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Shame of the Professors

This blistering commentary on the professional obscurantists who dominate the so-called "orthodox" study of Shakespearean biography was originally printed in the July, 1937, issue of a Chicago booksellers' review called Reading and Collecting. It was written by Mr. George Frisbee of San Francisco, chemist, Shakespearean scholar, and one of the original proponents of the Oxford-Shakespeare evidence in this country. A salty logician who never pulls his punches, Mr. Frisbee is something of an Elizabethan throwback himself, both in appearance and facility of picturesque expression. Within the past year he has donated his fine collection of books on Shakespeare and the Oxford evidence to the San Francisco College for Women. As the periodical in which Mr. Frisbee's essay first appeared ceased publication shortly after that event, we are glad to reprint it for the edification of our own readers.

THE EDITORS

The circus has its clowns; the drama its comedians; while for their humorous fellows the universities have the professors of English literature who teach innocent youngsters that the plays and poems of William Shakespeare were written by a man born in Stratford-upon-Avon. They are a comical crew and their antics in evading discussion of the truth regarding Shakespeare authorship afford real students of Elizabethan literature much amusement.

These professors who teach that Shakespeare, the poet, was born in Stratford may be roughly divided into three classes; the tricksters, the cowards, and the gulls. The tricksters are the big shots, the Tittlebat Toploftys that garble data to bolster the Stratford-upon-Avon myth. With them anything repeated often enough becomes, to their peculiar line of thought, fact; regardless of dubious origin. They juggle dates and conjure plays from their imagination to arrange a chronological scheme that will fit the Shakespeare work to the lifetime of the Stratford man. But *Hamlet* was too much for them; as will be shown.

The cowards are the timid souls who know better; and there are many; but who fear the disapproval of the elder pedants. The gulls are the common or garden variety who never gave birth to an

idea; who swallow everything peddled by the big shots; and whose greatest ambition is to cadge a junket from some Foundation, to waste time and money on alleged research. The results are printed; usually with a lot of back-scratching for colleagues; then quickly forgotten until some other fellow discredits the stuff.

The truth is simple; it always is. There were two men. One was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, 1564, and his name was Shaksper, Shakspeare, or Shakspe; he used all three; but never Shakespeare. "William Shake-speare" was the pen-name adopted by the person who wrote most of the plays and poems which appeared under that name. No professor, living or dead, has ever offered the slightest bit of evidence, the tiniest scrap of proof, to show that Shakspeare of Stratford wrote *Hamlet*, or the *Sonnets*. All they offer is guesswork, imagination, conjecture, plentifully padded with "probably" and "we must assume."

Nothing is known of the Stratford man linking him with any kind of writing, other than some half dozen signatures, no two of which correspond. These so-called Shakspeare signatures are all affixed to documents of a legal nature; never to anything showing that the man could really write. Everything recorded of the man deals with commercial

affairs. Nothing links him with drama or poetry.

But, something too much of this. Sir George Greenwood, in his great works, *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* and *Is there a Shakespeare Problem*, shows so clearly that the Stratford man could not have written the "Shake-speare" work, that no professor has dared reply. Greenwood simply mopped up with them. And the professors shun his work as if it were the plague. Perhaps it does plague their consciences; perhaps.

Here is part of his opinion of the tripe that the professors would have us accept: "The more I read these marvellous works, the more deeply I am impressed with the certainty that the man who wrote them was a man of wide reading, much learning, and high culture. I am more and more convinced of the 'highly cultured mind' as the necessary condition precedent of a 'Shakespeare.' My reason revolts against the postulate of the unlettered and untravelled man, who knew no country and no language but his own. A young provincial, with such smattering of education as he may have procured at a free Grammar school, speaking the dialect of his native country, comes to London in 1587, a penniless wanderer, straight from the society of the boors and petty tradesmen of obscure and illiterate Stratford; becomes successively 'horseholder' outside, and 'servitor' inside, one of the London playhouses (and such playhouses!); obtains a place in a company, is constantly playing to London audiences, or touring in the provinces; an actor-manager (as we are told) with shares in two theatres, and with a keen eye to business. And with all this, turning out each year on an average two plays, but in the earlier years, a much greater number, all belonging to the supreme rank of literature; marvellous works; 'not of an age, but for all time'; replete, if not with classical learning; as some high authorities insist; at any rate with profound knowledge of the world, and of mankind, and of the philosophy of life and human nature, and redolent of the highest culture, besides wondrously courtly polished and scholarly poems, composed in quite early days, but marked in the same or even higher degree by the same learning and the same culture; yet remaining *nonem et umbra*, and nothing more for posterity; except indeed for that little knowledge of his life history which we could so well spare."

Where and how did the Stratford man acquire his profound learning, culture, knowledge of mankind, and all the rest of "Shakespeare's" equipment? Professors please tell us; we are eager to know.

Alden Brooks, in his book, *Will Shakspeare, Factotum and Agent*, shows that there is little that is authentic of Shakespeare at Stratford-on-Avon. Most of it is fake played up to interest the tourist trade. The British are averse from having their best paying shrine debunked, so, in spite of facts that are constantly coming to light, they like to stick to their myth. Fair enough for the townspeople, but self-respecting men ought to be above fostering a fairy-tale in order to boost the tourist trade of Stratford. Do the professors get a cut? Hollywood yes-men are on the pay-roll; why not the Academic Ditto-men?

Shakspeare was born 1564, and it is not certain when he first arrived in London.

