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Look In the Chronicles

Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?
Excuse not silence so; for it lies in thee
To make him much outlive a gilded tomb,
And to be prais'd of ages yet to be.

Sonnet CI

One of the most authentic and disinterested witnesses in the whole group of those who can be invoked to throw light upon the controversy over the true authorship of the works of "Shakespeare" has been almost entirely ignored by Stratfordian writers since the time of John Payne Collier, and only occasionally mentioned by the proponents of Edward de Vere.

He is Philip Henslowe, proprietor of several London theatres and father-in-law of the successful actor-producer, Edward Alleyn. To be sure, Sir George Greenwood, in "The Shakespeare Problem Restated," gives the name, "The Silence of Philip Henslowe," to one of his chapters, in which he comments upon the failure of this very prominent theatrical producer to mention, even once, the name of the Bard, in the diary which he kept from 1581 to 1609, but he fails to stress the matter and to exploit this "silence" as fully as it merits.

The diary was found by Malone, in 1790, at Dulwich College, which had been founded by Alleyn, Henslowe's son-in-law. It had been originally used as an account book to record dealings in wood in Ashdown Forest, Sussex, from 1576 to 1586, but after this there is a gap in the chronology until 1591, when Henslowe had become manager of the Rose Theatre. Later he is part owner also of the Hope, and early in the 1600's, he and Alleyn had built the Fortune Theatre in Golding Lane. Still later we find them as joint tenants of an amusement park named Paris Garden.

In the diary Henslowe records the plays that he put on the boards; he gives the exact gate or intake

for every night's performance; he enters the sums that he is obliged to pay authors for "books." He names the actors whom he hires and to whom he is constantly lending or advancing money. In dozens of instances authors have signed in the book, receipts for sums that he has paid them. Groups of actors sign to serve Henslowe or acknowledge that they have received money from him.

In 1591, when the diary's theatrical entries begin, Marlowe is aboard. He returns in the spring of 1593, only to be promptly killed. Greene was ill, in fact slowly dying, in 1591-92. Beaumont and Fletcher were unknown, as late as 1608. But of the English dramatists who were at all prominent from 1593 to 1609, which according to the Stratfordians, was the great Shakespearean period of the English stage, ALL are mentioned in the diary—SAVE ONE.

Heywood, "Bengemen Johnson," "Antony Mundaye," Thomas Dekker, Day, Hathway, Middleton, "Harey Cheattell," R. Wilson, "Mihell Drayton," Webster, Smith, "Wm. Hawghton," "Samwelle Rowley," "Anthonie Wadeson," Henry Porter, Thos. Nashe, John Marston, George Chapman,—all are represented in the diary, not once, but many times each, oftentimes by their own handwriting and signatures. Remember the words of Robert G. Ingersoll in his famous lecture on Shakespeare: "It was an age of great writers: Marston, Middleton, Munday, Lyly, Nashe, Peele, Greene, Webster, Drayton, Dekker, Jonson, Chapman, Beaumont and Fletcher. But these are but the foot-hills about that mighty peak which towers so far above them

that its top is lost in the mists and clouds of obscurity."

Where is the name of the mightiest of them all? Henslowe produced some of his plays, the historical ones many times. But while every other playwright of the sixteen-year period received money from the manager for manuscripts or "books" that he had written, and while Henslowe recorded the payment of every debt, however small, incurred in a professional way, not one penny did he ever disburse for a play or manuscript of "Shakespeare."

Ponder for a moment on this amazing fact. The manager of three London theatres, an almost exact contemporary of the greatest playwright of all time (he died in 1616), bought plays from all the dramatists of his day,—save one! He produced eight or nine of this man's dramas, but never paid for them. What is more, in a diary covering eighteen years of play-producing, he never once mentions the name of the writer, who, according to all the English professors, was pouring out, throughout this period, plays which for language, for all around scholarship and for human understanding, have never been approached by man.

This situation cannot be ignored nor pooh-poohed by our Stratfordian friends. There can be only one explanation: "Shakespeare" was a pseudonym. Just as Marian Evans hid behind "George Eliot," just as Charles Egbert Craddock was thought for years to be a man, just as the author of the *Waverley* novels for thirteen years was never suspected of being the famous Scottish poet, so some great unknown hid behind this mask. What is more, he was not of Henslowe's *monde*. A theatrical manager of 1600 A.D. did not bandy about the names of the great nobles of the day. The Shakespeare plays were not paid for, as their author was not selling them for shillings nor pounds.

Henslowe was not able to get his hands on many of them. It is significant, moreover, that the eight or nine he did produce (all before 1598, by the way), are not at all the same as those found in the twelve plays attributed to "Shakespeare" by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia*, published in 1598. Some critics have tried to date the plays of the Master by insisting that any play not included in Meres' list was written subsequently to the printing of his book. But Cairncross has shown us that fourteen or fifteen of them antedate 1593, and the combination of Meres and Henslowe gives us eighteen. Actually, we are sure of only one play as appearing both in the diary and in the *Palladis Tamia*

list, namely, *Titus Andronicus*. Meres names *Henry IV*, while Henslowe was playing [producing] *Henry V* and *Henry VI*. Meres names *Romeo and Juliet* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Henslowe was playing *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. Meres names *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Love's Labour's Won* and *The Gentlemen of Verona*. Henslowe played *Caesar* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. It is probable, though not capable of proof, that there are two more plays on Meres' list which were also played by Henslowe. Meres names *The Merchant of Venice*. Henslowe, on July 30th, 1594, writes: "Rd at the merchant of camden 3pounds 7sh," followed five times in the next three months by entries which read: "Rd at the Venesyon comodey" or "rd at the venesyon." Invariably this play, like "the merchant of camden," draws a big house, much larger than the historical or biblical dramas. Now there is nowhere in the literature of this period any reference to a play called "the merchant of eamden," nor to any other Venetian comedy besides the "Merchant" of Shakespeare. But—and this is very significant—there was a popular ballad, well-known in those days, called "The Merchant of Emden." Henslowe, whose spelling is nothing if not individual and whose mind occasionally goes wool gathering, in my opinion either heard at first the title of the play imperfectly, or with his spinal column instead of his brain, wrote into his book the title of the popular song. After all, "the merchant of Venice" and "the merchant of Emden" are far more alike in sound than some of the other titles which the manager substitutes for one another. Witness "Rd at velya for," which Malone and Collier have decided was the first entry of "Antony and Vellea." Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour" is always referred to in the diary as "the comodey of Umers."

The second play named by Meres, which probably was also played by Henslowe, is either *Richard II* or *Richard III*. On December 31st, 1593, and twice in the following January, Henslowe records that he produced a play which he calls "Richard the confeser." This comes in the midst of a string of patriotic and historical plays, like *Henry II* and *Henry V*. The only English king who bears the title of "the Confessor" is Edward (1042-66) of the Saxon Line. There is no such character in the history as "Richard the Confessor." Here again it is plain that Henslowe was somewhat fuddled (as he was the same month when he entered "titus and ondronicus.") The only rational explanation for this entry is that the play was either *Richard II* or *Richard III*.

In a subsequent part of this narrative I shall discuss the chronology of the plays and shall show how Henslowe has thoroughly riddled the orthodox dates, as usually given for the composition of the plays by any Stratfordian editor. He completely bears out the contention of Cairncross (*The Mystery of Hamlet, A Solution*) that the great bulk of the plays published in the First Folio of 1623 had been written a good thirty years earlier.

