Note also "Shake-speare's" continual comparison of the "fair youth" of the sonnets to a *rose.*

Epy. 2, lines 9-10: And *Destins* and Gods, you might rather have ta'en,
My twentie years: than the two days of my son.
Ric. II (I, 2, 14) : Some of those branches by the *Destinies* cut.
(Duchess of Gloucester, on the death of the sons of the Black Prince.)

The Destinies are the three Fates of Greek mythology: Clotho, who with the distaff spins the thread of each man's life; Lachesis, who measures off each thread; and Atropos, who cuts the thread with her shears. Needless to say, the Bard refers to them many times.

The heavens, death, and life have conjured my ill:
For death hath take away the breath of my son:
The heavens receive, and consent, that he hath done:
And my life doth keep me here against my will.
But if our life be caused with moisture and heat,
I care neither for the death, the life, nor skies:
For I'll sigh him warmth, and wet him with my eyes:
(And thus I shall be thought a second Promet)
And as for life, let it do me all despite:
For if it leave me, I shall go to my child:
And it in the heavens, there is all my delight.
And if I live, my vertue is immortal.
"So that the heavens, death and life, when they do all
Their force: by sorrowful vertue th'are beguiled."

Epy. 3, line 1: The heavens, death and life *have conjured my ill.*
Winter's T. (V, 3, 40) : *My evils conjured* to remembrance.
(Leontes, addressing the statue of the wife he has long believed dead.)

Hamlet (at the grave of Ophelia) : Whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wand'ring stars . . ?

Epy 3, line 8: And thus shall I be thought a second *Promet*
(Prometheus)

L. L. L. (IV, 3, 333) : From women's eyes this doctrine I derive:
They sparkle still the right *Promethean* fire.

The longing for death which the Countess expresses throughout this Epitaph, and repeats elsewhere in the poems, is reminiscent of Ophelia's distracted psychology.

And as for life, let it do me all despite:
For if it leave me, I shall go to my child:
And it in the heavens, there is all my delight.

Ophelia (sings):
And in his grave rained many a tear—
Fare you well, my dove!

. . . .

For bonny sweet Rohin is all my joy.
Laertes:
Through affliction, passion, hell itself,
She turns to favor and to prettiness.

Idall, for *Adon,* ne'er shed so many tears:
Nor *Thet'* for *Pelid:* nor *Phoebus,* for *Hyacinthus*
Nor for *Atis,* the mother of *Prophetesses:*
As for the death of *Bulbecke,* the Gods have cares.
At the bruit of it, the *Aphroditan* Queen,
Caused more silver to distill from her eyes
Than when the drops of her cheeks raised Daisies:
And to die with him, mortal she would have been.
The *Charits,* for it break their Peruqs of gold:
The Muses and the Nymphs of Caves: I behold
All the Gods under *Olympus* are constraint,
On *Laches, Clothon,* and *Atropos* to 'plain,
And yet beautie, for it doth make no complaint:
For it lived with him, and died with him again.

The mythological allusions with which this Epitaph abound tell us that the Countess of Oxford had read Ovid and similar works. "Shake-speare" had an intimate acquaintance with the same type of literature, as every commentator knows. Note that Marina's epitaph, in *Pericles,* dubs her "Thetis' birth-child," while the bereaved Countess also mentions Thetis in the second line of this epitaph on the infant Bulheck. Two or three unusual bits of phraseology and imagery which add interest here to Anne Cecil de Vere's lines are also effectively employed by the Bard.

Epy. 4, lines 5-7: At the bruit of it, the Aphroditan Queen, (Venus)
Caused more *silver to distill from her eyes*
Than when *the drops of her cheeks raised Daisies.*

Sonnet 119: What potions have I drunk of *Siren tears*
Distill'd from limbecks foul as hell within.

Two G. of V. (III, 1, 230): Sad sighs, deep groans, nor *silver-shedding tears*

Rom. & Jul. (V, 3, 15): ... with *tears distill'd* by moans.

Ven. & Adonis (65-66): Wishing *her cheeks were gardens full of flowers,*
So they were dew'd with *such distilling showers.*
(Venus, holding Adonis in her embrace.)