In order to give him sufficient years for a play like *Hamlet*, it was settled that it was written about 1602. But, a play called *Hamlet* was in existence before 1590. To get around that, the professors invented, out of nothing but their imaginations, an "old *Hamlet*, an *Ur-Hamlet*," which Shakspeare transmuted into his masterpiece. The real students like Greenwood took no stock in the "old *Hamlet*," but the professors clammed up and sat pretty. Alack and aday for them! An honest orthodox scholar, interested only in the truth, Dr. A. S. Cairncross, in *The Problem of Hamlet*, proves that the play was written before 1588, by none other than "Shake-speare" himself. Proves also that there never was an "old *Hamlet*" nor an "*Ur-Hamlet*." Which leaves the Paeddiculi holding the bag, one might say. Not one has uttered a peep; they never do when confronted with facts which shatter their assumptions.

Since Shakspeare did not write the Plays, who did? That is easy to answer. In his magnificent work, *Shakespeare Identified*, J. T. Looney shows so clearly that none but Edward De Vere could have written them, that no professor seriously questions his findings. Dr. Gilbert Slater, in *Seven Shakespeares*, writes that Mr. Looney has never been answered with his case for Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Percy Allen, in many books; G. W. Phillips, in *Lord Burleigh in Shakespeare*; Mrs. Eva Turner Clark, Montagu Douglas, in *Lord Oxford was Shakespeare* (a book highly praised by the conservative Christian Science Monitor); and many other writers interested solely in the truth, have shown that De Vere was the man who wrote under the name, "William Shakspeare."

He was a scholar, musician, dramatist, and known to his contemporaries as a poet of high order whose serious writings were not published under his own name or title. He had studied law;

had visited foreign Courts; knew French, Italian and German; had spent nearly a year in Italy, the scene of six Shakespearean plays. He was a patron of literature and the stage, and maintained his own company of players. If the poet's identity had to be discovered from his works, as Nicholas Rowe and other early commentators stated it should be, there would be this general agreement:

Shake-speare was an aristocrat and familiar with Court life. His Lords and Ladies move to the manner born. He was cultured, a scholar, and had been trained in law. He was fluent in French and Italian,

and was acquainted with Northern Italy. Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford stands before us equipped with all these specific qualifications.

One could fill pages with incidents from the plays, which parallel events in Oxford's own career. Space forbids.

A perusal of the Oxfordian writers mentioned will satisfy an open minded reader that the professors have been deceiving their followers with their nonsense about Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon. As Hamlet said, "For 'tis the sport to have the engineer Hoist with his own petard."

George Frisbee

Who Was John Soothern?

New Facts Relating to the Identification of the Mysterious Author of *Pandora*, 1584

We'll put on those shall praise your excellence,
And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you.

Hamlet, IV. 7. 130.

Study of the rare Elizabethan publication, *Pandora*, containing the four Epytaphes written by Anne Cecil de Vere, Countess of Oxford, following the death of her only son, has proved worthwhile in bringing to light previously unnoted Shakespearean creative connotations.*

Let us now consider the volume from the point of view of its actual authorship, the writer's name, "John Soothern," being generally believed to be an assumed one. The fact that the book was not licensed for publication by the Stationers' Company lends extra credence to this belief.

"John Soothern" evidently designed his volume as a joint tribute to Edward de Vere, his Countess, and Queen Elizabeth. For the sub-title reads, *The Musyque of the beautie of his Mistress Diana*, and immediately following Anne Cecil's laments for her son, Soothern includes another "Epitaph, made by the Queenes Maiestie, at the death of the Princess of Espinoye." It seems hardly possible that any poet or anthologist who wished to profit by his labors would assume these liberties without some sort of permission. On the other hand, the rarity of "Soothern's" book might indicate that the edition had been suppressed by order of the Queen or members of the Vere or Cecil families who con-

sidered the publication of such personal poems in questionable taste.

Who was "John Soothern"? Although an important contemporary witness to Lord Oxford's pre-eminence in scholarship and the arts, and the pioneer exponent of the ode as a poetic form in English literature, an impenetrable mystery has always surrounded his identity.

On the title-page of his volume the name appears as "John Soowthern," but in a sonnet on page 7 he refers to himself as "Soothern," repeating this same spelling twice in an epode on page 19, and finally in an elegy to Diana on page 24 states:

"My name, quoth I, is Soothern, and
Madame, let that suffice:

That Soothern which will rayse the Englishe
language to the Skies."

This rather immodest insistence, quite unique among English rhymsters of the period (and paraphrased by this writer directly out of Ronsard) implies that "John Soothern" is a descriptive pen-name assumed by a Frenchman residing in England. That the author of *Pandora* was a native of the Gallic clime seems apparent from many circumstances, as George Steevens pointed out in the 18th century.*

*Published in the NEWS-LETTER for February, 1943.

*Chetham Society Pub. Vol. 108, pps. 252-3.

... from his levity, pertness, unbounded vanity, perpetual introduction of French words and phrases, unadopted by contemporary writers of this country, from his French mode of spelling and sounding English, his proper names with French terminations and especially from his calling Ronsard "our old Ronsard of France," his ability to compose stanzas and quatrains in French language, the epithet *rude*, which he bestows on us as a people, and his insolent observations at the end of one of his Odes, *Non careo patria, Me caret Illa magis*, I cannot help supposing this Soothern to have been a native of France, perhaps a refugee, admitted as secretary, a tutor, or for some other purpose, into the family of the Earl of Oxford. Being thus domesticated, he might easily obtain confidential transcripts of the Epitaphs written by the wife of his Patron and Queen Elizabeth. That particular one composed by a British Monarch, on a Princess of his own nation, would naturally have struck his vanity as a performance worth being preserved.

