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Rarest Contemporary Description of "Shakespeare" Proves Poet to Have Been a Nobleman

Vivid Word-Portrait by Thomas Edwards, Long Declared "Unidentifiable" by the Stratford Experts, Yields Its Secrets Under X-Ray of Oxford Documentation

By CHARLES WISNER BARRELL

ONE OF THE RAREST BOOKS ever printed in the English language contains a heretofore unidentified description of the poet-playwright Earl of Oxford as a dominating creative spirit of the Shakespearean Age.

This is *Cephalus and Procris (and) Narcissus* by Thomas Edwards. In addition to a fragment comprising the title-page and a small part of the opening poem, only one complete copy is known. It was discovered in 1878 in the library of Peterborough Cathedral, and was reprinted for the Roxburghe Club in 1882 with editorial comments by W. E. Buckley. While the printed date of this unique volume published by John Wolfe of London is 1595, it is evident that an earlier edition once existed, and that the work was actually written at least two years before 1595, for the following entry appears in the Stationers' Register under date of 22 October, 1593:

John Wolff . . Entred for his copie . . a booke entytuled PROCRIS AND CEPHALUS, *divided into foure partes* . .

Each of the two narrative poems signed by Thomas Edwards concludes with a separate lyrical envoy, the whole comprising the "foure partes" licensed for publication. These lyrics reflect the author's reactions to contemporary thought and to the work of creative writers of the period. "L'Envoy to Narcissus" expresses Edwards' appreciation of Spenser as *Collyn;* praises Daniel for his *Rosamond;* and laments the fact that *Amintas* (Thomas Watson) and *Leander* (Christopher Marlowe) are "gone"—both of these poets having died by June 1, 1593. Edwards then continues his "Envoy" with what are probably the earliest references extant to *Venus and Adonis*, as that poem was licensed for publication on April 18, 1593, only six months before the Edwards' manuscript was officially approved. What makes this Shakespearean commentary of paramount interest, however, is the fact that Edwards adds to his appreciation of *Venus and Adonis* a remarkable pen-portrait of its author which, while negating the corpus of Stratfordian creative claims, corroborates the Oxford-Shakespeare documentation with constructive realism.

In writing this commentary, Thomas Edwards uses the same form that he applies to Spenser and his works—first identifying the poet with his best known speaking part (such as Colin Clout) and then going on to particularize Spenser's character and life-interests. This is, in fact, a mode of address then very much in vogue, Spenser himself being its outstanding exponent. Yet the only Shakespearean authorities who have deigned to note Edwards' spenserian treatment of the author of *Venus and Adonis* in three stanzas of the "Envoy to Narcissus," beg the whole question by admitting only the first stanza as an authentic Shakespearean allusion.

The Edwards' verses are reprinted thus in the 1909 edition of *The Shakespeare Allusion Book*, Volume I, page 25. L. Toulamin Smith, one of the editors, adds this footnote:

"The two stanzas referring to 'one whose power floweth far' I insert, but he has not been identified."

Adon deafly masking thro
Stately troupes rich conceited,
Shew'd he well deserved to
Loves delight on him to gaze,
And had not love her selfe intreated,
Other nymphs had sent him baies.

Eke in purple roabes destain'd,
Amid'st the Center of this clime,
I have heard saie doth remaine
One whose power floweth far,
That should have bene of our rime
The only object and the star.

Well could his bewitching pen
Done the Muses objects to us,
Although he differs much from men
Tilting under Frieries,
Yet his golden art might woo us
To have honored him with baies.

Editor Smith's footnote has a familiar ring. It is another admission by a recognized Stratfordian expert that any such contemporary allusion as this to a "Shakespeare" who was obviously of premier social rank and Court influence when *Venus and Adonis* was published, is too inexplicable to warrant investigation. In the present instance, the total failure of all Elizabethan literary and biographical law-givers—with ample money and leisure at their command—to pursue the Edwards' lead, and give us some rational and convincing explanation of this contemporary description of the 1593 overlord of Shakespearean art, unquestionably convicts them of gross incompetence. Their complacent laxity is, moreover, particularly inexcusable when the fact is so patently susceptible of proof that Edwards' lines are all of a piece here, and that the *masking Adon* of *tropes rich conceited* can so logically be taken to be the most powerful example then typographically extant of the *golden art* of this Great Unnamed.