Epy. 4, lines 13-14: And yet *beautie,* for it doth make no complaint:
For it *lived with him, and died with him again.*

Ven. & Adonis (1080): But true-sweet *beauty lived and died with him.*
Ven. & Adonis (1019): For *he being dead, with him is beauty slain.*

Others of the four last lines,
of other that she made also.

My son is gone! and with it, death end my sorrow,
But death makes me answer "Madame, cease these moans:
My force is but on bodies of blood and bones:
And that of yours, is no more now, but a shadow."

The Countess' description of herself, overworn with grief, calls to mind a similar self-portrait by Helena in *All's Well,* whose characterization bears many other points of resemblance to Lord Oxford's sorely-tried wife. At the end of the play, when Helena enters to claim her forfeit, the King says:

Is't real that I see?

Helena: No, my good lord;
'Tis but the shadow of a wife you see.

Another

Amphion's wife was turned to a rock. O
How well I had been, had I had such adventure,
For then I might again have been the Sepulchre,
Of him that I bare in me, so long ago.

Amphion's wife is, of course, Niobe, who also serves "Shake-speare" metaphorically in several of his plays and poems.

The imagery that the Countess evokes from this classic allusion in the last of her verses is indeed striking. It will, I am sure, occasion small surprise when we show that "Shake-speare" utilizes exactly the same imagery more than once:

Sonnet 86: Making their *tomb* the *womb* wherein they grew.

3 H VI (II, 5, 115): *My heart,* sweet boy, shall be *thy sepulchre*.
(A father addressing his dead son.)

Rom. & Jul. (II, 3, 10): The earth that's nature's mother *is her tomb;*
What is *her burying grave* that *is her womb.*

It will be noted that in the second of these threnodies, the Countess laments that the destinies and gods have not taken

"My twentie years: than the two days of my son."

Anne Cecil de Vere was really in her twenty-seventh year in May, 1583, when her first and only son peeped into and out of the world with such tragic haste. And while the Countess may be accorded poetic license in referring to her own age in round numbers, the "two days'" life of the infant Bulbeck is evidently a correct statement of his brief existence.

The death of this child, together with his parents' inability to produce a male heir to the Earldom of Oxford, unquestionably had a profound effect upon Edward de Vere's relationship to his wife, his father-in-law, his mistress and the illegitimate son (later Sir Edward Vere) that he had sired by Anne Vavasor in March, 1581.

Like all landed noblemen from time immemorial, the 17th Earl of Oxford desired a lawfully recognizable son to carry on his name and title. We have first-hand testimony of his feelings in this respect in a letter that he wrote to Lord Burghley from Paris on March 17, 1575, in reply to news that had reached him that the Countess of Oxford was expected to have a child.

My Lord, Your letters have made me a glad man, for these last have put me in assurance of that good fortune which you formerly mentioned doubtfully. I thank God therefore, with your Lordship, that it hath pleased Him to make me a

father, where your Lordship is a grandfather; and if it be a boy I shall likewise be the partaker with you in a greater contentation. But thereby to take an occasion to return (i.e., to England) I am off from that opinion; for now it hath pleased God to give me a son of my own (as I hope it is) methinks I have the better occasion to travel, sith whatsoever becometh of me I leave behind me one to supply my duty and service, either to my Prince or else my country.*

In passing, it should be observed that the thought expressed in the last lines quoted above is developed at great length in the first seventeen of "Shakespeare's" Sonnets—wherein the handsome young nobleman (generally believed to be the Third Earl of Southampton) is urged to marry and reproduce himself that his duties as the representative of a great "house" may be assured of fulfillment by a successor.

Ah! if thou issueless shall hap to die,
The world will wail thee, like a makeless wife;
The world will be thy widow, and still weep
That thou no form of thee hast left behind.

(Sonnet 9)

As we know, it did not please God to give Edward de Vere a son in 1575. And it may well be that disappointment over this fact was one of the contributory factors that led to his estrangement from his wife upon his return to England the year following.