This shrewd analysis of Steevens' is borne out by the fact that Lord Oxford did actually have a personal retainer who was known as "Denys the Frenchman." We find mention of him first under date of May, 1573, as one of "three of my Lord of Oxford's men; Danye Wylkyns, John Hannam, and Deny the Frenchman," who are accused by William Faunt and John Wotton, two of the messengers of the Lord Treasurer's Office, in a letter to Lord Burghley from Gravesend, of ambushing the said messengers with intent to kill or rob them.* This attempted hold-up which took place on the old Gadshill section of the road between Gravesend and Rochester, was likely enough the authentic original of the famous highway robbery which "Shake-speare" staged on the same location some years later with Prince Hal and Falstaff as principals:

Case ye, case ye; on with your visards: there's money of the King's coming down the hill; 'tis going to the King's exchequer.

I Henry IV, II, 2, 50.

A memorandum in the Lord Treasurer's hand, among the Cecil papers and evidently dating from the time of this attempt upon Burghley's messengers, indicates that Lord Oxford had interceded on behalf of "Denny the French boy and others" who were punished by the Lord Treasurer for their participation in this desperate exploit.

Again, in a letter from Sir Francis Vere to Sir Robert Cecil, dated November 17, 1605, we find "Denys a Frenchman" named as one of Oxford's retainers (together with Sir Roger Williams, the well-proven original of Captain Fluellen in *Henry V*) who accompanied the Earl on a visit to Paris when Sir Francis Vere "was very young."† This was apparently during 1575, at which time Sir Francis would have been about fifteen years of age.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that the Earl of Oxford had a Frenchman among his personal followers of the same indiscreet, swashbuckling temperament that "John Soothern" displays in *Pandora*.

This "Denys" or Denis may also have been one of the four personal attendants in Oxford's household that Lord Burghley mentions in a letter to Sir Christopher Hatton, dated March, 1583:‡

"One of them waiteth upon his wife my daughter, another is in my house upon his daughter Bess, a third is a kind of tumbling boy, and the fourth is a son of a brother of Sir John Cutts. . . ." It should also be observed that the Bard gives Orlando, the hero of *As You Like It*, a personal attendant named Dennis.

All circumstances considered, Oxford's "Denys the Frenchman" appears to be the most likely original of "John Soothern" that has ever been put forward.

Within a year or so of the surreptitious publication of *Pandora* with its dedicatory odes "To the ryght honourable the Earl of Oxenford, & c.," it appears that "Denys the Frenchman" left England for the Lowlands, evidently in the train of Lord Oxford when the Earl headed an expedition to Flushing in September, 1585. And from this time onward, the young compatriot of Ronsard seems to have followed an active military career which won him the respect and liking of the English notables with whom he served for many years. In the records and correspondence relating to the Lowlands campaigns he is referred to as "Denys the Frenchman" and also under his full name and rank as Captain Morrys Denys. Among the Queen's "Officers of Flushing" printed in a "List of Officers and Soldiers in the Low Countries for Two Years Ended 11 October 1588," we find "Captain Denys, Gentleman Porter," associated with Sir William Russell, the English Governor of Flushing. Again, in the roll of Captains of the Horse Bands, the name of Morrys Denys appears with that of Sir William

*Cal. MSS. of the Marquess of Salisbury, Vol. 17.

†Nicolas, *Life of Hatton*, p. 321 and Ward, p. 232.

*S. P. Dom. Eliz., 91, 36 and Ward p. 91.

Russell. Russell had won great fame as a cavalry leader at the Battle of Zutphen in 1586 when Sir Philip Sidney lost his life. It is further significant to observe that both Russell and Denys accompanied the playwright Earl of Oxford on certain stages of his travels through France and Italy in 1575-76. Russell's personal association with Oxford and also with the Earl's French retainer should be worthy the attention of Dr. Leslie Hotson, author of *I, William Shakespeare*, in view of the great and abiding influence which Hotson asserts members of the Russell family exerted upon William Shakspeare of Stratford.

As one of the Queen's officers, Captain Denys undoubtedly returned to England occasionally during his long service in the armies of the Earl of Oxford, Lord Willoughby, Sir John Norris and Sir Francis Vere. But he does not seem to have attempted further literary ventures after the failure of *Pandora* to win him fame and fortune. He lives in the later records of the Elizabethan Age solely as an able soldier who finally died in action at the siege of Ostend. This occurred during the early days of January, 1602. His passing is commented upon by Sir William Browne in letters to Sir Robert Sidney, reproduced in the *Calendar of Mss. of Lord De L' Isle and Dudley*. From the same source we learn that Captain Denys' chief under-officer at Ostend had been one "Lieut. Poynts." The latter name will ring familiarly in the ears of all admirers of the Henry IV plays.

The above facts indicate clearly enough that Lord Oxford's French retainer, Captain Morrys Denys, was really a man of parts and that he could have been on terms of sufficiently intimate acquaintance with the poet Earl's menage to have secured access to the Countess of Oxford's writings and a copy of Queen Elizabeth's verses on the death of the Princess Espinoye — just as the mysterious "John Soothern" must perforce have been. Lord Oxford evidently not only gave Captain Denys his start in life, but backed his rise to military preferment in the Lowlands.

Regarding this latter circumstance, cynics who have attempted to explore the crabbed black-letter mazes of *Pandora* may believe that Oxford gladly sponsored his temperamental servant's military ambitions in order to keep Denys from committing further literary indiscretions.

Nevertheless, the identification of this spirited Frenchman as the real "John Soothern" adds another vital figure to the group that made up the early Oxford-Shakespeare circle.

