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Lord Oxford As Supervising Patron of Shakespeare's Theatrical Company

By CHARLES WISNER BARRELL

The arguments advanced in this article are largely based upon new and heretofore unutilized documentation of the Shakespearean Age. Their significance will be immediately grasped by everyone familiar with the main lines of testimony which identify Edward de Vere, the Poet-Playwright Earl of Oxford, as the long-sought creative personality behind the Shakespeare mystery. Mr. Barrell approaches his problem from the scientific angle. He emphasizes factual logic above standardized assumption. His documentation, showing Lord Oxford as the one permanent "Lord Chamberlain" of his era and familiarly referred to by his contemporaries under this provocative two-word designation, is authentic and undeniable. It will startle and perhaps chagrin many Stratfordian authorities who have previously either ignored or sought to misrepresent the great body of Oxford-Shakespeare evidence. Others will find it a fascinating example of careful research and realistic deduction.

The Editors.

All biographers of William Shakespeare agree that during the heyday of his career the Bard was the creative mainspring of the acting company known as the "Lord Chamberlain's Men." Most of the early quartos of the individual plays—although pirated versions, printed without the authority of an author's name—bear upon their title-pages a variation of this statement from the 1597 edition of *The Tragedie of King Richard the second*:

"As it hath bene publicly acted by the right Honourable the Lorde Chamberlaine his Seruants."

Sir Sidney Lee, Shakespeare's best known modern biographer, says:

"When in 1594 (Lord Strange's) company (then renamed the Earl of Derby's Men) was merged in the far-famed Lord Chamberlain's company, Shakespeare is proclaimed by contemporary official documents to have been one of its foremost members. In

December of that year he joined its two leaders, Richard Burbage the tragedian and William Kempe the comedian, in two performances at Court. He was prominent in the counsels of the Lord Chamberlain's servants through 1598 and was recognized as one of its chieftains in 1603. . . . Similarly, under this company's auspices, almost all of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays were presented to the public."

These statements, covering of course the presumed activities of the Stratford native, are nothing if not positive. And when we turn to the index of Lee's *Life of Shakespeare* (1917 edition) and find that the Lord Chamberlain's Company of the orthodox Shakespearean Age is listed under "Hunsdon, first and second Lords," everything seems simple and understandable.

We are to take it that the author of *Hamlet* and

the other masterpieces had at the most three theatrical patrons during the decade of his greatest stage production, 1593 to 1603, or up to the time that the Lord Chamberlain's Company passed under the personal patronage of King James I.

Lee and his followers tell us that Shakespeare's Elizabethan stage patrons were (1st) Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange and Fifth Earl of Derby, who died April 16, 1594; (2nd) Henry Carey, First Lord Hunsdon, who died July 23, 1596; and (3rd) George Carey, Second Lord Hunsdon, who died September 9, 1603. Ferdinando Stanley held no office of Chamberlain in the Tudor government. But Henry Carey was Lord Chamberlain of the Royal Household from June, 1583 until his death in the summer of 1596, while his eldest son George filled the same office from April, 1597 until December, 1602, when his duties were taken over by Lord Thomas Howard, later Earl of Suffolk.

In other words, as Sir Sidney Lee states it, the actors who presented Shakespeare's plays from 1594 to 1603, carried on their work under the protection and patronage of Henry and George Carey, Barons Hunsdon, who were Lords Chamberlain of the Royal Household. We are also assured by Stratfordian writers generally that members of "Shakespeare's Company" looked to these two patrons for considerable monetary support in working up their productions and bridging periods of enforced idleness, while also receiving their official backing in encounters with puritanical governmental authorities.

It all seems very simple, indeed. In fact, like most of the accepted Shakespearean assumptions, Lee's explanation of the Bard's association with the Lord Chamberlain's Company is weakened by oversimplification. Final conclusions have been drawn from evidence too conflicting to debar reasonable doubt. Moreover, a considerable body of negative evidence has been turned up in recent years which argues that this same group evidently owed less in the way of patronage and official backing to the two Lords Hunsdon than has been so generally assumed; while other documentation now comes to light which shows beyond all doubt that the abbreviated term of "Lord Chamberlain" was frequently applied during Elizabeth's reign to Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford and hereditary Lord Great Chamberlain of England, as well as to the various Lords Chamberlain of the Royal Household.

Such facts have not previously been taken into consideration, so far as I can find out by any writer on Shakespearean stage affairs. But they

seem to me of the utmost importance—something in the nature of a documentary bombshell which may blast apart the whole structure of assumptions regarding the real identity of the Lord Chamberlain of Shakespearean fame. It will at least be obvious in the sequel that he was not always one or the other of the Hunsdons, as Lee and his followers so confidently state.

For right at the beginning of this investigation it can be shown that the accepted commentators are misleading when they make it appear that Henry and George Carey monopolized the office and activities of Lords Chamberlain of the Household during the first (orthodox) decade of Shakespearean production. The fact is that the actual duties of that post were carried out by at least six different persons from 1593 until George Carey relinquished the office because of invalidism in the winter of 1602.