For the time being I wish to turn to another feature of the Henslowe diary, namely, his list of actors. The names run all through the book. The men are borrowing money from the manager, buying costumes and accessories for him, and representing him as go-betweens in purchases of books, as well as acting on the stage.

Famous names occur, along with others which would be unknown save for this entry. Here are Wm. Kemp, Gabriel Spencer, John Ducke, Thos. Blackwood, John Thayer, John Lowin, "Xpofer beston" (later called "Crystofe beestone"), Edward Alleyn, Edward Dutton, "Bengemen Johnson, player," John Synger, Thomas Hearne, Richard Alley, "John Helle, the clowne," Edward Jubey, "James Donstall," Richard Jones, Wm. Birde, Robert Shaw, "William Augusten," James Bristow, John Towne, M. Slaughter, "Hew Daves," T. Towne, "Lame Charles Allen," Joseph Taylor, Richard Hooppe, "Wm. Smyght," George Attewell, "Robard Nycowilles," "James Borne," "William Sley," "Steven Magett," Lawrence Fletcher, "Charles Massey," "Antony Jeffes," "Umfrey Jeaffes," Thomas Pope, "M. Shealden."

Actors came and actors went. Henslowe faithfully recorded their names as he paid them off or advanced money to them. But the name of the actor who was also the world's greatest playwright is conspicuous by its absence.

Many different companies played for him:

"1591, beginge the 10 of february, my lord Stranges mene as foloweth"

"begininge the 27 of desember 1593, the earle of Sussex his men"

"begininge at easter 1593, the Quenes men and my lord of Sussex to geather"

"beginninge the 14 of maye 1594, by my lord admerall's men"

"beginninge at Newington, my Lord Admeralle and my Lorde chamberlen men, as foloweth, 1594:—"

"begynnyng one simone and Jewdes daye, my lord Admeralles men, as foloweth: 1596"

"A Juste acownte of all suche monye as I have Receved of my lord admeralles and my lord of penbrocke men, as foloweth, beginning the 21 of October 1597:—"

A few pages beyond this occur the entries

"A Juste acownte of all suche money as I have layd owt for my lord admeralles players, begynnyng the xj of octobr, whose names are as foloweth: Borne, Gabrell, Shaw, Jonnes, Downten, Jube, Towne, Synger and ij Jeffes."

"Layde owt for the company of my lord of Notingame men, from the 26 of maye 1599, as foloweth:—"

"The earlee of nothengames players deattes as (1600) foloweth:—"

"Begininge with a new Recknyng with my lord of Nottingames men, the 23 daye of february 1601, as foloweth:—"

"Lent unto my Lorde of Worsters players as foloweth, begynnyng the 17 daye of auguste 1602"

"Begininge to play agayne by the Kynges licence and layd owt sence for my Lord of Worsters men, as foloweth, 1603, 9 of maye."

Here are found eight prominent companies, or seven, rather, for we are told by the historians that Lord Strange's company, after his death, became the Lord Chamberlain's group. Where is the Stratford actor's name? We read in Neilson and Thorn-dike: "With his company [Strange's-Lord Chamberlain's] Shakespeare was connected from the beginning, and he aided in making it the chief London company."

But here is J. Q. Adams asserting, with equally dogmatic finality, that "Shakespeare had thrown in his fortune" with Pembroke's company. He proves it in this manner:

1) The two best companies in London from 1589 to 1593 were Lord Strange's men and the Earl of Pembroke's men.

2) We have complete lists of the members of Lord Strange's company during those years and Shakespeare's name cannot be found in them.

3) Shakespeare was such a wonderful actor that he must have belonged to one of the very best companies.

4) Therefore he MUST have belonged to Pembroke's men!!!

However, Adams is sure that Shakespeare was writing exclusively for the Strange-Lord Chamberlain company from 1594 on. But here comes Henslowe, upsetting the apple-cart for both of these

"authorities." (When one Shakespeare "authority" flatly contradicts another, which happens in every chapter of any two "authoritative" works that I have ever read, who then is authority?)

If Shakespeare was a member of a rival company until late in 1594, as Adams proves, why did he permit Strange's men, in Henslowe's theatres, to play *Henry VI*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Henry V*, during 1591 and 1592? On the other hand, if Shakespeare was a member of Strange's company from the beginning, as Neilson so positively states, why does his name not appear in Henslowe's diary, along with those of the other members of the company, during the years when they were playing for him? Also, in either case, why did he allow the Queen's men and the company of the Earl of Sussex to put on *Henry V*, *Titus Andronicus* and *King Lear* during the period when they were acting at Henslowe's theatres? The Stratfordians cannot have it both ways.

Again, Adams assigns Shakespeare to Pembroke's men during 1592, '93, and '94, because we have lists of Strange's men for that period and none for Pembroke's. But he admits that this company was putting on "The Contention Between the Noble Houses of York and Lancaster" and "The True Tragedie of Richard, Duke of Yorke," plays which, as Cairncross suspected and as I have elsewhere proved, are memory piracies on the second and third parts of *Henry VI*. Why should Shakespeare's company play pirated and incorrect versions of true Shakespeare plays? Imagine the Bard reciting spurious lines ("Arcadian tygers," for instance, instead of "Hyrcanian," as he had written it) parodied by a thief upon his own flawless phrases.

No; genuine Shakespeare plays are played in Henslowe theatres—by Strange's men, by the Sussex company, by the Queen's men, by the Lord Admiral's group, by a combination of the Lord Admiral's and the Lord Chamberlain's men. Thus the myth of an actor-genius, writing exclusively for a single company in which he also is playing, vanishes into thin air.

The only hint during this early period that there might have been an actor named Shakespeare comes from an entry in the accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber to the effect that he paid "To William Kempe, William Shakespeare and Richard Burbage, servants to the Lord Chamberlain, upon the council's warrant, dated xvto Marcii, 1595, for two severall comedies or enterludes showed by them before her Majestie in Christmas tyme laste paste viz upon St. Stephen's daye and innocentes

day—in all £ 20."

Mrs. C. C. Stopes, as Mr. Looney has pointed out, tells in her book, "Burbage and Shakespeare," that this item is not a genuine entry made at the time, but was inserted subsequently by Mary Countess of Southampton, after the death of the Treasurer, her second husband, Sir Thomas Henegge, "who had left his accounts rather in a muddle."

Adams himself admits that there are some suspicious circumstances connected with this entry: the three men are supposed to represent the Lord Chamberlain's company and the official court calendar shows that this account is false. For on that particular Innocents' Day, the Admiral's men gave a play before her Majesty, while the Lord Chamberlain's company were playing before the members of Gray's Inn. We wonder what the Countess was trying to cover up.

Mrs. Stopes is trying hard to prove some connection between Shakespeare and Southampton. But after thirteen years of research through the letters and records of the Wriothesley family, she had to confess that there was in them not one word relating to the man who had made the young Earl's name immortal by dedicating to him *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*. She remarked to B. M. Ward, "My life has been a failure," and confessed to another prominent Oxfordian that she was beginning to doubt the whole Stratford story. In four pages of her work on "Shakespeare and Burbage" are given the names of the actors in the various performances of the company (the one that both Adams and Neilson agree that Shakespeare belonged to from 1594 on). *Not once* do we find the name of the Bard of Avon. The only mention of him as an actor (or was it as a producer?) is found in the record of the Treasurer of the Chamber, through the medium of an item which is now known to be a false statement, entered in subsequent years, for what purpose we know not.