Observe, then, the telling cogency of these comments upon the foremost narrative and dramatic poet of that day, as they may now for the first time in modern English literary history be read with reasonable understanding.

Archaic spelling of several of Edwards' words should not confuse when "troupes" is translated as *tropes* or allegorical metaphors; and when "baies" is spelled *bays*, meaning laurel wreaths.

In the second stanza, "eke" is the early synonym for *likewise, moreover* or *also*. "Roabes" is, of course, *robes* and "destained" the ancient variant of *distained*, meaning *stained* or, as the author of *The Comedy of Errors* (11.2) uses it, *disgraced, sullied:* "I live *distain'd*, thou undishonored." Also, "saie" is pronounced *say* and "bene" *been*, the rhythm accenting *have been*. In the second line of the third stanza, a poetic ellipsis of *have* before *done* is apparent. The word "Frieries" in the fourth line is the Elizabethan plural of *Friary*, its capitalization by Edwards indicating a definite group of former religious buildings which had become the scene of noteworthy poetical tournaments.

The Edwards' orthography having been somewhat modernized and defined, this, then, is what our Shakespearean commentator tells us:

Shakespeare's *Adonis*, although deaf to the insistent advances of *Venus*, is so realistically portrayed in the poet's rich allegory of love scorned that *other nymphs* or feminine admirers of Adon's creator would have openly hailed the author for his artistry—but for one consideration. A real life Venus had intervened to prevent this.

Who was the living Queen of Love with authority so to ordain?

None other than Queen Elizabeth, her Court nickname being "Venus," as correspondence of the period assures us. But while it would be absurd to suggest that the Queen might descend to such interference in the professional doings or public adulation to which William Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon would thus be assumed to have been subjected by lovesick admirers in 1593, it is a matter of detailed history that Elizabeth selfishly circumscribed the poet Earl of Oxford's career as a man covetous of military or naval glory in order to enjoy his intimate company. Also, when this procedure failed, she intervened in his private relations with other women with all the jealous ruthlessness of a Venus scorned.

Eke or *like* the *Adonis* of his creation, who is transformed into a *purple* flower at the end of the poem, Shakespeare's own *robes* of aristocratic *purple* oblige him to remain *deaf* to expressions of love and esteem for his vulgarly popular creative achievements. This, Edwards broadly intimates, is to be regretted because the real-life Shakespeare is the *only* (meaning *one*) poet of

supreme *power* to whom Edwards should be dedicating his fullest meed of praise. But the governing Venus has ruled otherwise.

Moreover, though his place is at the sovereign's Court—*the Center of this clime*—the master's *purple robes* are already *distained* or *sullied* in the sense that Adriana uses the word in *The Comedy of Errors* to describe the "adulterate blot" with which she charges herself for failure fully to perform her duties as a wife. In other words, Shakespeare has been recreant to the expectations of aristocratic usage in devoting too much of his *power* to popular creative art—particularly the art of public entertainment. Lord Oxford's personal documentation proves that his standing had been compromised in the same way that Edwards suggests. In the light of the rigid etiquette of the period, the poet Earl's literary and dramatic preoccupations operated against his advancement in those aristocratic circles where Court politics, high-flown social activities, foreign diplomacy or military prowess were the approved roads to eminence. In those days a nobleman might dabble in light verse or take part in Court theatricals occasionally. But seriously to engage in literary and dramatic creation in competition and collaboration with professionals meant loss of "credit." That during the latter half of his life Oxford's personal fame as a courtier bore a mysterious blot admits of no doubt whatever. Glibly to attribute this beclouding impediment to the Earl's "light-headedness" or "quarrelsome disposition" or alleged inhuman treatment of his wife, or an insanely revengeful desire to "destroy his estates" to spite his father-in-law, the Lord Treasurer Burghley—as many ill-informed historians have done—will no longer serve.