Let us see who these men were. First, we have Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, said to have been born in the year 1524, a natural son of Henry VIII by Mary, elder sister of Anne Boleyn. Certain references show that Hunsdon was made Lord Chamberlain of the Household in June, 1583, although Lord Charles Howard of Effingham, later Lord Admiral, actually administered the office during 1584 and 85. The author of the brief life of Henry Carey in the *Dictionary of National Biography* tells also of Hunsdon's appointment to the important military command of Warden of the East Marches Towards Scotland and Governor of Berwick in 1568, responsibilities which he shouldered until his death in 1596. The writer goes on to mention the fact that "Hunsdon's . . . office in the north did not allow him to reside regularly at Court." In fact, the Queen once threatened "to set him by his feet (in the stocks) if he appeared too frequently in her presence instead of concentrating on his military duties. This being the case, plus the fact that Hunsdon was a man well up in years in the 1590's, of uncertain health and temper, as contemporary references testify, it becomes plain why the Court duties of the Lord Chamberlain of the Household were so largely carried out by the Vice-Chamberlains, (first) Sir Christopher Hatton and (second) Sir Thomas Heneage, during Hunsdon's long absences in the north, and especially during the last years of the old soldier's life at the very time that *Hunsdon is so positively stated to have reorganized and revitalized a group of mummings who had lost their erstwhile patron.*

Thus, when the facts of Lord Hunsdon's life are set beside the Shakespearean assumptions, significant discrepancies become apparent.

Hunsdon had unquestionably lent his patronage to certain groups of players from the 1560's onward, but in the records where the activities of these players are to be traced, it can be shown that they are frequently referred to as "Lord Hunsdon's Servants." This being the case, it can be logically argued that accepted historians of the Shakespearean stage have gone too far in claiming that Hunsdon's Men were always the same groups that are coevally mentioned as "Lord Chamberlain's Players." The existence of more than one nationally known "Lord Chamberlain" throughout this era brings the whole matter into serious question. It may very be that Hunsdon, the veteran "sword and buckler" man had, indeed, nothing more than a nominal interest in the fortunes of the new "Lord Chamberlain's Servants" who suddenly preempted the place of royal entertainers in 1594 once filled by the "Queen's Men."

A personality of great artistic genius and unquestioned social and governmental authority was behind the organization of this acting group. But it does not smack of the rough and ready, gouty and bitter-tongued Hunsdon any more than it does of the former butcher's apprentice of Stratford-on-Avon.

Sir Thomas Heneage (c. 1532-1595) who was appointed Vice-Chamberlain of the Household in 1589 and fulfilled so many of Hunsdon's duties, also served as Treasurer of the Chamber and was authorized to pay the acting companies that appeared at Court. He was a man of cosmopolitan education and training and a great favorite of the Queen. On May 2, 1594, he took as his second wife Mary Browne Wriothlesley, the widowed Countess of Southampton and mother of the Third Earl of Southampton, "Shakespeare's patron." But upon his death in October, 1595, it was found that Heneage's accounts were over three years in arrears. This would indicate that Sir Thomas had been sadly overworked. In any event, many of the players who had appeared at Court, including the "far-famed" Lord Chamberlain's Servants, seem to have gone unpaid for many months, together with a number of the Royal Household attendants. When Elizabeth learned of this, she wrote a sharp letter to Heneage's widow and executrix, the Countess of Southampton. Mrs. C. C. Stopes, who discovered these facts, reproduces the Queen's letter in *Shakespeare's Industry* (p. 222) as follows:

"At the decease of your late husband. Sir Thomas Heneage, he had 1314 pounds, 15 shillings and 4 pence in hand as Treasurer of the Chamber . . . you, as Executrix have paid up 401 pounds, 6 shillings and 10 pence, and 394 pounds, 9 shillings and 11 pence to the guard and others. . . . We require immediate payment of the balance, 528 pounds, 18 shillings and 7 pence to the Treasury of the Chamber, on which you shall receive acquittance for the whole sum. . . ."

Thus it comes about that the Declared Accounts of the Treasury of the Chamber (Pipe Office Roll 542) from September 29, 1592 to December 16, 1595 are made up of bills rendered in the handwriting of Mary Countess of Southampton. And it is of especial interest to students of the Shakespeare problem to note that one of these vouchers, filled out by the Countess of Southampton in settling her husband's affairs (some time after October, 1595) contains the first (and *only*) reference to "Willm Shakespeare" as a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Company extant in Elizabethan Court records. This is the "contemporary official document" mentioned by Lee. In slightly modernized type it reads:

"1594, Dec. 26, 28. To Willm Kempe Willm Shakespeare & Richarde Burbage servants to the Lord Chambleyne upon the counceles (Privy Council's) warrant dated at Whitehall XV Martii (March) 1594 (really 1595 in modern reckoning) for two severall comedies or Enterludes shewed before her Matie in Xmas tyme last past viz upon St Stephens daye & Innocentes day Xiii l. vi s. viii d. and by waye of her ma'tes Rewarde vi l. xiii s. iiii d."