Louis P. Bénézet.

(To be continued)

* * * *

In addition to the continuation of his analysis of Henslowe's *Diary*, Dr. Bénézet will review Alden Brooks' volume on Sir Edward Dyer in an early issue of the NEWS-LETTER. Other articles scheduled for publication include research showing Oxfordian allusions in the plays by Mrs. Clark; a commentary on the burial place of Oxford by Miss Phyllis Carrington; and further papers on the Earl's private life as reflected in the *Sonnets* by Mr. Barrell.

King of Shreds and Patches

An Examination of the Alleged Credentials of Sir Edward Dyer as the "Great Revisor" of the Shakespearean Works

That dye is on me
Which makes my whitest part black.
Henry VIII. I. 1. 208

After years of deep cogitation, Mr. Alden Brooks, M.A., Harvard, has come up with his long-awaited study of the Shakespeare authorship problem.

It is an expansive tome, embracing some seven hundred pages, and offers an entirely new solution to the greatest of literary mysteries—one that may be designated as a combination of the "group" and "stooge" theories.

Under the Brooks' treatment, "Mr. William Shakespeare" as an individualized creative force disappears, and we are told instead of a sort of Elizabethan assembly-line, operated by Thomas Kyd, Robert Greene, George Peele, Thomas Lodge, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Nash, Samuel Daniel, Barnaby Barnes, Ben Jonson and others—with the young Earl of Southampton democratically joining the hired hands now and again to turn out a bit of piece-work on his own account.

The promotor, organizer and financial agent of the business is the shrewd and hustling Will Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon. As an entrepreneur, Will develops unique genius, equaling in rough and ready energy, trickery and rapaciousness any fictional character of the type evolved by Dickens or Mark Twain. And the veteran model-maker or "Great Revisor" that Will employs to help him plan and perfect the masterpieces of drama and poetry that flow from his shop is the courtier-lyricist, Sir Edward Dyer. Poor Dyer needs the money very badly and his understanding with his employer is that his services must never be acknowledged; although one day he himself inadvertently tips the whole arrangement off to Brooks (representing alert posterity) by inserting his own name—Capitalized—into the seventh line of *Shakespeare's Sonnet No. 111*:

Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdu'd
To what it works in, like the Dyer's hand:
Pity me then and wish I were renew'd . . .

Cutting through the verbose, involved and tenuously conjectural fabric of the Brooks argument, this is the gist of his case as it appears in *Will Shakspeare and the Dyer's Hand*.*

The Shakespearean student, seeking new light on a vexed subject, may for a while sit in pop-eyed wonder before the legerdemain of Master Brooks ere he thinks to ask:

Where is the contemporary documentation to back up these broad and sweeping claims? And who and what was this alleged "Great Revisor"—Sir Edward Dyer—in real life?

The realistic questioner will soon find that the one recognized authority on the life and writings of Dyer is the British scholar, Ralph M. Sargent, who in 1935 published a thoroughly documented account of this Elizabethan diplomatist's career under the title of *At the Court of Queen Elizabeth: The Life and Lyrics of Sir Edward Dyer*.

Carefully perusing Prof. Sargent's work in conjunction with the Brooks volume, the information-seeker cannot help but note the many key points at which the Harvard M.A. diverges sharply from the well-defined outline of Dyer's recorded documentation. In instance after instance, Brooks is obliged to pull his "Great Revisor" along by main strength in following paths charted only in Brooks' own elastic imagination.

Thus at the very outset of this alleged identification of Dyer with the greatest plays that Anglo-Saxon culture has produced, we find there is really no contemporary warrant for the assumption that Dyer had any skill at all in the highly specialized art of playwriting. No record can be produced to show that this courtier-lyricist was considered a dramatist by any contemporary, nor has his name ever before been mentioned in connection with any public theatrical enterprise. One of Dyer's possible

*Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, Feb. 1943, \$5. The volume contains no footnotes or appendix references to authorities consulted, no mention of any original research—not even a bibliography.

lyrics—the so-called “Song in the Oak”—appears to have been sung at an outdoor entertainment for the Queen at Woodstock in 1575. But that is all. And certainly one song does not make a Shakespeare any more than one amateur drawing-room lyric would make a Noel Coward today.

Alden Brooks has the temerity to claim that because Dyer has never been known to anyone before this as a playwright, he “must have been” the peerless Bard; but the futility of such an “argument” is self-apparent.

This is what the foremost contemporary literary critics have to say of Sir Edward’s known talents as a poet:

The Arte of English Poesie (1589): . . . “Master Edward Dyer for Elegie most sweet, solemn, and of high conceit.”

Meres’ *Palladis Tamia* (1598): . . . “these are the most passionate among us to bewail & bemoan the perplexities of Love, Henrie Howard Earl of Surrey, Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder, Sir Francis Brian, Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Edward Dyer, Spencer, Daniel, Drayton, Shakespeare, Whetstone, etc.”

Henry Peacham’s *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622), lists Dyer fifth among the outstanding poets of Elizabeth’s reign, in the following company: “Edward Earle of Oxford, the Lord Buckhurst, Henry Lord Paget; our Phoenix, the noble Sir Philip Sidney, M. Edward Dyer, M. Edmund Spencer, M. Samuel Daniel, with sundry others . . .”

Observe that none of these authorities refer to Dyer as a dramatist. He is, indeed, specifically characterized as an elegist and a writer of love lyrics. Peacham’s placement of Dyer as a link between Sidney and Spenser is appropriate enough, for other recorded circumstances show that to be exactly where Dyer belongs. He was by no means the first or outstanding figure; and no man would know this better than Henry Peacham, whose reputation as an authority on the fine arts of the Shakespearean Age cannot be questioned.* It must also be borne in mind that Peacham never once mentions the name “William Shakespeare” in *The Compleat Gentleman* or in any other of his many

works, although he quotes directly from the plays in *The Worth of a Penny* and elsewhere, and is the only English artist of that period (1578-1640) who can be shown to have made a contemporary illustration of a Shakespearean play. This quaint sketch of priceless value, depicts the plea of the Queen Tamora for the lives of her sons in *Titus Andronicus*. It is endorsed “Henricus Peacham, 1595.” During the present century, it was found among the Elizabethan manuscripts of the Marquess of Bath at Longleat.† It is thus apparent that Peacham had real personal interest in the Shakespearean works and in specifying his favorite poets of that age, we could expect him to take appropriate means to indicate his partiality for the Bard. It is the contention of the proponents of Lord Oxford as the true “William Shakespeare” that Peacham does exactly this in *The Compleat Gentleman*. Oxford and Buckhurst head his list as the two dramatic poets of all-time historical interest, while Dyer serves the purpose of connecting Sidney’s art with Spenser’s. Every Elizabethan poet that Peacham lists in 1622 was dead at that time. So was *William of Stratford*. Yet the name of “Shakespeare” as a personal entity is conspicuously absent. Was this because he was a public dramatist? Well, hardly, in view of the fact that both Buckhurst and Samuel Daniel had been known as public playwrights, while Oxford had been listed first in Meres’ *Palladis Tamia* (1598) among the playwrights specified as “the best for Comedy among us.”