The records proving otherwise are now ample and of unquestionable authenticity. The falsity of all such ill-founded gossip becomes doubly apparent when it is found to emanate in the main from proven traitors and unscrupulous Court rivals and their known agents. What the great scholars, such as Laurence Nowell, Sir Thomas Smith, Arthur Golding, Thomas Underdowne (translator of Heliodorus), Thomas Twyne (translator of the *Æneid*) as well as Gabriel Harvey and Edmund Spenser, have to say of Oxford's love of learning and marked liberality is in illuminating contrast.

Just why the tainted words of historic scoundrels such as Sir Charles Arundell and Lord Henry Howard should be deemed fair estimates of Oxford's character in preference to the commendations of the notables I have mentioned is, in fact, the real mystery.

But when we find this learned aristocrat in intimate personal contact with a whole group of popular poets, playwrights and novelists, such as Thomas Watson, Anthony Munday, John Lyly, Thomas Churchyard, Robert Greene and Thomas Nash—all of whom acknowledge him as their "Maecenas" and active supporter—Oxford's gradual loss of social prestige is accounted for.

Thus, during the 1580's and early 90's when most should be expected of him in the aristocratic pattern, he is otherwise engaged. It is also during the same period that explicit records are found of his leadership in stage affairs, and "in the rare devices of poetry."

Legal proof that Oxford's official title of Lord Great Chamberlain of England was commonly shortened to that of "Lord Chamberlain" further argues that he was the permanent supervising patron of "Shakespeare's company" of players. The fact that he is placed first in Meres' contemporary list of those professional playwrights considered *"the best for comedy among us,"* certainly indicates his artistic endowment for such a task. His possession of the literary nickname of *"Gentle Master William,"* by the same token, makes his identification as the one humanly accountable entity behind the long-suspected pen-name of "William Shakespeare" thoroughly logical. Every standardized "life" of the Bard dwells upon the fact that his plays were produced by the "Lord Chamberlain's men" — dogmatically assuming thereby that one of the numerous Lords Chamberlain of the Queen's Household is the patron indicated. With equally dogmatic finality we are told that there could not possibly be any other "William Shakespeare" connected with this company than one William Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon birth, notably illiterate family background and significantly *unrecorded* personal qualifications as to creative genius. The fact that William of Stratford never once wrote his name in the grand manner, and that his six signatures—representing his sole surviving manuscript output—bear every evidence of unfamiliarity with a pen, we are ordered to disregard.

Fortunately for the verification of biographical fact, however, it appears that there were no Stratfordian "authorities" issuing such ukases when

Thomas Edwards paid his respects to the author of *Venus and Adonis.*

The second stanza of this tribute to the *purple-robed* master *whose power floweth far,* ends with a punning personal metaphor of approved Elizabethan currency. For when Edwards laments that the courtier-poet *should have been*

The only object and the star

of his "Envoy," he points with graphic aptness—at Edward de Vere. This for the reason that the silver *star* in the Earl's ancient shield of arms was the most famous *star* device then displayed by any English family. In referring to an aristocrat, it was, moreover, common practice to personify him by his heraldic symbols. Thirty years after Edwards used this metaphorical pun, Ben Jonson, in accordance with his own penchant for the same type of word-play, applied the same heraldic-literary pun to "Shakespeare" in concluding the introductory verses to the First Folio Plays:

Shine forth, thou *Starre of Poets.*

In 1630 Milton also tells us in his sonnet "On Shakespeare" that we do not need *a star-ypointing pyramid* to recognize the master's intrinsic worth.

And for those who may question the personal application of these *star* metaphors in identifying Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, with his pseudonymously printed plays and poems, I would draw attention to Andrew Marvell's verses "On Appleton House," the Fairfax-Vere manor where he acted as tutor to the collateral descendants of Lord Oxford during the 1650's. Marvell extols the intellectual joys he experienced therein

Under the discipline severe
Of Fairfax and *the starry Vere.*

Edwards' final stanza in tribute to the Elizabethan *Star of Poets* contains perhaps the most revealing lines of all to alert students of the Oxford-Shakespeare records.