Both *Pandora* and its author are harshly criti-

cized in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), one of the contemporary studies of Elizabethan poetry which states categorically that Lord Oxford ranked "first" among the poets of his era.

In the *Arte*, "Soothern" is significantly described — without being named — as a "minion" or pampered favorite who attempts translations of Ronsard,

. . . of the hymns of Pyndarus and of Anacreon's odes . . . and applieth them to the honour of a great noble man in England (wherein I commend his reverent mind and dutie) but doth so impudently rob the French Poet (Ronsard) both of his praise and also of his French terms, that I cannot so much pitie him as be angry with him for his injurious dealing. . .

Thus, while it seems inevitable that Oxford himself may have taken a hand in suppressing his retainer's exhibition in bad taste, the laudatory references that the irrepressible Frenchman filched from Ronsard to apply to his master are now worthy of reproduction as supplementary evidence that Oxford was known to his personal associates as a man of outstanding genius in the arts.

Antistrophe

Muses, you have had of your father,
Only the particular favor,
To keep from the reeve infernal:
And therefore my wantons come sing,
Upon your most best speaking string,
His name that doth cherish you all.
Come Nymphs while I have a desire,
To strike on a well sounding lyre,
Of our virtues *Dever* the name.
Dever, that hath given him in part:
The love, the war, honour, and art,
And with them an eternal Fame.
Come Nymphs, your puissance is divine:
And to those that you show no favour,
Quickly they are deprived of honour,
And slaves to the chains Cossitine.

Epode

Amongst our well renowned men,
Dever merits a silver pen,
Eternally to write his honour,
And I in a well polisht verse,
Can set up in our Universe,
A Fame, to endure forever. . .

Antistrophe

For who marketh better than he,
The seven turning flames of the Sky:
Or hath read more of the antique,
Hath greater knowledge in the tongues:
Or understands sooner the sound,

Of the learner to love Music.
 Or else who hath a fairer grace
 In the Centaurian art of Thrace,
 Half-horse, half-man, and with less pain,
 Doth bring the Courser indomitable,
 To yield to the raynes of his bridle:
 Vaulting, on the edge of a plain.
 And it pleases me to say too,
 (With a lovange, I protest true)
 That in England we cannot see,
 Anything like *Dever*, but he.
 Only himself he must resemble,
 Virtues so much in him assemble.

There are several other references to *Dever's* affinity to the Muses and his proficiency in the arts, but those given above seem most striking, despite the crude doggerel in which they are expressed.

In line two of the Epode quoted, Soothern says: "*Dever* merits a silver pen."

In 1594, one W. H., identified as Sir William Harbert, ascribes a "silver pen" to "Shake-speare."^{*}

"For who marketh better than he,
 The seven turning flames of the Sky."

This is a reference to Oxford's interest in astrology or astronomy, the "seven turning flames of the sky" being the seven principal planets. Lord Oxford appears to have been one of the most interested patrons of Dr. John Dee, foremost of Elizabethan astrologers, according to a statement in *A Compendious Rehearsal*, the book which Dee published in 1592 to clear himself of charges of sorcery. In this work, Dee makes prominent mention of "the honourable the Earl of Oxford, his favourable letters, anno 1570."

The foremost scholars of the age then gave serious consideration to astrology. Oxford's interest in the subject is one more testimonial to the catholicity of his education.

Coincidentally, it should be noted that "Shake-speare" studs his writings so generously with astrological allusions and metaphors that it would require a bulky monograph to record and analyze them.

Not from the stars do I my judgment pluck;
 And yet methinks I have astronomy,
 But not to tell of good or evil luck,
 Of plagues, of dearths, or seasons' quality.

(Sonnet 14)

The Bard even utilizes astrological terms for comedy effect, as in *II Henry IV* when Falstaff kisses Doll Tearsheet and Prince Hal remarks:

"Saturn and Venus this year in conjunction!
 What says the almanac to that?"

"And, look," adds Pointz, "whether the fiery Trigon, his man, be not lipping to his master's old tables, his note-book. . ."

The Prince's sally derives point from the fact that Saturn and Venus are never conjoined.

"The fiery Trigon" refers to Falstaff's servant Bardolph, who is making the most of his time with Falstaff's old love, the hostess of the Boar's Head. In the language of astrology, the Trigon represents the triangle. (A good quip in the sense that Pointz uses it.) A "fiery Trigon" develops when the three upper planet meet in a fiery sign, signifying rage and contention to follow.

These are but one or two of a hundred equally interesting examples of the effective use to which "Shake-speare" puts his keen understanding of the ancient "science" of astrology. In fact, it is the Bard, above all writers, who has said the last word, astrologically:

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
 But in ourselves, that we are undeilings.

"John Soothern's" references to Lord Oxford's love of "antique" literature and of his "knowledge in the tongues" and understanding of music can all be verified from numerous sources, including the statements in books dedicated to the Earl by Arthur Golding, Thomas Twyne, Anthony Munday, John Farmer and others.

We have previously noted the parallel between "Soothern's" tribute to Oxford's horsemanship and the King's tribute to the Norman gentleman who was "incorpsed and demi-natural" with his charger in *Hamlet*.^{*}

There is another contemporary word picture of the literary Earl as a youthful performer in the lists, written in Latin by Giles Fletcher, uncle of John Fletcher, the dramatist, and translated by B. M. Ward, which should be inserted here. Many persons may see in Fletcher's lines of 1571-72 an early presentment of the real-life "Shake-speare" in action:

. . . he controls his foaming steed with a light rein, and armed with a long spear rides to the encounter. Fearlessly he settles himself in the saddle, gracefully bending his body this way and that. Now he circles round; now with spurred heel he rouses his charger. The gallant animal with fiery energy collects himself, and flying quicker than the wind, beats the ground with his

*The Shakespeare Allusion Book, Vol. I, p. 14.