These facts would seem to be of vital significance in identifying the real “Shakespeare,” but they mean nothing at all to Master Brooks. He entirely ignores the statements of the author of *The Arte of English Poesie* and of Francis Meres, qualifying Dyer as an elegist and lyricist (while Oxford is distinctly listed as “best” or “first” of all the Court poets by the same authorities). As a matter of fact, throughout his book, *The Arte of English Poesie* is not even mentioned by Brooks. Neither is Henry Peacham nor *The Compleat Gentleman*. This is obvious evasion—the opposite of scientific scholarship—and immediately sets Brooks down as a “special pleader”—unwilling to let the jury consider all of the first-hand testimony affecting his own client.

Worse than this, he distorts alleged “evidence” to his particular ends, beyond all patience. In this connection, let us examine more closely his repro-

*Dr. Samuel Johnson drew heavily upon Peacham’s *Compleat Gentleman* in compiling definitions for his famous dictionary.

†Sir E. K. Chambers, *The Library*, Series 4, Vol. V, pp. 326-30.

duction of the line from Sonnet 111 in support of his claim that the writer of this poem herein openly reveals his name as "Dyer." Brooks stakes much on this claim—the title of his book, no less. It is, therefore, little short of amazing to find what amounts to deliberately misstated and suppressed fact.

Brooks uses only a *part* of Sonnet 111 as it originally appears in the 1609 Quarto:

O For my sake doe you with fortune chide,
The guiltie goddesse of my harmfull deeds,
That did not better for my life prouide,
Then publick meanes which publick manners
breeds.

Thence comes it that my name receiues a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdu'd
To what it works in like the Dyers hand,
Pitty me then, and wish I were renu'de,
Whilst like a willing pacient I will drinke,
Potions of Eysell gainst my strong infection,
No bitterness that I will bitter thinke,
Nor double pennance to correct correction.

Pittie me then deare friend, and I assure yee,
Euen that your pittie is enoughto cure mee.

On page 639 of *Will Shakspeare and the Dyer's Hand*, Brooks writes of the above sonnet:

There is a clear association here between the Poet's name and the "Dyer's hand." It is not the word "fortune" that is capitalized, nor the words "goddess," "nature," but alone the word "Dyer."

To refute this misstatement, all that is necessary is to read on beyond "Dyer" to the noun "Eysell" (eisel, early Saxon for vinegar) which is also capitalized.

I believe there is a school of thought that may argue from this that the Bard was really of German extraction.

But why does Mr. Alden Brooks put his name to statements that are so easy to disprove? Shall we say he is merely careless and just did not bother to read the whole of Sonnet 111 before writing the above statements?

Many other evidences of carelessness pervade the book. For instance, Brooks refers no less than three times to Hall, the satirist, as *John Hall* when he really means Joseph Hall, later Bishop of Exeter and Norwich and author of *Virgidentiae*, a book all students of the Shakespearean authorship mystery

should certainly know well enough. For therein Hall brutally attacks the greatest concealed poet of the age under the designation of "Labeo."* Besides miscalling Hall, Alden Brooks indexes Elderton the Shakespearean ballad-maker as *T. Elderton*, whereas his given name was William.

These examples of slapdash workmanship are unfortunate enough, but certainly the printer cannot be blamed for the really atrocious exhibitions in bad taste and faulty scholarship that Master Brooks displays when he undertakes to dispose of the Earl of Oxford as a claimant to Shakespearean honors. The editorial board of Charles Scribner's Sons should also come in for a certain amount of censure here for allowing so much misinformation and so many brash statements bordering on outright libel to reach the stage of cold type.

Brooks frankly sets out on page 518, *et seq.*, to present Oxford as an utterly worthless, brainless and insignificant figure in order to have Dyer appear vastly superior to the Elizabethan scene. He finds it necessary to his argument to swallow without examination the counter-charges of "treason" and "criminal" practice which the notorious Spanish agents, Lord Henry Howard and Sir Charles Arundel made against "this monstrous Earell" following their own arrests for high crimes and misdemeanors in December, 1580, on *information supplied by Oxford*.† History has long since trebly corroborated and underscored every statement regarding the dangerous disloyalty of Howard and Arundel which Oxford made to the then incredulous Queen. But it seems in Brooks' view that this precious pair of Elizabethan patriots were really reputable and unprejudiced patriots, after all; and that the counter-charges of "treason" and "horrid murder" that they hurled back at Oxford to save their own necks, are to be accepted as gospel. The Earl, thereupon, becomes the real traitor in Brooks' version of this historic case. Our heartless author

*This name Labeo to characterize some great man who has demeaned himself in Hall's eyes by writing *Venus and Adonis*, has bothered Baconians for generations. Brooks sees that it obviously does not fit Dyer. But the appellation applies perfectly to Lord Oxford. He always signed himself "Edward Oxeford" or "Edward Oxenford" and his few verses in anthologies and manuscript collections bear the initials "E.O." The prefix "Lab" means to *blab*. So Hall presents him as *Edward Oxford the Blabber*, ending his satirical attack on Labeo with:

Who list complain of wronged faith or fame
When he may shift it to another's name?

†State Papers, Domestic, Elizabeth and Addenda, Vols. 2 & 8.

actually makes Oxford serve a sentence of nearly three years in the Tower of London for a purely imaginary crime!

As every reader of the NEWS-LETTER knows, this is an unpardonable distortion of easily ascertainable fact. There is simply no excuse for anybody who styles himself an "Elizabethan expert" to undertake an alleged serious study of the character of the 17th Earl of Oxford these days with so little sense of responsibility to his readers. If full and amply documented *dated records*, sufficiently corroborated from official sources to leave no possibility of doubt regarding practically every detail of the episodes in which the poet Earl of Oxford took part during the period between December, 1580, and June, 1583 were not available for Brooks' examination, we could be more charitable to his shortcomings as a writer on the authorship mystery. But by ignoring all this factual documentation in order to present a fictional characterization of the man he must misrepresent in order to make Sir Edward Dyer into a dramatist, Brooks writes himself down as thoroughly untrustworthy.

The truth is, after exposing Howard and Arundel in December, 1580, Oxford was held in the Tower for a day or two—but no longer—as a material witness. Even Arundel himself enviously testifies to Oxford's immediate release. At the same time, no one can produce any official evidence that the Queen's government seriously countenanced any of the counter-charges of "treason" that Howard and Arundel had made. It is also true that in March or April, 1581, Oxford was again sent to the Tower for getting his dark-eyed mistress, Anne Vavasor, with child. But the records are explicit in stating that the Earl was released from prison for this infringement of Elizabethan etiquette about two months later, on June 8, 1581. At the time of his enlargement, a letter was dispatched from the Privy Council to Sir William Gorges, Lieutenant of the Tower, expressly informing him that Oxford must not be subjected to any indignity upon quitting the Tower, as he had *not* been committed "upon any cause of treason or any criminal cause."^{*}

So we see that the madcap Earl did not spend more than *eight or nine weeks* in prison, all told, and that he was officially absolved of "any cause of treason."

But this documentation does not appeal to the author of *Will Shakepere and the Dyer's Hand*. He

proceeds to develop a set of ersatz facts and circumstances of his own manufacture in order to make Sir Edward Dyer become the directive collaborator of John Lyly—Lord Oxford's well known secretary-steward—in the creation of three or four of the Lyly comedies, such as *Endymion*, *Sapho and Phao* and *Gallathea*. This, says Master Brooks, is how Dyer made his start as an active dramatist:

"... December 1580, the Earl of Oxford lost the Queen's favor and lost it so disastrously *under accusation of treason* that he was cast into the Tower.