Well could his bewitching pen,
Done the Muses objects to us,

evidently means that Edwards considers his own poetry a task of supererogation in comparison. But the two lines which follow clinch the Oxford-Shakespeare identification beyond reasonable doubt. This for the fact that they corroborate established realities of the Earl's theatrical interests. At the same time they directly echo Edmund Spenser's vivid description of the playwright peer as "our pleasant Willy" in *The Tears of the Muses,* the aristocratic leader and master craftsman of the group of satirical comedy-writers who broke many quill-lances to the honor of Thalia, Muse of Comedy, at the little theatre in the Blackfriars Priory before the Puritan forces of London put a halt to their fun.

Athough he differs much from men
Tilting under Friaries

could hardly refer to any other creative personality allied with the Blackfriars Theatre than Lord Oxford for the reason that he was the only playwright in the group of high social degree. All the rest were commoners and lived largely upon the Earl's bounty. It is also plain that in using the term *tilting,* Edwards signifies literary activities or wit-combats. The Bard uses this *tilting* metaphor in exactly the same sense in the final scene of *Love's Labors Lost,* together with much tilt-yard word-play in *Much Ado* and other comedies. Pope in the 18th century echoes with this example:

Satire's my weapon, but I'm too discreet
To run a muck, and *tilt* at all I meet.

The only creative tournaments or notable wit-combats which could be said with any allusive import to have been carried on *under Friaries* in Edwards' day were those in the old Blackfriary, where the famous little "painted theatre" of Spenser's *Tears* had been established.

Moreover, Edwards' metaphor is an effectively witty *double-entendre* allusion to Lord Oxford's early reputation as a champion of the tilt-yard—a reputation which had been accorded revived publicity in an account of the Earl's 1581 tournament exploits as *The Knight of the Tree of the Sun,* printed in 1592, or the year before Edwards penned these lines.

Thy countenance shakes a spear declares Gabriel Harvey in 1578, in urging Oxford to *give up bloodless books and writings that serve no useful purpose,* while Edwards' words bear witness that this same tilt-yard champion who was mad about writing had finally developed into the most poetically *powerful* spear-shaker of his era by *tilting under* the roof of the Blackfriars Theatre.

This playhouse in the ancient Friary bounded by Fleet Street and the Strand, was the first of all enclosed theatre buildings in London. Its admission prices were higher than those demanded in the unroofed structures catering to "the groundlings," a circumstance which restricted its audiences to the wealthier and better educated classes. The Blackfriars company had been established in 1580 when two able stage directors—Richard Farrant, Master of the Children at Windsor, and

William Hunnis, Master of the Children of the Queen's Chapel, combined the best of their talent for the enterprise. Neither of these directors are known to have been capitalists, and Farrant died shortly after joining Hunnis. Yet the latter went on to notable success. It is apparent that Blackfriars Theatre had an influential and monied patron from its inception. In the opinion of Sir Edmund Chambers, foremost authority on the documentation of the Elizabethan stage, Lord Oxford was this patron. For after Hunnis passed his lease of the house to one Henry Evans, a Welsh singing master, and the latter became associated with John Lyly, Oxford's secretary, in the public presentation of Lyly's Court comedies, Chambers comments on these circumstances by saying:

" . . doubtless Hunnis, Lyly and Evans were all working together under the Earl's (Oxford's) patronage."

It is a certainty that Lyly became Oxford's secretary about 1578, that the Blackfriars boys enacted several of the Lyly comedies, that this company was also frequently recorded as "the children of the Earl of Oxford," or "the Oxford boys;" also that Henry Evans is specifically named as payee of "the children of the Earl of Oxford." By 1583 Oxford himself is designated as the holder of the Blackfriars lease, but hastens to transfer the property to his man Lyly.

In *Shakespeare's Theatre* (p. 263), in seeking to explain the smooth operations of patron and personnel apparent in the development of "Shakespeare's" own group, Thorndike cites Oxford's connection with Blackfriars as

"The most striking case of personal relations between a patron and his company."

The Earl can thus be personally associated with the fortunes of the Blackfriars acting and playwriting forces for a matter of four or five years, at least, from 1580 onward. Even after the original premises at Blackfriars had to be given up, "Oxford's children," also variously known as the "children of the hospital" and the "Paul's boys," continued to give public performances at some unidentified location contiguous to Blackfriars and St. Paul's Cathedral.