In view of the circumstances under which this voucher was written, its meticulous detail and the fact that three payees are specified as receivers of the overdue payment, it is reasonable to believe that the directing head of the Lord Chamberlain's Players had been one of those who had personally protested to the Queen over the delay his men had experienced in receiving their dues from the Treasurer of the Chamber. The Countess of Southampton would be one of the few persons in England most likely to know that the professional mask of the ranking Lord Chamberlain of the realm was "William Shakespeare." Hence her careful inclusion of this name in her ante-dated voucher to notify all interested parties that the account had been settled.

Following the death of Sir Thomas Heneage in the autumn of 1595, no Vice-Chamberlain was appointed, despite Hunsdon's advanced age and poor

physical condition, until 1601, when Sir John Stanhope took over the office.

Meanwhile, Henry Carey was buried in Westminster Abbey at the Queen's expense in the summer of 1596, having been incapacitated for many months prior to his death. Contrary to orthodox intimations, Hunsdon's son George did not immediately succeed him as Lord Chamberlain of the Household.

Instead, Elizabeth appointed an aged Court politician. This was William Brooke, Seventh Lord Cobham, who dated from the reign of Henry VIII and had for years filled the lucrative billet of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. The supposition is that the Queen selected Cobham as her Household Chamberlain to spite Essex, who was Cobham's bitter enemy, and incidentally to please Sir Robert Cecil, who had married the new Lord Chamberlain's daughter.

Cobham appears in the chronicles as a choleric and domineering baron of the old school—with Puritan political affiliations. He was a descendant through the female line of the First Lord Cobham, better known to history as Sir John Oldcastle, the companion of Prince Hal. Although early in the reign of Elizabeth, William Brooke had for a short period patronized certain unidentified players, there are many indications that he had no liking for the acting profession. It seems quite definite indeed that he had a particular bone to pick with the group known as the Lord Chamberlain's Servants because they had unmercifully lampooned his maternal ancestor in the Shakespearean creation of the super-rascally Sir John Oldcastle (Falstaff). And it was either William Brooke or his son Henry who about this time succeeded in having the name of this immortal exponent of sinful folly changed in the plays of *Henry IV*, *Henry V* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* from the original designation of Oldcastle to Falstaff. There is some amusing evidence in a letter written by the young Countess of Southampton to her husband while he was serving with Essex in Ireland in 1599, that the Oldcastle-Falstaff lampoon was still applied to Henry Brooke at that time. Be that as it may, a Lord Chamberlain less sympathetic to the growth of revolutionary theatrical genius than the Seventh Lord Cobham would have been hard to find.

Yet Cobham served as presumable director of Court entertainment from August, 1596, until the end of March, 1597, when he died. And during his tenure of office, "Shakespeare's Company" (specifically listed in the books of the Treasurer of the

Chamber as "servants to the Lord Chamberlyne") appeared at Court no less than six times between December 26, 1596 and February 8, 1597. Extant records do not give the titles of the plays shown by this group during Cobham's administration as Lord Chamberlain of the Household. But such widely accepted authorities as Malone and Chalmers between them date the first productions of all four of the comedies in which Oldcastle-Falstaff figures to the years 1596 and 97. Such guesses are, of course, wide of the mark when applied to the works of an alleged untrained young "natural genius" from the provinces, bent upon steering a successful career among the pitfalls of Tudor officialdom. All circumstances considered, it is quite impossible to assume—as the Court records indicate—that Cobham took over the former Derby-Hunsdon Men intact, including the irreverent "William Shakespeare" and his objectionable Oldcastle libel, giving them his blessing and a patent to conduct business as the "Lord Chamberlain's Servants." Such a supposition is denied by what we read of Cobham at this period of his career. Documents in the *State Papers Domestic* picture him as an arrogant and contentious curmudgeon, patently more interested in strengthening his own pretenses and prerogatives than in tenderly shepherding the fortunes of play actors and dramatists. Moreover, Cobham, like the elder Hunsdon, was a sick man for some time before his death in March, 1597.

All of these puzzling and conflicting facts point up a significant anomaly that no previous investigator appears to have noted; viz., that the Lord Chamberlain's Company was strongly organized, intelligently patronized and became firmly entrenched in public favor during the very period when the office of Lord Chamberlain of the Household was subject to many vicissitudes of decay, death, financial laxity and political maneuvering.

George Carey, Second Lord Hunsdon (1547-1603) who followed Cobham as Lord Chamberlain of the Household in April, 1597, was a man of considerably more culture and cut a more graceful figure as a professional courtier than his forthright, swashbuckling father. But that he took a personal hand in furthering the fortunes of any of the men whose names are so frequently mentioned as members of the Lord Chamberlain Players cannot be corroborated by his own documentation. Thomas Nash, the dramatist and comic commentator, lived for a time in George Carey's household between 1593 and 1595, but Nash is not generally considered an orthodox associate of the Lord

Chamberlain's Men. Neither has anyone so far been able to identify the "Richard Hoope," "Wm Blackwage" or "Rafe Ray," each of whom is described in Philip Henslowe's famous *Diary* as "my lorde chamberlennes man," as a retainer of George Carey, Baron Hunsdon, or as a known employee of the office of the Chamberlain of the Household. Any one or all of these persons could seemingly just as well have been servants of Edward de Vere, the playwright Lord Chamberlain of England.