Oxford had been married to Anne Cecil nearly four years before their first child, the Lady Elizabeth Vere, was born. This could be considered a long time for the production of progeny by healthy parents in Elizabethan days. That the Earl had grown pessimistic of his wife's ability to conceive can be gathered from the fact that prior to his departure for the European Continent in January, 1575, he had drawn up a will leaving all his property "in default of issue by himself or his sister" (Lady Mary Vere) to his male cousins, the sons of his father's younger brothers.† These cousins included Francis and Horatio Vere who later became the two outstanding British military geniuses of the Lowland Wars.

We know that Oxfords father-in-law was perturbed by the Earl's desire to bestow his properties upon his relatives of the Vere blood, rather than to leave its administration (even in part) to his widow, should she survive him. For Burghley refers to this move more than once in his correspondence and personal memoranda as one of the differences between himself and his son-in-law.

After so many years spent in contact with Lord Burghley—first as a Ward of State and later as husband of the Master of the Ward's favorite daughter, Oxford was as familiar as anyone in England with Burghley's unsleeping ambitions for the House of Cecil. The literary Earl knew that his father-in-law loved power and property above most other things, and that it would be the proudest feather in his cap if he could be assured that the ancient Vere titles and estates would descend, in one way or another, to a representative of the Cecil blood. By the same token, it is plain that Oxford neither wholly admired nor trusted his father-in-law and considered his wife too much the Ophelia-like puppet of her parent's schemes for absolute confidence.

The elements of misunderstanding and suspicion which beclouded Oxford's relationship to the Cecils—and which still militate against the Earl's good name in certain quarters where the Cecil side of the story is considered the only one—might have been ironed out if Anne Cecil's son had lived to maturity. On the other hand, it is fair to assume that if such had been the case, we would not today have many of the Sonnets and some of the greatest plays, such as *Hamlet*. For inasmuch as our evidence indicates that a large proportion of the Shakespearean works reflect Lord Oxford's reactions to life as he can be shown to have experienced it, who can doubt that a happier career in which emotional conflict, uncertainty and frustration did not play so important a part might have decreased his incentive for self-expression? Nor is it unreasonable to believe that if the literary peer's emotional and material interests had been channelled to protect the welfare of a legitimate male heir from 1583 onward, he might not have continued his liaison with Anne Vavasor, nor have given so much of his love and attention to her son—his tragically illegitimate "other self."

Charles Wisner Barrell.

*Hatfield MSS. (Cal. II, 29), reprinted by Ward, pps. 102-04.

"Lord Burghley," comments Capt. Ward, "who was always opposed to foreign travel, had evidently urged Oxford to return on account of his wife's pregnancy. The Earl's reply makes it clear that he will not be denied the long-wished for journey to Italy."

†Cal. of MSS. of James Round, Esq., M.P., of Birch Hall, Essex, in Hist. Mss. Com., 14th Report, App. 9, p. 267.

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

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

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

"Shakespeare" the Pseudonym of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford

Evidence supporting this belief may be found in the following books.

"SHAKESPEARE" IDENTIFIED IN EDWARD DE VERE, THE SEVENTEENTH EARL OF OXFORD, by J. Thomas Looney. London. 1920.

In this book, Mr. Looney presents the evidence to support his discovery of Lord Oxford as the man behind the name "Shakespeare," and amplifies it with such a fine chain of reasoning that unprejudiced readers are at once convinced of the truth of his assertions. Unhappily, the stock remaining in the publisher's hands was destroyed by London's great fire of December, 1940. A few copies of this important book had previously been imported by the Shakespeare Fellowship and can be supplied.

THE SEVENTEENTH EARL OF OXFORD, by B. M. Ward. London. 1928.

His interest aroused by Mr. Looney's convincing *"Shakespeare" Identified,* Captain Ward spent some five years examining the records to be found in Elizabethan archives and in this book presents the results of his research. It is a mine of historical facts and, as a biographical supplement to Mr. Looney's work, is invaluable. Original sales price in this country $7.50, but present price should be verified by correspondence with London publisher.

Most large libraries have copies of the above mentioned books and, by advertising, a second-hand copy can occasionally be procured. The books listed below, printed in this country, are more readily available.

HIDDEN ALLUSIONS IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS, by Eva Turner Clark. New York. 1931. $3.00. Based on records of early court revels and personalities of the Elizabethan era, this book argues that the plays of Shakespeare were written earlier than has been assumed by Stratfordian theorists and that they contain many allusions to persons and events of that earlier period. By means of these allusions, a more satisfactory chronology than has hitherto obtained has been produced.