There can be little doubt in the mind of anyone thoroughly alive to the implications of Lord Oxford's creative and theatrical documentation that the Earl's "lost" comedies were produced by the Blackfriars boys for the edification of the Elizabethan smart set. It is equally apparent that these same comedies were finally published many years later under the "William Shakespeare" alias.

Other playwrights who *tilted* at the fads and foibles of the day, such as Lyly, Munday, Churchyard, Greene and Nash—all Oxford's protégés—may also be believed to have had their best works produced at the ancient Friary.

Evans, the Welsh singing-master and one of the managerial staff at Blackfriars, seems to be hilariously burlesqued in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* characterization of Evans, the Welsh parson who fulfills the office of satyr-director of the boys chorus of singing imps in the comedy's final scene. This ring of "Fairies," it will be recalled, sing and pinch the harried Falstaff into renunciation of his evil intentions toward the ladies of the cast. Their song is a very close paraphrase of the "Song of the Fairies" in Lyly's comedy of *Endymion*, as Looney has shown.

And while Oxford's personal association with the successful establishment and temporary dissolution (through Puritan political interdiction) of the first company of junior players to attain professional rating can be clearly traced in Elizabethan theatrical history, another fact is of illuminating interest:

A significant commentary on the Blackfriars or "Oxford boys" appears in Act II, Scene 2 of *Hamlet*, when Rosencrantz and the melancholy Prince discuss the reasons why *"the tragedians of the city"* have been obliged to travel abroad, to beg engagements at inns and castles.

Hamlet

What players are they?

Rosencrantz

Even those you were wont to take such delight in, the tragedians of the city.

Hamlet

How chances it they travel? their residence both in reputation and profit was better both ways.

Rosencrantz

I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.

Hamlet

Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city; are they so followed?

Rosencrantz

No, indeed, are they not.

Hamlet

How comes it? do they grow rusty?

Rosencrantz

Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace: but there is, sir, an aery of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for't: these are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages (so they call them) that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills, and dare scarce come thither.

Hamlet

What, are they children? who maintains 'em? how are they escoted? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? will they not say afterwards if they should grow themselves to common players (as it is like most will if their means are not better) their writers do them wrong, to make them exclaim against their own succession?

Rosencrantz

Faith, there has been much to-do on both sides: and the nation holds it no sin to tarre them to controversy. There was, for a while, no money bid for argument, unless the Poet and the Player went to cuffs in the question.

Hamlet's query, "*Will they pursue the quality* (i.e., the acting profession) *no longer than they can sing?*" refers to the same sort of choir boys, trained to act, that Oxford had maintained or "*escoted*" for long periods. Dr. Dover Wilson in his latest Cambridge edition of the play annotates this passage with the remark that

"The Children of the Chapel played at the Blackfriars, a 'private' playhouse."

Throughout *Hamlet* there are a great many such direct allusions to Elizabethan events and personalities. The playwright Earl can be directly associated with practically all of them, just as surely as Hamlet's interest in these young actors reflects Oxford's recorded patronage of his own "little eyases." So Thomas Edwards' use of the otherwise obscure metaphor *tilting under Friaries* can be seen to be a realistic reference to the same satirical wit-combats which the boy-actors described by Rosencrantz wage against the adult players of "*the common stages*" and many of the vulnerable gentry "*wearing rapiers*" who have ventured into the Blackfriars theatrical tilt-yard.

Returning to the concluding lines of Thomas Edwards' stanzas on the unnamed author of *Venus and Adonis,*

Yet his *golden art* might woo us
To have honored him with bays

brings to mind Sir William Herbert's 1594 reference to Shakespeare's *silver pen.* It is also reminiscent of Chettle's 1603 plea to the Bard as *the silver tongued Melicert;* and is especially remindful of Horatio's remark in *Hamlet* that "*all his golden words are spent.*"

Both the *Cephalus and Procris* and the *Narcissus* which Edwards versified are among the works of Ovid translated by Arthur Golding. The Golding translation is generally referred to as "one of Shakespeare's best-loved books in youth." There is no record of the Stratford native having either owned or read the volume. But Arthur Golding was Lord Oxford's uncle, and the young peer's personal adviser and household companion when the translation of Ovid was made about 1565.