In attributing the organization and highly successful direction of the affairs of the Lord Chamberlain's Players to the Careys, far too much has been taken for granted. Writers such as Sir Sidney Lee are able to have a whole series of important assumptions accepted primarily because so much of the basic contemporary documentation upon which an alternate opinion might be founded is either missing—or has been studiously ignored. All of the books and practically all of the incidental records relating to the offices of the Master of the Revels, the Lord Chamberlain of the Household and the Lord Great Chamberlain of England, covering the last decade of Elizabeth and the first years of James I—in other words, the Shakespearean Age—no longer exist. Incumbents of all three of these offices could have exercised authority over the selection, writing, stage presentation or publication of plays. They not only could—it is very apparent that at various times all three did. But just where the jurisdiction of any one of these three officials ended and another's began has not been positively established. Their records are gone. Whether they were deliberately or accidentally destroyed seems impossible to determine today. In any event, and without stressing the importance of the Master of the Revels here, for it appears certain that he reported to one of the Lords Chamberlain, we are on firmer ground when we attribute the marked success of "Shakespeare's Company" to the personal protection of a known poet and playwright of exceptional ability such as Edward de Vere, the Lord Chamberlain of England, than to the Careys, Heneage, Cobham or any of the other men who carried out the duties of Chamberlain of the Household during the final decade of Elizabeth.

The Second Lord Hunsdon had hardly succeeded to the title before an event occurred which bears out our argument that he was not the "all-powerful" patron of the theatre that has been assumed.

In 1596, when James Burbage purchased property in the Blackfriars district for the purpose of re-establishing the little theatre that had once

flourished there under the ownership or management of Henry Evans, John Lyly and the Earl of Oxford, determined though unsuccessful efforts were made to prevent Burbage from accomplishing his purpose. Some time in November, 1596, a formal petition was addressed to the Privy Council by residents of Blackfriars, protesting against Burbage's activities. The second name appearing among the signers of this document is that of "G. Hunsdon," i.e., George Carey, Lord Hunsdon.

Chambers in his *Elizabethan Stage* (Vol. IV, p. 319) says:

"... it is odd to find Lord Hunsdon a signatory, since one would have supposed that he could influence James Burbage through his son Richard, who was one of Hunsdon's players."

It is indeed odd. And odder still to find the Blackfriars Theatre—huilt despite the protests of Hunsdon—becoming the sole property of Richard Burbage in 1597. It would certainly seem that this star performer of the Lord Chamberlain's Servants stood in very little awe of the expressed wishes of his alleged "all-powerful" patron. Such negative evidence indicates that Burbage took orders from an entirely different Lord Chamberlain—perhaps the one who had some years previously backed the comedies written by John Lyly and himself in the original Blackfriars playhouse.

Like his father before him, the Second Lord Hunsdon was a victim of chronic ill health during his latter years. In the *MSS. of the Lord de L'Isle and Dudley*, under date of March 15, 1600, appears the transcription of a letter from Rowland Whyte to Sir Robert Sidney which states:

"My Lord Chamberlain (Hunsdon) is sick at Drayton. . . . If My Lord Chamberlain should die, it is like a Vice-Chamberlain will be made first. I will put your friends in mind of you."

This is one of the first of a whole series of contemporary references written by Whyte. Sir William Browne, Sir Robert Cecil and Hunsdon himself, all stressing the physical break-up and incapacity of George Carey to administer the office of Lord Chamberlain of the Household.

Whyte writes to Sidney on September 26, 1600: "The Lord Chamberlain is not able to take the pains which belong to his place, which surely will draw to making a Vice-Chamberlain."

It has always been confidently stated that the selection of theatrical entertainment for the drama-loving Elizabeth was one of the particular duties of the Lord Chamberlain of the Household. Yet here we find the Second Hunsdon a self-admitted invalid

during the years of 1600, 1601 and 1602 when stage entertainment is at peak production at Court to divert the Queen's mind from the Essex conspiracy and its tragic aftermath—while the Servants of the Lord Chamberlain play the most prominent part in these dramatic festivals. Surely, this particular company had a dynamic directive continuity that bears no apparent relationship to the personal interest or well being of its (assumed) official patron at any given period of its career. When the Earl of Pembroke goes into a decline, his players decline with him—into obscurity. When Essex is out of sorts or out of the country, his proteges suffer and sing small. But as soon as one of the Lords Chamberlain of the Household takes to his death-bed, the players who are supposed to look to his advice and bounty seem to take on a new lease of life. In this respect, the Lord Chamberlain's Servants differ from all other acting companies of the period.