*Feb., 1943, NEWS-LETTER.

hoofs, and again is pulled up short as the reins control him.

Bravo, valiant youth! 'Tis thus that martial spirits pass through their apprenticeship in war. Thus do yearling bulls try the feel of each other's horns. Thus too do goats not yet expert in fighting begin to butt one against the other, and soon venture to draw blood with their horns.

The country sees in thee both a leader pre-eminent in war, and a skilful man-at-arms. Thy valour puts forth leaves, and begins to bear fruit, and glory already ripens in thy earliest deeds.*

And now, one final observation concerning the ties, both personal and literary, that have been found to bind with telling effect the names of Morris Denys, "John Soothern," Edward de Vere and "William Shake-speare."

In his book, *The French Renaissance in England* (1910), Sir Sidney Lee remarks:

The poetaster Soothern introduced the word (ode) and the form into the English language in 1584 when he published his volume of crude imitations of Ronsard.

If it is true that Lord Oxford's personal retainer introduced the word *ode* into the English language, then it is equally true that "William Shake-speare" was the first playwright to give this word wide currency, for he uses it in two of his early comedies.

In *As You Like It*, Rosalind tells Orlando:

"There is a man haunts the forest, that abuses our young plants with carving Rosalind on their barks; hangs odes upon hawthorns and elegies upon brambles. . ."

Also in *Love's Labors Lost*, Dumain announces:

"Once more I'll read the ode that
I have writ. . ."[†]

Thereupon, this character in the Bard's comedy proceeds to read the opening movement of a correctly scanned ode—so vastly superior to any of the crude examples of "mingle-mangle" which Oxford's French swashbuckler had tried to inflict upon the public in 1584 that conclusions regarding the present-day rarity of the volume become inevitable. Oxford, as the real "Shake-speare," simply couldn't tolerate his retainer's bad taste and so had as much of the evidence of it destroyed as pos-

*Elogue. In *nuptias clarissimi D. Edouardi Vere*. Hatfield MSS. (Cal. XIII. 109) and Ward pps. 60-61.

[†]Murray's *New English Dictionary* quotes these lines from *L. L. L.* with the date of composition given as 1588, as the first appearance of the word *ode* in English.

sible. At the same time, as a constructive critic, he dashed off a proper ode to show the poor fellow who had tried to honor him how a real lyric of this type should be done.

As everyone who knows "Shake-speare" must be familiar with the haunting melody of Dumain's ode, we will merely set down the opening lines:

On a day—alack the day!—
Love, whose month is every May,
Spied a blossom passing fair
Playing in the wanton air. . .

Charles Wisner Barrell

Cryptic Passages by Davies of Hereford

Sir Edmund Chambers includes in his *William Shakespeare* a compilation of "Contemporary Allusions" to Shakespeare. Three somewhat cryptic passages are from the pen of John Davies of Hereford.

The first is taken from *Microcosmos*, 1603:

Players, I loue yee, and your Qualitie,
As ye are Men, that pass time not abus'd:
And some I love for painting, poesie,

W. S. R. B.

And say fell Fortune cannot be excus'd,
That hath for better vses you refus'd:
Wit, Courage, good shape, good partes, and all good,
As long as all these goods are no worse vs'd,
And though the stage doth staine pure gentl^e blood,*

Yet generous yee are in minde and moode.

The initials in the margin obviously refer to William Shakespeare and Richard Burbadge, for they were the outstanding men with those initials connected with the stage. While an excellent actor, Burbadge was not a man of "gentle blood," which in those days meant of "gentle birth," nor was Shakspeare of Stratford a man of "gentle blood," however much his followers try to make him seem so by a relationship with the Arden family. The reference must be to some one of superior birth who has lowered his dignity by appearing on the stage.

The second passage cited by Sir Edmund Chambers is taken from *The Civile Warres of Death and Fortune*, 1605:

*In the original, all nouns are italicised. They are here printed in ordinary type and the next to the last line only italicised, in order to emphasize it.

Some followed her by acting all mens parts,

These on a Stage she rais'd (in scorn) to fall:
 And made them Mirrors, by their acting Arts,
 Wherin men saw their faults, though ne'r so small:
Yet some she gerdond not, to their desarts;

Stage players

W. S. R. B.

But, othersome, were bnt ill-Action all:
 Who while they acted ill, ill staide behinde,
 (By custom of their manners) in their minde.

When the title of the piece from which this passage comes is taken into consideration, together with the date of publication, 1605, the initials in the margin and the lack of reward for their desert, it suggests that some one connected with the stage had died without having his work properly recognized. That person was not Burbadge, for he lived for years afterwards. It was, then, W. S. who had died without receiving the reward of recognition for his great work for the stage. The person of "gentle blood" (note the previous passage) whose work for the stage did not receive public recognition was Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, who died in 1604, identified through much evidence as the poet-dramatist "William Shakespeare."

The third passage cited by Chambers has been often quoted. It is taken from *The Scourge of Folly* which was entered in the Stationers' Registers in 1610, though it may have been written years before. It is even more cryptic than the others. In quoting this verse, the usual italicised words are printed in ordinary Roman characters, like the rest of the text, and the second and third lines are italicised for the sake of emphasis.

To our English Terence, Mr. Will.
 Shake-speare.