The Oxford-Shakespeare references in the great plays and poems to the Narcissus fable need not detain us, but it is interesting to note that a reference to *Cephalus and Procris,* spelled in satirical phonetics, appears in the Pyramus and Thisbe interlude in *Midsummer Night's Dream:*

Pyramus

Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

Thisbe

As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

In the same play, the author refers to Spenser's *Tears of the Muses* (1591), wherein Lord Oxford, then practically bankrupt, is described as "our pleasant Willy," the learned aristocrat of the Blackfriars, whose theatrical career has been brought to a "dead" halt by the type of puritanical "innovation" mentioned in *Hamlet.*

Theseus, host to the wedding party which ends the *Dream,* describes one of the "devices" nominated by way of entertainment as

The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of Learning, late deceased in beggary.

He rejects it, with this comment:

That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

Incidentally, various commentators on the *Dream* opine that the comedy was first given during the 1594-5 Court celebration of the wed-

ding of William Stanley, Earl of Derby, to Lady Elizabeth Vere, daughter of the poet Earl of Oxford.

Perhaps it is well to emphasize the fact that in personalizing Oxford metaphorically and by *masking* him under the title of *Adonis*, one of his own literary creations, Edwards is following the approved method of Elizabethan commentary. Edmund Spenser is the most notable exponent of this art, paying tribute in like manner to practically all of his known patrons, friends and fellow-poets throughout the pages of *The Shepheard's Calendar, The Fairie Queene* and *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*. Unless full consideration is given to the validity of this style of personal address, a very large proportion of Elizabethan poetry loses its meaning. The same thing holds true in regard to considerable personal correspondence, not to mention sermons, legal addresses, and state papers. The alleged "cryptograms" and unworkable "cyphers" of the nineteenth century Baconians are something else again, and not to be confused with the genuine metaphorical and allegorical writings of Spenser and his contemporaries.

Every one of the 16th and earlier 17th century commentaries on Shakespeare are of this approved pattern. Where the poet's personality is described, the metaphors apply to a man of high social caste or one who is *condescending* from such a caste to write poetry and plays for the populace. But significantly enough, none of these commentaries printed during the lifetimes of either Lord Oxford or William of Stratford applies in any particular to the humble beginnings or well-recorded provincial background of Shakspere.

Regarding the present commentary, Edwards' pen-picture of the aristocratic Bard whose *purple robes* have been *distained* is actually too realistic. This circumstance undoubtedly explains the unique rarity of *Narcissus*. It is apparent that those interested in eliminating so keen a commentary upon the Lord Chamberlain of England's career as a popular poet and playwright may very well have bought up and destroyed all obtainable copies of the *Narcissus*.

This could have taken place when Oxford's son-in-law, the Earl of Montgomery, joined with other highly-placed members of the Vere family in hiring Ben Jonson to collect and "introduce" the First Folio collection of the plays in 1623.

The parallel (and mutually explainable) "loss" of Oxford's unnamed plays, together with the total disappearance of every last line of the hundreds of thousands of lines of "Shakespearean" manuscript that had once existed, evidently occurred about the same time.

A few years previous to 1623, the London-made monument to Oxford's pen-name, dated to make it appear a mural memorial to one of the Lord Chamberlain's theatrical handymen who had lived and died at Stratford-on-Avon, was hung (without record) in the local church. It was obviously meant to confuse any genealogist hardy enough to journey into the hinterlands. Moreover, such a *Comedy of Errors* subterfuge to protect the social prestige of the great Earldom of Oxford was again all of a piece with the Elizabethan Lord Chamberlain's reputation for comedy, i.e., *irony*.

For no scrap of credible evidence has ever been discovered to prove that the Lord Chamberlain's handyman (horse-groom or dummy director) was personally capable of writing anything more than his own name. Even that seems to have been composed with laborious difficulty and marked uncertainty as to its spelling.

Alias

One of the last letters received from the late Mrs. Eva Turner Clark, distinguished Oxford-Shakespeare scholar and founder of The Shakespeare Fellowship in this country, was accompanied by several short pieces of research. The following is the first of these stimulating items which we shall print in memory of our much lamented friend, counselor and indefatigable co-worker.