Finally, in 1601, when Elizabeth becomes convinced that Lord Hunsdon is permanently incapacitated, she appoints Sir John Stanhope Vice-Chamberlain. Stanhope, incidentally, is related to Elizabeth Trentham, Lord Oxford's wife, by marriage. He fulfills Hunsdon's Court responsibilities until Lord Thomas Howard takes over the more important ones in December, 1602, a few months before the great Queen's death.

It should be abundantly apparent from the record here briefly given of the high mortality of Lords Chamberlain of the Household during the so-called heyday of Shakespearean stage enterprise, that the name under which the Bard's fellows carried on their operations is not subject to the narrow interpretation it has been accorded. Sometimes this historic galaxy may have—and evidently did—secure Court favor and take orders from the two Lords Hunsdon, from Sir Thomas Heneage, from Lord Cobham, from Sir John Stanhope and finally from Lord Thomas Howard. But such a multiplicity of masters is not conducive to harmony and progress in any line of creative endeavor. And the high artistic aims set and achieved by these men connotes a leader of vast experience, keen and constant sympathy, together with unquestionable authority to push their interests at all times—even to the extent of securing for them the personal patronage of the new monarch.

Logic and commonsense indicates, therefore, that behind all of these passing and acting Lords Chamberlain of the Household loomed the potent figure of Edward de Vere, the one permanent Lord Chamberlain of the realm. He, above all the personages

mentioned above, can be fully documented as best-fitted by temperament, experience and publicly noted dramatic ability and associations to initiate, nurture and coordinate stage entertainment on the grand scale.

From earliest manhood Oxford is referred to by Court correspondents and other contemporaries as Elizabeth's favorite wit and entertainer, as one capable of devising and enacting shows, interludes and spectacles in which the Queen "took great pleasure"—just as Ben Jonson tells us the plays of Shakespeare "did take Eliza and our James."

The records of performances given by Lord Oxford's various groups of players—both children and adults—fill many pages in the chronicles of Elizabethan stage affairs from the 1570's onward. The Earl's patronage of and personal interest in the doings of such well-known figures in dramatic history as Thomas Churchyard, John Lyly, Anthony Munday, Robert Greene and Thomas Nash has been mentioned again and again. Sometimes these associations are brought up to Oxford's discredit, as when Lord Burghley writes under date of May 13, 1587 to Sir Francis Walsingham that the Earl's "lewd friends . . . still rule him by flatteries."† Or when Sir Sidney Lee comes to the curiously unenlightened conclusion that Oxford is to be censured because he appears to have "squandered some part of his fortune upon men of letters whose bohemian mode of life attracted him." And finally we find Sir George Buc, poet, historian and the Deputy Master of the Revels who licensed several of the Shakespeare plays for stage production and publication, lamenting Lord Oxford's "waste" of his earldom, while paying high tribute to him as a "magnificent and a very learned and religious man," Buc himself "having had the honour of his familiar acquaintance."*

Comments of this kind—together with similar references too extensive to include here—show that Oxford had a lifelong preoccupation with literary and dramatic art and cultivated relationships with men of the pen and the stage. No other noblemen of the day displays the same all-out, extravagant generosity to creative workers that he does—even to the extent of helping them revise and improve their

†In the play of *2 Henry IV*, II, 2, 57, Pointz reminds Prince Hal that he has lost reputation "because you have been so lewd, and so much engrafted to Falstaff."

*See chapter on Sir George Buc by Mark Eccles in Sirson's *Thomas Lodge and Other Elizabethans*.

writings, as Thomas Watson and Anthony Munday both bear witness. So marked is Oxford's predilection for the creative arts that we may well agree with Lee's harsh comments insofar as to admit that this personal characteristic was one cause of Oxford's virtual bankruptcy in 1586, when he was obliged to accept a pension from the Crown. All of these circumstances will be seen to have direct Shakespearean connotations, as, for instance, when the Bard declares in Sonnet 64:

When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded to decay,
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminat . . .

But the most telling parallel between Oxford as a theatrical patron and the type of generously cooperative organization which made "Shakespeare's Company"—the Lord Chamberlain's Servants—the best-sustained and most prosperous association of its era is to be found in Prof. Ashley H. Thorndike's book, *Shakespeare's Theatre* (p. 260, *et seq.*) written some years before Lord Oxford's real personality was disclosed by Mr. Looney. Thorndike remarks:

"In the Shakespeare-Burbage organization, the leading actors were both 'housekeepers' or sharers in the playhouse, and 'shareholders' in the profits of the company. . . . A share in a good company represented a considerable investment in costumes and plays. Lean years put the company in debt, but the fat years brought large dividends, and the actor who stuck to one company prospered. Shakespeare's company, the most prosperous of all, kept its organization intact from 1594 to 1642. Some actors who had played with Shakespeare were still acting for the same company when the revolution stopped their profits and called them to the service of the King.