"With his patron imprisoned in the Tower *under grave accusation of treason*, Lyly would have every reason to seek other employment. Indeed, his first thought would have been to sever himself from all connection with *one now publicly accused of being a traitor*. Possibly the finger of suspicion had even begun to stretch toward himself, *the traitor's secretary*. Edward Dyer was not only active man of letters and long standing friend—had they not exchanged poems, discussed *Euphues* together and a hundred other matters?—Edward Dyer was also allied in some influential way with Walsingham. One could take no better refuge than to engage oneself to his service. Then too, on the other hand, to place one's pen at secretive and unworldly Dyer's behest was not to contract oneself too bindingly or openly. Should Oxford one day be able to clear himself *of the accusation of treason*, as seemed none the less in a fair way to be possible, then there would always be opportunity, when the storm blew over, to come forth from one's obscurity, greet one's noble lord at the prison gates, and return to his lordly generosity and patronage.

"December 1580, Edward Dyer engaged the services of John Lyly. Since Oxford was not pardoned and freed from prison until June 1583, it is logical to suppose that *Dyer directed Lyly's pen from December 1580 until June 1583!*" (My exclamation point and italics).

Brooks goes on to explain in great—and purely imaginary—detail how this alleged alliance of Lyly with Dyer accounts for the remarkable number of Shakespearean touches to be met with in the Lyly comedies. Not content with making a traitor out of Oxford—who later commanded his own ship at the repulse of the Spanish Armada—Brooks strips the literary Earl of his attested secretary, who is artificially transformed thereby into a pretty despicable traitor on his own account.

^{*}Ward, *Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, pp. 213-14.

"So then, with Oxford locked up in the Tower on charge of treason" . . . Dyer switches the full propaganda value of the Lyly comedies to the account of the Earl of Leicester, Oxford's unsleeping rival. Months pass into years as this treachery proceeds apace.

"However, like many another schemer who imagines that the traces of his duplicity have been well hidden, Lyly overlooked one possibility. It never came to his mind that someone in the know might deliberately denounce him. And denounced he was. A malevolent voice whispered to Lady Oxford—and Lady Oxford carried the word to Oxford in his confinement (still in the Tower) that the secret author of recent Court plays, so favorable to the Leicester cause and, incidentally, so scandalously and even sacrilegiously devised, was none other than supposed-loyal secretary John Lyly."

Note how far afield Brooks wanders from the true chronology here. In the early summer of 1582, when he has Oxford mouldering in the Tower, the Earl was actually at home, recovering from serious wounds suffered in his duel with Thomas Knevet during March of the same year. His devoted wife, with whom he had been living, following a reconciliation in December, 1581, may have complained to Oxford "in his confinement" during June, 1582, of the inability of the secretary-steward, John Lyly, to stave off a hornet's-nest of creditors who were making things disagreeable at this time. But we may rest assured she had only to penetrate the "confinement" of Oxford's private bedroom or study to register such complaints—not the Tower of London.

Moreover, if Master Brooks had only taken the time to look into Feuillerat's documented biography of John Lyly (whose reputation Brooks slanders so needlessly) he could hardly have missed Feuillerat's detailed and dated account of the rapier-and-dagger vendetta that Lyly's patron, Lord Oxford—together with his swordsmen-retainers—carried on throughout the winter and spring of 1582 with the partisans of Oxford's unfortunate mistress (a la Montague-Capulet). But Brooks does not bother with such hampering items as accurate chronology. He prefers his imaginary picture of the poet Earl under bolt and bar—with Lyly ratting to Leicester's camp under Dyer's direction.

Let us repeat: in view of all the documentation of unquestionable authenticity that has been published of late years, proving that Oxford was imprisoned in 1580-81 for a few weeks only by his irritated and

jealous Queen, and from June, 1581 to June, 1583 *debarred by her command from the precincts of the Court* as a punishment for having broken the Seventh Commandment, Alden Brooks' fantastic interpretation of the fictional events which he attributes to the same critical period of 1580-1583 must be accorded a place among terrible examples of historical misinformation.

Disregarding all of the evidence proving Oxford was not considered a traitor by Queen Elizabeth or her Privy Council which has been published by present day students of the literary Earl's career, Brooks could still have easily checked upon his own unwarranted conclusions before rushing into print. Murray's *English Dramatic Companies* would have shown him that Oxford could not possibly have been publicly "accused of treachery to the state" during 1581-83 for the good and sufficient reason that the playwrighting peer's theatrical company is recorded as touring England during these same years. "The Earl of Oxford's Players" appear in town registers as filling engagements (with the official approval of municipal authorities) at Norwich in 1581, at Coventry in November, 1581 and November, 1582; at Dover in 1581; at Ipswich in 1581 and 1582; at Gloucester in May, 1582; at Bristol in February, 1583; at Abingdon June 2, 1583; and also at Southampton and Exeter in the early months of the latter year.

It can be taken as an absolute certainty that the bourgeois of important English centers such as these would never have given official sanction to the public appearance of any group of players—no matter how talented—who wore the livery and contracted their engagements in the name of *an accused traitor to the state*.

So much for Brooks' efforts to account for the beginnings of Edward Dyer's alleged career as a dramatist by shamelessly bedaubing the reputations of these two known and amply recorded playwrights of the day—Lord Oxford and his personal secretary, John Lyly.

Contrary to Master Brooks's determined efforts to present his Great Revisor as the only Elizabethan rightly fitted to wear the true Bard's mantle, the *authoritative* commentators on Dyer's literary activities are explicit in placing him with the one definitely *anti-Shakespearean* group of the period. This consisted of Philip Sidney, Dyer, Edmund Spenser, Fulke Greville (later Lord Brooke), Thomas Drant and Gabriel Harvey. The letters of Spenser and Harvey comment at length on the plans

and purposes of these men to found their own school of English literature. Writing to Harvey in October, 1579, Spenser says:

"As for . . . Master Sidney and Master Dyer, they have me, I thank them, in some use of familiarity. . . . And now they have proclaimed in their Areopagus (clique) a general surceasing and silence of bald rymers and also of the very best too* : instead whereof, they have, by authoritie of their whole Senate, prescribed certain laws and rules of quantities of English syllables for English verse: having had thereof already great practise, and drawn me to their faction."

The rules and regulations for the writing of English poetry which Sidney and Dyer tried to enforce would have prevented the development of Shakespeare's particular talents, it is now universally agreed. Spenser soon saw the folly of endeavoring to shackle the vigorous new spirit of Elizabethan literary expression in the classic moulds of any dead language, and struck out for himself. But Sidney, unfortunately for his reputation as a critic, (though undoubtedly with the full approval of his close friend, Dyer) put the creative principles advocated by their Areopagus into an essay entitled *An Apologie for Poetrie* where anyone may judge for himself just how anti-Shakespearean was the point of view maintained by this priggish clique. Let it suffice to say that Sidney's rules for dramatic constructions had not advanced beyond those of Aristotle: demanding rigid adherence to the unities of time, place and action. Plays such as those of "Mr. William Shakespeare," which violate the old classic laws with reckless impunity are treated with scorn; particularly those that contain a multiplicity of scenes, covering long passages of time; tragedies representing realistic history, and—grosses of absurdities—"plays (that) be neither right tragedies nor right comedies: mingling Kings and Clowns." In reading Sidney's diatribe on the alleged faults of the budding Elizabethan drama, one receives the strange impression that somehow or other Sidney had seen some of "William Shakespeare's" characteristic early works before 1581, when the *Apologie for Poetrie* appears to have been written. The Bard, as all stage managers have found out, dotes on multiplicity of scene and change of time. Also, he dramatizes history realistically enough to outrage

any pseudo-classicist. And as for hybrid tragic-comedy, "mingling Kings and Clowns," no more flagrant examples could be cited than the two parts of *Henry IV* with Falstaff and Prince Hal interchanging roles. As I believe Mrs. Eva Turner Clark has already pointed out elsewhere, Sidney actually describes contrasting scenes from *Twelfth Night* in the following sarcastic comment:

"Now ye shall have three Ladies, walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a Garden. By and by, we hear news of a ship wreck in the same place, and then we are to blame, if we accept it not for a Rock."