In a note in the late Professor Joseph Quincy Adams' *Shakespearean Playhouses* (p. 350), the author lists a number of actors of the Elizabethan era who employed *aliases*. Those men named by him are here given, each one's *alias* following after his correct name:

Christopher Beeston = Christopher Hutchinson.
Nicholas Wilkinson = Nick Tooley.
Theophilus Bourne = (William) Bird.
James Dunstan = James Tunstall.

Dr. Adams seems to have overlooked the fact that Thomas Dutton also appears in records of the period as Thomas Dounton or Downton.

It would not be extraordinary to find a man greater than any of these using an *alias:*

Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford = William Shakespeare.

Professor Feuillerat, in his *John Lyly* (p. 78), states that "the critics of the epoch saw in him [Lord Oxford] one of the best comic English actors; he was also well read in classic literature and spoke with ease both Italian and French; he surpassed, it is said, the best musicians." If the Lord Great Chamberlain of England ever appeared on the public stage, he would have been obliged to use an *alias*. That could have been "William Shakespeare" who, according to John Davies of Hereford, *plaid some Kingly parts in sport*. Professional actors take such parts in their stride, not "in sport."

Oxford and the Professors

From undergraduate and faculty personnel of a famous American seat of learning we have received news of actions and reactions of a well known professor from a larger university who was invited to conduct final examinations of the senior class in English.

During previous months, members of the class had—unknown to visiting Professor X—become exposed to the evidence for Oxford as "Shakespeare." In fact, a highly creditable paper on the matter had been submitted during the course by one of the students. This he had been requested to read aloud by the regular English instructor, who gave him an "A" on the performance, to the enthusiastic approval of his fellows.

So it came about that when Professor X announced his test theme to be "The Life of William Shakespeare," many in the class set about outlining the poet-playwright Earl's career instead of the one attributed to the shadowy William of Warwickshire.

Noting this, Professor X became very angry and threatened to withhold grading marks from all heretics in his class who wasted their time on the Oxfordian "nonsense." Yet, not so long after announcing this high-handed method of crushing non-conformity to his doctrinaire rule, Professor X admitted in private conversation that since looking more closely into the Oxford-Shakespeare case, he was "*becoming an Oxfordian in spite of himself.*" To this gentleman must be accorded the respect due an honest—though emotionally choleric—scholar who is willing to revise his opinion upon fuller consideration of the facts in dispute. We understand that mention of the literary Lord Chamberlain whose Elizabethan nickname was "Willy" and "William" is now tolerated in the presence of this guide and counselor of youth.

At another college, an English professor set out to write a brief which would bring his straying Oxfordian sheep back into the fold. But when he came to deliver his paper, he found his own arguments missing fire so consistently that he ruefully concluded that "something had gone wrong" with his ammunition. Others before him have learned that malt and corn will not explode heavy artillery although they do well enough for the pop-gun targets of Stratford-on-Avon.

Such incidents as these are to be expected wherever the new Shakespeare evidenee is brought into conflict with the vested interests that control the formalized teaching or publication of the accepted theories of Shakespearean biography. Too many salaries and copyrights are at stake for the teachers and exploiters of the academically approved fables to admit without considerable reluctance that they have misidentified the greatest creative personality in English history.

THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP
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—A Continuation of the NEWS-LETTER—

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Official organ of The Shakespeare Fellowship in the U.S.A., the QUARTERLY is the only publication now printed which is devoted chiefly to the perpetuation of documentary evidence that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604) was the real creative personality behind the plays and poems of "Mr. William Shakespeare."

Meetings of The Shakespeare Fellowship for educational and allied purposes will occasionally be held, in which members will be asked to cooperate. Membership dues are $2.50 per year—U.S.A. money—which sum includes one year's subscription to the QUARTERLY. Special rates of subscription to the publication which do not include membership in The Fellowship may be arranged for student groups and libraries.

The Shakespeare Fellowship executives will act as an editorial board for the publication of the QUARTERLY, which will appear four times a year, i.e., in January, April, July and October.

News items, comments by readers and articles of interest to all students of Shakespeare and of the acknowledged mystery that surrounds the authorship of his works, will be welcomed. 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 that of The Shakespeare Fellowship as a literary and educational corporation.

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