Some say (good Will) which I, in sport, do sing,
Had'st thou not plaid some Kingly parts in sport,
Thou hadst bin a companion for a King;
 And, beene a King among the meaner sort.
 Some others raile; but, raile as they thinke fit,
 Thou hast no rayling, but, a rainging Wit:

And honesty thou sow'st, which they do reape;
 So, to increase their Stocke which they do
 keepe.

A professional actor plays a "kingly part" whenever a play calls for him to do so. That is his business. He does not do it "in sport." "Mr. Will. Shakespeare," the person of "gentle blood," had done something beneath his station in life by appearing on the stage, even if only "in sport," according to the conventions of the period. The only high-born man of that time who might have been "a com-

panion for a King," and who was devoted to the theatre, was Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

John Davies tells of Shakespeare in a "kingly part" picking up a glove let drop by Gloriana's self and handing it to her with the words:

And though now bent on this high embassy,
 Yet stoop we to take up our cousin's glove.*

Can one imagine Ned Alleyn or Richard Burbadge presuming upon the playing of a "kingly part" to call Queen Elizabeth "cousin"? "Shakespeare," in the person of the Earl of Oxford, could do it, for that was what the Queen called him. In proof of this statement, it is only necessary to read the document (as translated from the Latin) by which she made the grant to him of £1,000 a year. In it she calls him "our right trusty and well beloved Cousin the Earl of Oxford," and twice later in the same paper refers to him as "our cousin."

If imagination may be allowed to play, one can believe that the Queen, in a moment of mischief, with the intent of distracting the actor, dropped her glove on purpose, but was gratified by his prompt and unflurried gesture as he returned it to her.

Considering John Davies' three passages together, they seem to refer to some one not of the usual class of actors, but to that person of "gentle blood" who sometimes played "kingly parts in sport," under the name of "Will. Shakespeare," and known to the Queen and his fellow-players as the Earl of Oxford.

Eva Turner Clark

"No. 1 Little Crown Street"

Regarding the copy of William Lambard's *Archæionomia*, recently acquired by the Folger Shakespeare Memorial Library at Washington, mention of which was made in the last NEWS-LETTER, it is now reported that the address of William Shakespeare, as supposedly given in the book—No. 1 Little Crown St. Westminster—cannot be correct, as numbers were not used for addresses until 1708 and did not become common for many years afterwards.

If Shakespeare ever lived at the address later known as No. 1 Little Crown Street, or even if he was supposed to have lived there, the inscription in the book must have been written nearly a century afterwards. Penmanship and ink are said to support that opinion.

*George Wyndham's Introduction to *The Poems of Shakespeare*, xliii.

Look in the Chronicles

III

And there put on him
What forgeries you please . . .

Polonius to Reynaldo

The second installment of these papers closed with a promise to give some details of the astonishing career of the notorious John Payne Collier (1789-1883), for present day readers should be reminded how extremely difficult it has been to bolster up the Stratford legend, and to what lengths certain addicts have gone. The story of Wm. Ireland, son of a London antique dealer, who in the latter part of the 18th century had England agog with his "discoveries" of "genuine" Shakespeare manuscripts, is fairly well known. Had not this youth overplayed his hand by creating an alleged Shakespeare tragedy, *Vortigern*, which was actually produced by a leading theatrical company in London, he might even today have some partisans.

Then there was John Jordan, "a self-educated wheelwright with literary ambitions," who "made himself local guide and Shakespearean authority at Stratford." It was he who "discovered" the spurious Catholic testament belonging to John Shacksper, and made the story stick to such an extent that there are books written recently which solemnly quote this antique fraud to prove that the Stratford family were professing members of the Church of Rome.

Even Halliwell-Phillips and Chambers are not above quoting Jordan, though both of them confess that some of his stuff is fraudulent.

But John Payne Collier was far more dangerous than Jordan, Ireland and the fabricators of the early eighteenth century legends. Of course all real students of Shakespearean lore know something of the activities of this remarkable man. It is whispered that in his zeal for the Stratford cause he went a little too far. His name is no longer mentioned in Shakespeare biographies. Yet there was a time when he was the acknowledged High Priest of Avon. In fact for thirty years he was the unquestioned Voice of Authority in all matters Shakespearean. The great French Encyclopedia of Biography, published in 1860, says of Collier's edition of the works of Shakespeare: "Il a consigné dans cette édition les résultats de vingt années de laborieuses et patientes recherches," and speaks of his "rang honorable parmi les historiens littéraires." Chambers' Encyclopedia, in its 1886 edition, praises his *New Facts Regarding the Life and*

Works of Shakespeare, but admits that a furious controversy raged over his *Emendations* to Shakespeare and says that some people were unkind enough to "allege" that some of the seventeenth century emendations had been inserted by Collier himself. Still, as one reads the article, he is left with the impression that Mr. Collier was a distinguished contributor to the field of Shakespearean literature, who had died at the age of 94, full of years and honors. The many volumes of the Shakespeare Society, bound in beautiful calf, are still found in all the important libraries of the world. There is no notice pasted upon the cover printed in red and marked with a skull and crossbones to warn the unwary reader that the contents of some of them are poison.

To illustrate: In the memoirs of Edward Alleyn, referred to in our last number, is a letter from the latter's wife to her husband, in which she says: "and Mr. Shakespeare of the globe who came." Collier explains that the letter is in rags, so that the rest of the sentence is gone. But here at last is supposedly some real testimony from one who knew Shakespeare, something to tie to. Also, on page 68, Collier gives a list of actors which he says was enclosed with a letter written on April 6th, 1604, from the Council to the Lord Mayor of London and the magistrates of Middlesex and Surrey. There are eleven names in the list, which includes Phillips, "Candle" and "Hemminges." The first name is Burbidge, the second Shakespeare (a new spelling, by the way). Thus John Payne Collier proves that there was a Shakespeare who was in the midst of matters theatrical in the early seventeenth century.