Sir Philip appears to have had in mind Olivia's garden and the sea-coast of Illyria upon which Viola's ship has been wrecked.

Two things are quite certain from these instances: first, that Sidney and his school had no taste for, nor appreciation of, drama built upon the imaginatively untrammelled lines that Shakespeare follows; and secondly, that as Sidney's intimate friend and co-founder with him of the Areopagus, dedicated to the "surceasing and silence" of all Elizabethan poets who do not conform to a narrow interpretation of classicism, Edward Dyer himself, obviously could not have been the kind of writer who was particularly disliked by the lawgivers of the Areopagus.

Prof. Sargent emphasizes the fact that Sidney was Dyer's closest confidant. Brooks quotes and quotes Gabriel Harvey's statement that Sidney and Dyer were "the two very diamondes of her maiesties courte for many special and rare qualities."

But when the author of *Will Shakspeare and the Dyer's Hand* goes on to argue from these unquestioned literary associations that Edward Dyer was the real Shakespeare, logic has already flitted out the window. For who but the Bard himself overwhelmingly demonstrates the barren hollowness of the pet ideas of Sidney, Dyer, Harvey, Greville and their camp-followers regarding the future of the English drama? Master Brooks simply cannot be allowed to hoard his cake and eat it!

Moreover, he is entirely blind to the fact that the Earl of Oxford ("in the rare devices of poetry . . . the most excellent among the rest"*) was the acknowledged leader of the rising group of realistic, Shakespearean dramatists and harum-scarum university wits, such as Thomas Churchyard, Anthony

*This is a plain reference to Oxford, who was hailed by Webbe and other critics as the "most excellent" of the Court poets. Sidney's and Dyer's personal antagonism to the Earl is amply recorded.

*Webbe, *A Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586).

Monday, John Lyly, Robert Greene, Thomas Nash and others who took delight in breaking all the silly laws of composition that the founders of the *Areopagus* had so pompously promulgated.

Sidney's differences with Oxford, it now appears, were violent merely upon the rhetorical plane; their so-called "murderous hatred" of each other has been exaggerated out of all proportion; for Sidney's beloved sister, the Countess of Pembroke,† was later on the friendliest of terms with the Earl. In 1597 she tried to bring about a marriage between Oxford's daughter, Bridget Vere, and her eldest son, William Herbert, later Earl of Pembroke; while Oxford's youngest daughter, Susan, did become the wife of Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery, the nephew and namesake of the same Sir Philip Sidney that Alden Brooks declares Lord Oxford seriously plotted to "murder." It is hardly necessary to point out the fact that Shakespeare's First Folio is dedicated to these two "incomparable brethren"—one of whom was the poet Earl of Oxford's son-in-law.

Gabriel Harvey, makes a very unconvincing witness indeed for Sir Edward Dyer as the iconoclastic Shakespeare. Harvey's enthusiasm was expended on creative talent of a different type. He is never more than luke-warm and usually quite offensively critical and condescending in his several references to the mysterious Bard's plays and poems. So when we find this Cambridge doctor of Latin rhetoric praising the neo-classicists, Dyer and Sidney, as the "two incomparable and miraculous Gemini," and holding up their "delicate and choice elegant poetry" as the very pattern for other English poets to follow, the Shakespearean connotations that Brooks draws from Harvey's remarks are somewhat less than convincing. From Harvey's letters to Edmund Spenser, we know that the Cambridge pundit both feared and disliked the type of witty Shakespearean satire that emanated from the group of comedians sponsored by the Earl of Oxford. In one of his letters, the egotistical Gabriel expresses real apprehension lest he himself may be held up to ridicule on the stage. This fear seems to have grown out of Harvey's own daring burlesque of the literary Earl of Oxford in a truly extraordinary set of the classic hexameters which the egregious pedant affected. In his *Speculum Tuscanismi*, Harvey lampoons Oxford as an Italianated English fop and teller of tall travelers' tales, who besides being "a brave Mirror" of fashion and "in Courtly guiles

a passing singular odd man," is "a fellow peerless in England"—significantly enough—

Not the like discourser for Tongue, and head to be found out,

Eyed like to Argus, eared like to Midas, nos'd like to Naso.*

Overlooking its startling shortcomings as "poetry," Harvey's satire is of great value as a first-hand caricature of the fabulous 17th Earl of Oxford, for the Shakespearean connotations here are immediate and unmistakable. Harvey will also live in literary history as the first recorded English observer to openly designate the poetical peer as a "shake-speare." In an oratorical address that he delivered in welcoming Oxford to Cambridge University in 1578, Harvey criticized him for devoting so much of his time to "bloodless books and writings that serve no useful purpose," and urged him eloquently to take up a military career because, "thine eyes flash fire, thy countenance shakes a spear." The Harvey-Oxford-Shakespeare evidence is much too extensive to be included here. It is, however, a most amusing narrative and too clearly documented to leave room for doubt as to its authenticity. Let us merely say that the real Shakespeare did take ample revenge upon Harvey for the *Speculum Tuscanismi* satire by burlesquing that garrulous rhetorician most unmercifully in *Love's Labor's Lost*. Harvey's nickname, often used to designate him in *The Shepheard's Calendar*, is Hobbinol. Under the appropriate variation of Holofernes,† Harvey can be easily identified as the pedant in Shakespeare's comedy. We have space here to point out but one of a great many allusions to Harvey's pet foibles which give the Holofernes characterization its life-like cutting-power:

Harvey, in *Four Letters and Certain Sonnets* (1592), an attack upon Robert Greene, deceased, and Thomas Nash, defender of the playwright's memory:

A mā is a man though he have but a hose upon his head: for everie curse, there is a blessing, for

*Publius Ovidius Naso, the full name of the Latin poet Ovid to whom Francis Meres (1598) compares Shakespeare.

And why, indeed, *Naso*, but for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancie?

Holofernes the pedant in
Love's Labor's Lost, IV.2.112.

†Holofernes is also the name of the pedant who teaches Gargantua his letters in the first book of Rabelais.

*Ward, *Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, p. 329-30.

every malady, a remedie, for every winter, a summer: for everie night a day. . . .

In *Love's Labor's Lost*, Moth, the page, introduces Holofernes, the pedant:

Yes, Yes! he teaches boys the Horn-book. What is 'Ab' spelt backward, with the horn on his head?

Holofernes: 'Ba,' *puericia*, with a horn added.

Moth: 'Ba,' most silly Sheep with a horn. You hear his learning!