" . . . we have little information as to the conditions of patronage in Elizabeth's reign. The patrons of the companies occasionally appear as their protectors in disputes with the mayor or magistrate, or even in the discussions of the Privy Council. The protection and prestige afforded by a great nobleman like the Earl of Leicester or by such an official as the Lord Chamberlain, were of course of the greatest value to the fortunate companies. In other cases the use of the nobleman's license must have been about the beginning and end of his relations with the actor, although it would not be surprising in view of Elizabethan conditions if this use of his name brought to the nobleman an hon-

orarium from the company. *The most striking case of personal relations between a patron and his company is that of the Earl of Oxford, who leased the first Blackfriars theatre for his company of boys, and then turned the lease over to John Lyly the dramatist.*" (My italics.)

All of Prof. Thorndike's comments are worthy of careful consideration in solving the mystery of the permanent directive patron of "Shakespeare's Company."

Did this man himself own a share in his "cry of players," as Hamlet suggests to Horatio may be his own destiny? It does not appear at all likely that either of the Lords Hunsdon did. But knowing the precarious state of Oxford's finances during the seventeen years of his life between 1586 and 1603, the different "shifts" he employed from time to time to come by ready money, it is easy enough to see him in such a role. At the same time, he would naturally adopt a stage name and a living mask to cover such a socially dubious connection from public notice. Moreover, by securing for his group the official but purely nominal "patronage" of the current Lord Chamberlain of the Royal Household, while he himself remained the permanent Lord Chamberlain of England, any professional work in which he saw fit to engage, as dramatist, actor, production supervisor—and incidental sharer in the profits of the enterprise—would be quite as effectually screened from public identification as have been the similar doings of many present day "sleeping partners" who have operated behind ambiguously named holding companies and dummy boards of directors.

One of the significant examples of contemporary evidence that first encouraged me to look into this matter of a probable connection between the operations of "Shakespeare's Company" and the theatrical activities of the temperamentally Shakespearean Lord Great Chamberlain of England, appears on the title-page of an anonymous play, *The Weakest Goeth To the Wall*. This Elizabethan drama is doubtfully attributed to John Webster by William Hazlitt, editor of Webster's collected works, though it seems to me to be written more in the style of Lord Oxford's protege and stage-manager, Anthony Munday, especially by virtue of its well-constructed plot.*

*In listing Anthony Munday among the foremost dramatists of the Shakespearean Age, Francis Meres describes him as "our best plotter."

In the earliest extant edition (of 1618) the title is followed by these words:

"As it hath been sundry times plaid by the right-honourable Earle of *Oxenford*, Lord Great Chamberlaine of *England* his scruants."

Hazlitt is struck by the coincidental possibilities of this statement and quotes an earlier editor of Elizabethan literature in remarking:

"If for 'Lord Great Chamberlain of England' we could read 'Lord High Chamberlain of Her Majesty,' this being the company to which Shakespeare belonged, and which, subsequently to the accession of James I, changed its style, by patent, to that of the King's servants, or players, *The Weakest Goeth To the Wall* would then have had the advantage of being represented by the same actors as had been engaged in performing the works of our great dramatist."

If so keen and unfettered a critic as Hazlitt was willing to speculate thus far, nearly a hundred years ago, and long before the Oxford-Shakespeare documentation had been assembled, he would be even more intrigued today, could he read the transcripts now to be presented for the first time in this case, showing as they do, beyond any possibility of question that the playwriting and play-producing Lord Great Chamberlain of England was referred to by his contemporaries in exactly the same shortened phraseology that is applied to the (assumed) official patrons of "Shakespeare's Company."

One of these appears as follows in the *Calendar of Proceedings in Chancery in the Reign of Elizabeth* (Vol. 1, p. 185):

"Plaintiff Daniel Cage: defendant, Thomas Hamond. Object of suit, claim by lease, Manor of Much Hormeade, the inheritance of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxenford, lord chamberleyn."

I have also found that the correspondence of Lord Burghley and Sir Robert Cecil, calendared in the *MSS. of the Marquess of Salisbury* contain several references to the "Lord Chamberlain" which show by internal evidence, plus known situations in which Oxford figured, as well as provable affiliations of the writers, that the Poet Earl is meant, rather than one of the Hunsdons, Cobham or Lord Thomas Howard. All of these documents must some day be more carefully analyzed. For the present I will reproduce the most striking and conclusive of them, a letter which bears date of "1 July, 1603." It is unsigned, but is endorsed, "Mrs. Hicks to my lord." Mrs. Hicks appears to have been the wife of Michael Hicks who was private secre-

tary to Lord Burghley, later serving Burghley's son, Sir Robert Cecil, in the same capacity. Cecil had become "My Lord Cranborne" when this letter was written. Mrs. Hicks was then acting as a sort of governess to, and providing living quarters for, Lord Oxford's youngest daughter, the Lady Susan Vere. The "Mr. Haughton" and "Mr. Percival" mentioned in the letter were evidently two of Cecil's stewards, while "Mr. Billett" was Thomas Bellott, who had long been the late Lord Treasurer's confidential servant and had much to do with Oxford's tangled properties and family affairs during Lord Burghley's lifetime. This letter has such an important bearing upon the identification of the Earl of Oxford as the real Shakespearean "Lord Chamberlain" that it must be given in full, as it appears in the *Salisbury MSS.* (Vol. 15, p. 164):