THE MAN WHO WAS SHAKESPEARE, by Eva Turner Clark. New York. 1937. $3.50. To a narrative of Lord Oxford's life, based on the fundamental facts found in the works of Mr. Looney and Captain Ward, is here added new evidence and a new interpretation of the relationships between the dramatist Earl and the individuals of his time.

NEWS-LETTER of The Shakespeare Fellowship. American Branch. Twenty copies each of the first three volumes have been bound, in order to insure permanence. Of these, Vol. I has been sold out and only a few copies of Vol. II and Vol. III are now available. Unbound copies of all issues are still in hand. Many valuable articles have appeared in this periodical, among which are Mr. Looney's *"Shakespeare": A Missing Author,* and Mr. Barrell's interpretation of the Sonnets and his discovery of Lord Oxford's home on the River Avon.

A Note on Pericles

The critics are unanimous that the "much admired" play *Pericles* is only partly the work of Shakespeare; George Wilkins, "a second-rate or third-rate hack writer," is generally held responsible for at any rate the first two Acts. The late Sir W. Raleigh said that "no pen but Shakespeare's could have written Act IV of *Pericles*" (English Men of Letters Series: *Shakespeare*) and another Professor was even more explicit. "He left," said Mr. J. W. Mackail in his *Approach to Shakespeare*, "the first two Acts pretty much, if not entirely, as they stood, but rewrote practically the whole of the rest."

The purpose of this little Note is not to discuss the play or its sources, or the judgments passed upon it by scholars, but merely to point out the curious fact that Act II (held to be non-Shakespearean) contains under three headings a résumé of Oxford's characteristic accomplishments. These social graces are represented as having been displayed at a foreign court by a visiting and stranger knight in a manner that recalls *The Two Gentlemen of Verona.**

In Act II Scene 3 of *Pericles* we are at the court of Simonides, King of Pentapolis; a joust has been held, followed by a state banquet. Pericles, the Disinherited, the Stranger Knight, is proclaimed victor in the tournament and, at the feast that follows, he surpasses all others in the dance, while in scene 5 he is hailed as excelling in music. He is, in short,

"The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observ'd of all observers."

All this is exactly what we should expect; in fact, it accords with what we know of Oxford's career at the court of Elizabeth and with much that we may reasonably surmise of his travels in Italy. Moreover, the threefold claim made for the hero in Act II of this play is followed by the usual vaunt of his high birth, repeated more emphatically in the last Act by his daughter, Marina.

Let us look for a moment at these passages.

*"It is not improbable," says Mr. J. T. Looney (*Shakespeare Identified*, p. 268), "that the latter was the first play of Shakespeare's and may, if we assume the De Vere authorship, have been begun shortly after his return from Italy."

'T were good, I think, your lordship sent him thither:
There shall he practise tilts and tournaments,
Hear sweet discourse, converse with noblemen,
And be in eye of every exercise
Worthy his youth and nobleness of birth.

Two Gentlemen, Act I, sc. 3.

I. Pericles is victor in the joust and is complimented on the perfection of his address:

Thaisa.

But you my knight and guest,
To whom this wreath of victory I give,
And crown you king of this day's happiness.

Pericles.

'T is more by fortune, lady, than by merit.

Simonides.

Call it by what you will, the day is yours;
And here, I hope, is none that envies it.
In framing an artist, art hath thus decreed,
To make some good, but others to exceed:
And you're her labour'd scholar.

To these compliments, Pericles makes reply:

My education ('s) been in arts and arms.

Which reminds us at once of Ophelia's description of Hamlet: "Courtier, soldier, scholar."

II. He excels in the dance.

Simonides.

Unclasp, unclasp:
Thanks, gentlemen, to all; all have done well.
(To Pericles) But you the best.

III. He excels in music.

Simonides.

I am beholding to you
For your sweet music this last night: I do
Protest my ears were never better fed
With such delightful pleasing harmony.

Pericles.

It is your grace's pleasure to commend;
Not my desert.

Simonides.

Sir, you are music's master.