The reader who has access to a well stocked Shakespeare library may find therein a small book entitled *The Shakespeare Question—An Inquiry into the Genuineness of the Manuscript Corrections in Mr. J. Payne Collier's Annotated Shakespeare Folio, 1632: and of Certain Shakesperian Documents Likewise Published by Mr. Collier*. The author is Mr. N. E. S. A. Hamilton, Assistant to Sir Frederic Madden, Keeper of the MSS., British Museum.

An astounding story is unfolded. J. Payne Collier, F.S.A., leading Shakespeare authority of his

time, searching for references to the Stratford man as the author of the plays (in contemporary papers) and finding none, had gone to work to manufacture some. He began with a copy of the Folio of 1632 which he had bought from a dealer who had conveniently died immediately after the sale. In this volume Collier claimed to have found such emendations and additions to the text as to clear up the meaning of many difficult passages. Made bold by the success of his "new edition," based on these changes, he began editing the various volumes sponsored and published by the Shakespeare Society, in which, as has been told, appeared several hitherto undiscovered references to the Bard of Avon. The literary world was thrilled, and J. Payne Collier became The Last Word in matters Shakespearean.

But a Nemesis was on his trail. Mr. Hamilton, checking on the antique corrections in the Folio of 1632, found that they had been made in pencil and traced over in modern ink, betraying to any scientific investigator their spurious character. Then Mr. Hamilton went to work on others of Mr. Collier's "discoveries." He went to Dulwich and made an examination of Mrs. Alleyn's letter. I quote his words:

"There is not the smallest trace of authority for any allusion to Shakspeare, or to any of the words concerning him found there by Mr. Collier and printed by him as forming part of the original document." Hamilton illustrates his book with a fac-simile of that portion of the letter. He then states that while the letter printed by Collier (from the Council to the Lord Mayor and the Magistrates) is genuine, the list of actors including Shakspeare's name "is a modern addition."

Still unsatisfied, Mr. Hamilton, armed with his microscope and his chemistry, set out to make a comprehensive study of Collier's forgeries. Ten or more were uncovered, often planted among genuinely ancient documents. The most remarkable of them was found among the papers "preserved in Her Majesty's State Paper Office" and bearing the official stamp of that office. It is a petition to the Lords of Elizabeth's "most honourable privie Counsell" from Thomas Pope, Richard Burbage, John Hemings, Augustine Phillips, Willm Shakspeare and others. How the forger managed to slip it into the official records and have it stamped, Mr. Hamilton could not learn. It had been slipped into the files some years before he exposed the fraud. But there it was, written in the same nineteenth

century ink as Collier's other bits of manufactured testimony.

The Hamilton exposé appeared in 1860, nearly thirty years after Collier's boldest forgeries had been widely accepted by scholars. Meanwhile this man, as the leading Shakespearean expert in the British Isles, had had access to all the valuable papers and historical documents relating to the Elizabethan era; so the question naturally arises (since he was unable to find any genuine references to Shakespeare and was driven to forge so many), did he not destroy evidence that might have set us upon the track of the real author of the plays? Collier died, unrepentant and defiant, and his secrets were buried with him. The extent of the mischief that he did to the cause of truth will never be known.

Among the books that Collier published is one dealing with reminiscences of the actors named in the list printed in the First Folio. He gives biographies of Burbage, Phillips, Heminge, Condell and others. *But nowhere in all their papers, letters, or wills is there a genuine reference to the Bard of Avon.*

Incidentally, the wills of Heminge, who died in 1630, aged 75, and of Condell, who was deceased in 1627, in literary style and clearness are so far above the rambling, unpunctuated scrawl that is today worshipped as the final literary composition of the world's greatest author-genius as to suggest that they belonged to a monde at least two strata above him. Heminge speaks of his books, specifies that five pounds shall be spent in purchasing volumes for the education of his grand-child, and writes again and again of his income from the Globe and Blackfriars playhouses and its disposal. Condell wills to his son his yearly dividend from the "Blackfriars" and the "Bankside."

On the other hand, the will of Shakspeare does not mention a book, or a manuscript. He is supposed to have been a partner of Heminge and Condell: why, then, is there no word about shares in theatres, so prominent in the wills of the other two? This document, as has been hinted, as a literary effort is no credit, even to a small-town law clerk. Sir Edmund Chambers, in the Appendix to his Life of Shakespeare, prints the Will, with this startling admission: "THERE IS PRACTICALLY NO PUNCTUATION. I HAVE ADDED A MINIMUM."

Let us dip in at random for a sample of the latter-day style of the genius.

"Item I Gyve & bequeath vnto my saied daughter Judith One Hundred & ffytie Poundes more if shee or Anie issue of her bodie be Lyvinge att thend of three Yeares next ensueing the daie of the date of this my will during which tyme my executours to paie her consideracion from my deceas according to the rate aforesaid And if she dye within the saied terme without issue of her bodye then my will ys & I doe gyve & bequeath One Hundred Poundes thereof to my Neece Elizabeth Hall & the ffittie Poundes to be sett fourth by my executours during the lief of my Sister Johane Harte & the vse & profit thereof Cominge shalbe payed to my saied Sister Jone & after her deceas the saied Lli shall Remaine Amongst the children of my saied Sister Equallie to be divided Amongst them But if my saied daughter Judith be lyving att thend of the saied three Yeares or anie issue of her bodye then my will ys & soe I devise & bequeath the saied Hundred & ffytie poundes to be sett out for the best benefit of her & her issue & not paied vnto her soe long as she shalbe married & covert Baron by my executours & overseers but my will ys that she shall have the consideracion yearelie paied vnto her during her lief & after her deceas the saied stock and consideracion to be paied to her children if she have Anie & if not to her executours or assignes she lyving the saied terme after my deceas Provided that Yf such husband as she shall att thend of the saied three yeares be married vnto or att anie after doe sufficiently Assure vnto her & thissue of her bodie landes Awswereable to the porcion by this my will gyven vnto her & adjudged soe by my executours & overseers then my will ys that the said clii shalbe paied to such husband as shall make such assurance to his owne vse Item I gyve & bequeath" etc.