When Alden Brooks undertakes to prove by Sir Edward Dyer's own signed or otherwise identified writings that the courtly lyricist was the prodigal and versatile genius whose achievements revolutionized English literature, his case breaks down most lamentably. Esau's hand, as well as Esau's voice is missing. Any reader of average intelligence who knows the Bard's works can see for himself how lacking in forcefulness and originality the Dyer poems are. The point need not be labored, for the lines produce their own effect. And a very quiet, contemplative siesta this turns out to be, without a single bugle-call to action or even a six-penny sky-rocket to draw the eyes aloft. Best of the elegies is, of course, "My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is." But the originality of this philosophical commentary can hardly be allowed in view of Prof. Sargent's frank admission that the poem is in the main an English paraphrase from Seneca's *Thyestes*. Our own John Burroughs struck higher in the same vein with "Serene I Fold My Hands and Wait." And by the time we have finished a characteristic Dyer selection such as "Amarillis"—which Brooks himself finds a foot or two short of epic proportions—I am sure every open-minded reader will be perfectly willing to agree with Sargent's honest and adequate estimate of this professional courtier's literary remains:

"Yes, for a lyricist, Dyer is remarkably earth-bound. But amongst the swelling chorus of all Elizabethan poets, he strikes a rich, lingering minor chord."

What more need be said? Only this: Shakespeare was not a minor poet—his was the *major* voice of his age, a voice so vigorous and so vibrant with unmistakable overtones and ringing metaphors that we can be absolutely certain he must have betrayed himself many times over had he written the three hundred or more lines of poetry, plus the two thousand words of prose correspondence that are ascribed to Dyer. In the *Sonnets* the Bard is disturbed

lest his pseudonymity be penetrated because "every word doth almost tell my name." Why, then, doesn't the same thing happen here? Why does Alden Brooks, after exhausting every subterfuge, fail so signally to present authentic Shakespearean thought, imagery and phraseology from Dyer's writings? The answer is a very simple one.

Because Mr. Brooks has tried to palm off the wrong collection of lyrics and personal letters. Those filed under the name of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, contain all the Shakespearean parallels that this collection lacks.

Charles Wisner Barrell.

Soldiers Read Shakespeare

Several commentators on books that are being read by our men of the armed forces and by men trapped in Axis prisons, state that the Bard is a prime favorite. This fact is further borne out by the photograph featured in the New York Times Sunday Magazine article of February 23th, showing the typical Red Cross nurse presenting cigarettes and reading matter to a wounded U. S. soldier. The book for which the patient eagerly reaches is a copy of Shakespeare in the handy Pocket Book edition. Yet publishers' representatives, who should know better, frequently remark: "Who reads Shakespeare these days?"

Tragic Accident

Friends of Mrs. Eva Turner Clark, many of whom are now so widely scattered in various parts of the world that they can be conveniently reached only through the NEWS-LETTER, will be grieved to hear that our beloved Executive Vice-President and her family suffered a tragic personal loss during February in the death of Mrs. Clark's grandson, Aviation Cadet Howard Gray Park, Jr., in a plane crash on the Pacific Coast.

Cadet Park was in his early twenties. A graduate of Hill School at Pottstown, Pennsylvania, he had later attended Stanford University for a year, but left to work at the Lockheed Aircraft Company before entering the Army Air Corps. Two of his brothers, Charles and James Park, are now on active duty with the U. S. Marines in war areas.

Members of The Fellowship will regret very keenly the loss of this fine young patriot and offer their most heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Clark and her family.

NEWS-LETTER

THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP

AMERICAN BRANCH

VOLUME IV APRIL, 1943 No. 3

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Louis P. Bénétzet, A.M., Ph.D.

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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.

Silent Testimony

President Bénétzet's examination of Henslowe's Diary, the result of which he details in a series of articles beginning with this issue of the NEWS-LETTER, shows a complete absence of the recording of the name of William Shakespeare in that unique document, while the names of all other persons ever connected with Henslowe are mentioned in it. This is strong, even if silent, testimony that "William Shakespeare" was a pseudonym masking a personality too important to be so recorded, so important that he did not receive payment for his work used by the play producer, as did the others mentioned. Later issues will carry the examination still further.

Another absence of the great name of the master dramatist is noticeable in that period between the accession to the throne of King James, 1603, and the death in 1616 of William Shaksper of Stratford. Despite the fact that "William Shakespeare" had by 1603 attained full recognition for his writing for the stage, he did not contribute any of the salutatory panegyrics and pageants arranged to celebrate the coronation of the King nor is his name found in connection with the masques which were so popular at Court in the following decade.

Because of the prevalence of the plague, the King did not enter London until 1604 and for entertainment during the Christmas season of that year, a series of Shakespeare plays (seven were given, one being repeated, making eight performances in all) were produced at Court. This fact proves the King's acquaintance with Shakespeare's work, indeed, his admiration, since so many plays of one author were given in one season.

Why, then, was the name of this outstanding author not associated with the panegyrics, the pageants, the masques, which played so large a part in the early years of King James's reign? Surely a man dependent upon his profession of playwriting, as the Stratford Shaksper is supposed to have been, would have found a way to keep his name before the new King, as his fellow poet-dramatists were all doing. The answer is that "William Shakespeare," in the person of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, in ill health at the time of the King's accession, died little more than a year later.

Stratfordians say that the death of Lord Oxford in 1604 completely denies the claims of Oxfordians that he was the author of the plays because several were written after that year. A perfectly simple explanation answers this apparently vital charge.

Colonel B. R. Ward, *The Mystery of "Mr. W. H."*, points out that "The end of the first period of Shakespearean publication (1604) coincides with Oxford's death at King's Place, Hackney." No Shakespearean plays were published for four years after that. "The second period of Shakespearean publication (1608-09) occurs simultaneously with the sale of King's Place and the general clearing up of the Oxford affairs." Following the alienation of King's Place by the Countess of Oxford to Fulke Greville in 1609, there came a revival of Shakespearean publication. Such an uprooting from a long established home gave an opportunity to the printers of the day and they made the most of it by securing manuscripts of the *Sonnets* and three plays, which were shortly afterward published.

These three plays, together with thirteen published in the first period, sums up to less than half the number that were included in the First Folio of 1623. With the printers avid to publish Shakespeare plays, it is extraordinary that so many remained in manuscript until that year. Certainly, if they had been the property of the penny-pinching business man of Stratford, they would not have remained hidden so long.

Many allusions in the so-called "late plays" place them as having been written long before 1604, the year of Lord Oxford's death. The few that Stratfordians place between 1609 and 1612, some of them supposedly written in collaboration with Beaumont or Fletcher, must be accounted as early plays of Oxford which were, at that time, revised by these men, thus giving them such modernization as the taste of the Jacobean era seemed to suggest, at the same time introducing a few contemporary allusions. Such revisions were common then.

The conclusion is unassailable that, had the great dramatist still been living in the early years of King James's reign, he would have written one of the salutatory panegyrics, for the King honored Lord Oxford by making him a member of the Privy Council and in other ways in the brief period that he lived after the accession. Furthermore, since the King had shown his admiration for the "Shakespeare" plays by having eight performances given at Court the first season he spent in London, he would have expected the author so honored, if he were still living, to have indicated his appreciation by writing one or more of the masques which so soon became popular.

Absence of a certain type of evidence, where it should naturally be found, is often of such significance that it has all the force of direct testimony and so it has in this case.

Fellowship Booklets

SHAKSPERE, SHAKESPEARE AND DE VERE, by Louis P. Bénézet. Hanover, N. H. 1937. In this book of 34 pages, Professor Bénézet includes a medley of lines from Shakespeare's poems and early verses by the Earl of Oxford, the distinguishing of which is a challenge to readers. 25c postpaid.