I would have been glad to have heard from my Lord Chamberlain for the main sum, because I have occasion to use it for a payment shortly. You told me at my last being with you at the Court you would speak with him. In the meantime may it please you to give order to Mr. Haughton or Mr. Percival to discharge the consideration. Mr. Billett desired me to speak with my Lord Chamberlain touching the money due to my lady Susan, which is for half a year the second of last month. Having no other assurance for the main sum but an assignment from those in whose name the manor of Hadnam (Castle Hedingham, Oxford's birthplace in Essex) passed, he (Mr. Billett) saith that he ought to have the letters patents of the grant from the Queen made over to him; without the which the rest is no assurance. As I shall hear from you herein so I will return him answer. My apricots begin somewhat to draw to ripening colour. As soon as they be worth the sending they shall be sent you.—1 July, 1603.

Here at last in this letter and in the Court of Chancery reference we have two of the key exhibits that I think any fair-minded person will recognize as providing ample warrant for the claims that have been made regarding the Earl of Oxford's connection with "Shakespeare's Company" of players. Under the ambiguous title of "Lord Chamberlain" he can be discerned just as clearly as his features and insignia can now be detected beneath the over-painted surfaces of the ancient "portraits of Shakespeare."

Some Character Names In Shakespeare Plays

By EVA TURNER CLARK

We continue Mrs. Clark's stimulating discussion of the origins of many of the character names in the plays as identified from the Oxfordian point of view. The present installment carries on these identifications from the point where they were interrupted on page 32 of the April QUARTERLY by exigencies of space—during the analysis of the cast of Love's Labour's Lost. The conclusions reached by Mrs. Clark represent many years of research among the social and political archives of the Elizabethan period.

The Editors.

Part Two

In "*Don Adriano de Armado*, a fantastical Spaniard," is found a caricature of Don John of Austria who was, in the late 1570's, in command of Spanish forces in the Netherlands. He had planned a grandiose scheme to invade England, marry the Queen of Scots, and with her to occupy the throne of England. His plans had become known to English political leaders and his every move was watched with suspicion and anxiety. *Armado*, the name given in the comedy, is a reminder of Don John's leadership in 1571 of the armado (or armada)—the combined fleets of Venice, Spain, and Rome—which won a famous victory against the Turks in the decisive Battle of Lepanto. Selim, the Sultan, was at Adrianople when the armado entered the Straits of Lepanto, and the first part of this place-name gives the Christian cognomen of the character in the comedy, hence the full name, *Adriano de Armado*. Don John's part in this important victory made him the great hero of Western Europe and he became "fashion's own knight." Not only were courtiers everywhere "too happy to glass themselves in so brilliant a mirror," but they imitated his melancholy, a state in which he was frequently found due to the serious problems which confronted him after he went to the Netherlands.

"*Sir Nathaniel*, a curate," carries a Hebrew name meaning "the gift of God" and for that reason is applied to the part which depicts William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, leader in the Netherlands of the Protestant Reformation and foe of Spain. He fought Don John's schemes and kept Queen Elizabeth informed of them.

"*Holofernes*, a schoolmaster," is a name taken from Rabelais's "*Gargantua*," in which a pedant and sophist is called by it. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, it is used to bring into the picture of political events

of the moment a man who was much in the minds of Englishmen just then, the Duc d'Alençon, suitor for the hand of Queen Elizabeth. That the prototype of this character was a Frenchman is indicated by his frequent lapses into French. That this Frenchman was Alençon is indicated, among other things, by a brief dialogue between Armado and Holofernes which is clearly a reference to Alençon's capture of the citadel of Mons on July 7, 1578:

Arm. . . . Do you not educate youth at the charge-house on the top of the mountain?

Hol. Or mons, the hill.

Arm. At your sweet pleasure, for the mountain.

Hol. I do, sans question.

This can only be an allusion to Alençon's capture of Mons and the training of his troops there.

"*Dull*, a Constable," called Anthony Dull in the play, is chiefly concerned with carrying letters. The King of Spain had an agent in England at this time named Antonio de Guaras and it was through this Spanish agent that Don John communicated with Mary Queen of Scots. "Anthony" is simply the English form of the Spaniard's first name.

In "*Costard*, a Clown," the leading Catholic noble of the Netherlands, the Duc d'Arscot, is caricatured. This individual tried to keep in close touch with Don John, Orange, and later, with Alençon, but carried tales from one to the other—disloyal to all. *Costard* is an anagram of the Duc's name, pronounced *d'Arscot*.