Incredible as it may appear, all of the "responsible scholars," the experts in Elizabethan literature, solemnly assure us that the man who dictated this stupid, dull and redundant drudgery, and who sat by, helplessly, while the barely literate law clerk spelled his name "Shackspere," putting down his dictation with practically no punctuation with misplaced capitals and telescoped words, who accepted it as his last written message to his family and friends, and signed it in three places with dissimilar and almost illegible scrawls, is the same man who wrote:

"O, lest your true love may seem false in this,
That you for love speak well of me untrue,

My name be buried where my body is,
And live no more to shame nor me nor you."

On the other hand, several of these same "experts," commenting on the following lines:

"If care or skill could conquer vain desire,
Or reason's reins my strong affections stay:
There should my sighs to quiet breast retire,
And shun such sights as secret thoughts betray:
Uncomely love, which now lurks in my breast
Should cease, my grief by wisdom's power
oppressed. . ."

which were written by the Earl of Oxford in his youth, say that they are "puerile in style" and entirely unworthy of the mind which wrote *Hamlet*, the *Sonnets*, and dictated the will which is quoted above!

Of course, the mentality revealed in the composition of the will is entirely in keeping with that which dictated those two other unquestioned contributions to early seventeenth century literature made by the Man of Stratford. I refer to, first, his 1612 deposition in the law suit of the young Frenchman, Belott, against his father-in-law, Mountjoy. Even Chambers comments on his "imperfect memory of events which had taken place eight years before." The other two witnesses, Johane Johnstone and Daniell Nicholas (who refer to him slightinglly as "one Mr. Shakspere that laye in the house" and "one Wm. Shakspere") are much more clear in their recollection of what took place. Secondly, ponder the doggerel dictated for inscription on his alleged tombstone, where everyone would expect a crowning stanza of original poetry, or at least, an appropriate quotation from plays or sonnets.

While there are several letters written by the actors, Heminge and Condell, in their own chirography, the contributions to literature in his own hand left behind by the world's greatest writer consist of six signatures: 1612, Willn Sha(blot)p, (credited by Chambers with meaning Willm Shakp) on the Belott deposition; (this is the earliest signature), (blot)illiam Shakape, on a conveyance; Wm Shakepe, on a mortgage; Wile(blot)m(illegible scrawl), Willm Shap(scrawl), William (very plain and so legible that many think it written by the law clerk) Shasp(scrawl) on the will.

We are told that Heminge and Condell received from their partner, the Bard, the "true and original" copies of all the plays, written out "with scarce a blot." Strange, is it not, that in the specimens that we have of his writing, he makes three bad blots in writing twelve words, and that he can-

not get beyond the seventh letter of his own family name until he reaches the last page of his will!

By the way, why is there no mention of these precious "true and original" copies in the will of Heminge and Condell? They bequeath other papers, books, etc. Collier, bothered over this question, says:

"There seems no reason why Heminge should destroy them, and they may still lurk in some dark and dusty depository." Query: had not Mr. Hamilton exposed him, might not some of them have been "found," later on?

Collier, honest for once, confesses:

"It is one of the problems in the life of our great dramatist that will never be solved, how it happened that he, who could write such plays, could be so indifferent to their appearance in print."

He goes on to say that Shaksper did absolutely nothing to right himself in the eyes of the world regarding the "stolne and surreptitious copies" that were being palmed off as his genuine work. Collier continues:

"He probably superintended the passage through the press of his two poems *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, but it is my conviction that as far as regards any of his plays he never corrected a line of them after they were in print." He may have done some editing of his plays after his retirement to Stratford, says Collier, "but all that has reached us tends to show that he preserved to the last the indifference which had marked him from the first."

More mystery. Wm. Shacksper sues P. Rogers a fellow businessman of Stratford for a debt of less than two pounds, yet tosses aside, or gives away to Heminge and Condell, these priceless manuscripts as if they were so much trash! He is careful to specify what shall be done with his second-best bed, but forgets to tell his heirs that some day, when they are good and ready to do so, his old associates Heminge and Condell are going to publish all his plays, including sixteen that the family have never seen in print, and turn over the proceeds to—whom?

What a tangled mess of inconsistencies and impossibilities the Stratford story is, and how simple is the explanation when one knows the hard-won facts that show the poet Earl of Oxford as the real Bard.

Louis P. Bénézet

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AMERICAN BRANCH

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

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

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

To Our Readers

With our next issue, this organ will change from bi-monthly to quarterly publication. At the same time, the NEWS-LETTER will become THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP QUARTERLY. War conditions oblige us to concentrate our efforts. The Editorial Board feels this can be best accomplished by four instead of six printings per year. The same format will be kept, with a minimum of sixteen pages per issue. The same realistic and scholarly editorial standards will be maintained. New, exciting evidence in the case for Lord Oxford as the central figure in the greatest of creative mysteries will be presented. Our field widened materially in the year passing. We mean to reach more readers than ever in 1944.

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