A moment later, Pericles utters, under sharp provocation, the inevitable claim about his high lineage:

Pericles.

My actions are as noble as my thoughts
That never relished of a base descent.

As if these passages do not point plainly enough to Oxford, we have, in Act V sc. 1 (the Recognition Scene), the familiar de Vere claim in still more explicit form:

Marina.

Though wayward fortune did malign my state,
My derivation was from ancestors
Who stood equivalent with mighty kings:
But time hath rooted out my parentage
And to the world and awkward casualties
Bound me in servitude.

This sounds very like Viola's answer to Olivia's question: "What is your parentage?"

Viola.

Above my fortunes, yet my state is well.
I am a gentleman.

Finally, there is another small but unmistakable sign of the revising hand of Oxford, namely, one more instance of the word "monument" for any kind of tomb or burial.

In Act III sc. 1, when the makeshift coffin of his wife, Thaisa, who is supposed to have died on board ship during the storm, is about to be thrown into the sea, Pericles must even there talk about a *monument.* Oxford simply could not conceive that anybody connected with himself could be buried in any other manner.

There are hundreds of such passages scattered throughout the Plays and, cumulatively, they constitute something very like a biography of the seventeenth Earl of Oxford. When applied to him they are instantly seen to be full of meaning and coherence; when applied to anyone else, *e.g.* Bacon, they do not fit together and lose all meaning; applied to the Stratford actor, they are merely absurd.

J. J. Dwyer.

"Hamlet" in China

Brooks Atkinson, dramatic writer for *The New York Times,* witnessed in Chungking, China, on December 16th last, the stage production of Liang Shih Chiu's version of *Hamlet,* which was "put on in modern style, with simple settings and in good taste. The opening battlement scene . . . may be accounted something of an achievement. Although the costumes are hardly sumptuous in wartime Free China nor authentic in style or color, there are intelligent attempts at period design. . . . To the Western visitor it is disconcerting to hear the sentimental melody of Handel's 'Largo' caressing the first throne-room scene, reducing exits and entrances to the style of a church processional; it is astonishing to hear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern beguile Hamlet to the graceful, bowing 'Minuet in G' by Beethoven."

As the Chinese are accustomed to long plays which are sometimes carried on for several evenings in succession, it is not surprising that the mousetrap scene had not been reached at 11:15, as Mr. Atkinson reports.

William Caxton

The following dispatch from London was recently sent out by the Associated Press:

Lord Kemsley presented the nation today documents 500 years old, clearing up the mystery surrounding the first years of William Caxton, "father of English printing."

The documents are 15 Latin parchments in exquisite Gothic script. They were expected to fill in previously vague records of Caxton's early life and clear up the date of his birth, variously reported between 1412 and 1423. The manuscripts had been in the possession of the Turnour Suffolk family, of which the Caxtons were neighbors.

Coming to light of such valuable ancient documents renews the hope that, with England's present endeavor to safeguard her treasured papers of the past, documents may be discovered which will throw new light on obscure years of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

The Dire Rival

Alden Brooks, skilled fictionist and former instructor in English at Harvard, has published a 700-page volume entitled *Will Shakspere and the Dyer's Hand* (Scribners, New York), in which he offers his belief that the real Bard was Sir Edward Dyer, the trusted friend of Sir Philip Sidney.

No actual contemporary documentation exists to prove that Dyer was a dramatist. His reputation as a poet is founded upon his gift "for elegy, most sweet and solemn, and of high conceit." He died a bachelor, according to Ben Jonson.

Mr. Brooks' theory is a smoothly constructed lattice-work of conjecture. He makes no distinction between literary allusions and *actual personal documentation.* His arbitrary assumptions regarding the crucial *Sonnets,* for instance, (upon which the whole authorship identification must inevitably stand or fall) will both amuse and amaze Oxfordians. It is his contention that the *Sonnets* really represent an anthology of the work of Thomas Nash, Samuel Daniel, Barnaby Barnes and others! Only two persons are addressed in these poems, Brooks claims—one, the young Earl of Southampton, the other a "dark-eyed tavern wanton" who has led the youthful Southampton astray.

Read, by all means, if you would have increased respect for the thoroughness, realism and solidly-grounded documentation of the case for Edward de Vere.