ELIZABETHAN MYSTERY MAN, by Charles Wisner Barrell. New York. 1940. Republication in pamphlet form of an article which appeared first in *The Saturday Review of Literature*. A brief summary of the life of Lord Oxford and his connection with the Shakespeare plays. 25c postpaid.

Stratford Relics

In its issue of February 28th, 1942, the London weekly, "Everybody's," contained an article by Roderick L. Eagle called "El-Dorado-on-Avon," which is devastating in its charges of fraud in connection with the so-called Birthplace of Shakespeare and the relics contained therein.

Mr. Eagle says, "Evidence shows that he [John Shakespeare] did not buy the house called the 'Birthplace' until 1575—eleven years after the birth of William—yet visitors are shown a room on the first floor in which the poet was born! The house itself was, with the exception of the cellar, completely rebuilt and enlarged between 1858 and 1860, and has no resemblance to the old tumble-down place as shown in old prints and photographs."

After making a pilgrimage to Stratford in 1769, the great actor, David Garrick, described it as "the most dirty, unseemly, ill-paved, wretched-looking town in all Britain."

"The Shakespeare industry had not been started as a 'going concern' but Garrick's Jubilee was a means of arousing local interests as to the possibilities of exploiting Shakespeare," states Mr. Eagle. He quotes contributors to the "Gentleman's Magazine" of 1791 and 1801 as telling about an "old armchair in which Shakespeare used to sit and smoke his pipe," an armchair which had been sold outright at least twenty times, yet always replaced by another, from which chips were sold to credulous persons for a price ranging from five shillings to a guinea. Another "relic" is a desk from the Grammar School, known as "Shakespeare's desk," although, says Mr. Eagle, "There is not a scintilla of evidence that he ever attended the school."

The article continues, "No 'pilgrimage' to Stratford is complete without a visit to the Monument in the chancel of the church. But the guide-books do not show a picture of the original monument (which is nothing like that seen today). In the middle of the eighteenth century it had become 'very much decayed' and a local limner, John Hall, was given a free hand in 'repairing and beautifying it.'"

In the picture of the original monument, not only is the head quite unlike the "beautified" head seen today but the hands rest on a wool-sack instead of holding pen and paper as shown at Stratford now.

"The rejection of all the spurious 'relics' and portraits' of Shakespeare is long overdue. They have little value in themselves and would not be missed. It is discreditable that 'relics' unsupported by evidence should be displayed. In no other industry would such a state of things be tolerated," concludes Mr. Eagle.

Anniversary Month

When days were happier than the present, it was the custom of the literary-minded to celebrate the birth of the great master of poetry and drama on April 23rd in all the civilized countries of the world. We hope this admirable custom will be resumed when the war is ended and peace restored.

The anniversary so celebrated began with the intent of honoring William Shakspeare of Stratford, whose baptismal date was April 26th. His date of birth was not recorded, but, because the custom of those days made the ceremony of baptism three days later, it has been generally accepted as April 23rd.

Members of the Shakespeare Fellowship, believers in the Oxfordian authorship of the plays and poems, have no need to change the date so long celebrated, for, strange to relate, Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, was born April 12th, 1550, a date which, with the correction of the calendar in 1582 by Pope Gregory by the omission of eleven days, makes our poet's anniversary fall on April 23rd, one more of the extraordinary coincidences which connect Lord Oxford with the life-story of the poet-dramatist. On April 23rd, then, the 393rd year of his birth will be commemorated. Few men have left so profound an impression on the world after nearly four centuries. His writings, filled with philosophy, humor, and general knowledge of an amazing variety, are as much alive as ever.

A Henry James Satire

April 15th of this year marks the centenary of the American-British novelist, Henry James. The fact is rarely mentioned that this master of psychological fiction was, like Hawthorne and Mark Twain, a thorough disbeliever in the Stratford-on-Avon myths regarding the authorship of the Shakespearean works. James' story, "The Birthplace," is a keen and devastating satire on the commercialized fakeries of the Avonside which will repay re-reading at this time.

Shakespeare in Russia

A Russian correspondent, writing on "Russian Bibliography" in *The Times Literary Supplement* (London) of January 16, 1943, includes a paragraph which indicates that the literary-minded of the Red Republic have an enormous interest in Shakespeare:

"The index of English literature [recently published by the Moscow State Publishing House] begins with the middle of the fourteenth century, the first entry being Chaucer, whose 'Canterbury Tales' have seen four Russian editions. The Shakespeare bibliography is divided into five sections: collected works, historical works, tragedies, comedies, and sonnets. Shakespearean literature in Russian is so extensive that it was found necessary to give a bibliography of bibliographies. There are already four such bibliographical works on Shakespeare in existence. The Moscow headquarters of the All-Russian Theatrical Society has a special Shakespeare Room which calls an annual three-day conference on scientific and stage problems and arranges for two meetings a month at which papers on problems connected with Shakespeare are read."

Historic Documents Lost

Word has recently reached us of the destruction through enemy action of the Library of the University of London. It appears that all of the printed and manuscript treasures of this famous institution have been consumed, though sincere hopes are entertained that later news may prove less calamitous in this respect.

A unique historical document relating to the Shakespeare authorship question had been in the possession of the University Library since 1932. This was the manuscript of the lecture by James Corton Cowell, delivered before the Ipswich Philosophical Society on February 7, 1805, in which attribution of the plays to Sir Francis Bacon was first publicly made to a representative body of listeners.

Mr. Cowell then stated that he had received the outline of his hypothesis during the latter years of the 18th century from Dr. James Wilmot, prominent Anglican clergyman who had the "living" of the church at Barton-on-the-Heath, near Stratford-on-Avon. Dr. Wilmot can thus be accurately identified as the very first of all known Baconians. A man of wit and learning, he frequented the Court of George III, and was one of the men upon whom the anonymous *Letters of Junius* were for a time fathered.

Reference Files

Students desirous of keeping up to date on developments in the case of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, as Shakespeare, should be glad to know that the NEWS-LETTER from Vol. I, No. 1 to the latest current issue, may be consulted at any one of the following libraries in the United States; subject, of course, to the rules and regulations of each institution:

Chicago, University of,
Periodical Department,
Harper M 22,
Chicago, Ill.

Colorado, University of,
The Library,
Boulder, Colorado.

Dartmouth College,
The Library,
Hanover,
New Hampshire.

Folger Shakespeare Library,
Washington,
District of Columbia.

Harvard College,
The Library,
Cambridge,
Massachusetts.

Holyoke Public Library,
Holyoke,
Massachusetts.

Iowa, The State University of,
The Library,
Iowa City,
Iowa.

Michigan, University of,
General Library,
Ann Arbor,
Michigan.

Minnesota, University of,
The Library,
Minneapolis,
Minnesota.

New York Public Library,
Fifth Avenue & 42nd Street,
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New York University,
Washington Square Library,
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Ohio State University,
The Library,
Columbus,
Ohio.

Pennsylvania, University of,
The Library,
Woodland Avenue & 34th St.,
Philadelphia, Pa.

Pennsylvania State College,
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Princeton University,
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Princeton,
New Jersey.

Rollins College,
The Library,
Winter Park,
Florida.

Stanford University,
The Library,
Stanford University,
California.

Swarthmore College,
The Library,
Swarthmore,
Pennsylvania.

Tennessee, University of,
The Library,
Knoxville,
Tennessee.

Wells College,
The Library,
Aurora,
New York.

Wisconsin, University of,
The Library,
Madison,
Wisconsin.

Yale University,
The Library,
New Haven,
Connecticut.