"*Moth*, page to Armado," bears a name whose Dutch translation is "motte," and in the Seigneur de la Motte, Governor of Gravelines, who sold himself and his troops to the Spanish—a notorious treason—is found the prototype of Moth. To which, however, making the character a composite, must be added the activities of another traitor to the

Netherlands cause in the person of a little monk, John Sarasin, Prior of Saint Vaast. Around the character of Moth has also been intertwined references to Gabriel Harvey, the Cambridge pedant, who, in the year previous to the production of the play at Court, had made himself ridiculous by the eulogistic latin addresses he had presented before the Queen and her courtiers, then making a Progress through the eastern counties.

With the names of the comedy connected in one way or another with intrigues against the peace of England at a time when Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, was England's prisoner and the center of most of the intrigues, when Don John was scheming to marry her and ascend the English throne, there can be no other prototype for the part of "Jaquenetta, a country wench," than Mary Stuart who, as prisoner, was kept under guard at the country estate of the Earl of Shrewsbury. There is even a name hint in "Jaquenetta," a feminine form of Jacques, French word for James. Queen Mary came of a line of Scottish kings successively named James; she was the daughter of James V and the mother of James VI (James I of England); as heir to the throne of Scotland, she would assuredly have been named James had she been a son. She seemed more French than Scottish because she spent her youth in France and married there the French Dauphin, who for a brief period reigned as Francis II, returning to Scotland after her husband's death.

The whole story of this undramatic but intriguing comedy, filled with allusions to events of 1578, is told in my study of it in *The Satirical Comedy, Love's Labour's Lost*.

"A history of the Duke of Millayn and the Marques of Mantua," produced December 26, 1579, before the Court at Whitehall, carries a title which points directly to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in which are found numerous allusions to the period when Alençon was paying court to Queen Elizabeth.

In the name, "Valentine, a Gentleman of Verona, in love with Silvia," reference is noted to Saint Valentine's Day, February 14, 1578, on which date Alençon made his spectacular escape from a Louvre window by means of a rope ladder, fleeing from his semi-imprisonment to his province of Angers, there to assemble troops with which, July 7th, he captured the citadel of Mons. His escape was a sensation in France and his mother, Queen Catherine, besought him with tears to return, but to no avail.

Valentine's friend, "Proteus, a Gentleman of Verona," makes love to Silvia in the absence of Valentine. The prototype of this character was clearly the Comte de Simier, an envoy sent by Alençon to conduct marriage negotiations with Elizabeth, but in the absence of his master "made violent, vicarious love to the Queen." All England was scandalized by his actions, being led by the Court party of Leicester, Sidney, Hatton and their friends. Because of their position on the question of the French marriage and their dislike of Simier, these men were temporarily out of favor.

In a foolish dialogue about a sheep and a shepherd between Proteus and "Speed, a clownish Servant to Valentine," there is an obvious reference to Sir Christopher Hatton, who was called by Elizabeth her "sheep" or her "mutton." The name Speed for this character appears to have been taken from that of a certain Spede, who made supplication to the Queen, April 26, 1579, in connection with a matter between him and Dr. Dale, English Ambassador to the Court of France. (*Acts of the Privy Council*). This unusual patronymic, with its ordinary meaning, would have caught the fancy of the dramatist when he was looking about for a suitable name for this character.

Another foolish dialogue takes place between Speed and "Launce, Servant to Proteus," which again ridicules Sir Christopher Hatton. Launce observes, "Well; the best is, she hath no teeth to bite." This is a slight paraphrase of a statement Hatton once wrote to the Queen: "Reserve it to the Sheep [meaning himself], he hath no tooth to bite, where the Boar's [i.e., the Earl of Oxford, whose crest was a Boar] tusk may both raze and tear." Hatton was intensely jealous of Oxford for years, as much evidence indicates. The name Launce was that of one of the pirates mentioned in connection with the Frobisher voyage of 1578. (*Calendar of State Papers, Elizabeth, Domestic, 1566-79, p. 536.*)

When the comedy was produced in 1579, the names of these two servants would have given added amusement to their clownish actions and speech, for they were of topical interest.

"The history of Portio and demorantes," produced before the Court at Whitehall February 2, 1579-80, is a title suggestive of *The Merchant of Venice*, because of "Portio" (*Portia*) being included in the title. Records of the Court Revels were listed from day to day slips of paper, according to B. M. Ward, and were frequently so illegible that they were incorrectly transcribed, sometimes a blank left for an important word that could not be

made out. This fact accounts for the word "demorantes," which should read "the merchants," as suggested by Captain Ward. The identification of this play with *The Merchant of Venice* is supported by Stephen Gosson in his *School of Abuse*, published in 1579, who praises a play called "The Jew," which he has recently seen at the Bull, one of the inns where plays were given rehearsal before being produced at Court. He describes it as representing "the greediness of worldly chusers, and bloody minds of usurers." No better description of *The Merchant of Venice* could be given in so few words.

Using the classic story of the caskets, the author connected with it references to the suitors who had attempted to win Elizabeth's hand, the favored one at the moment being Alençon. Wound about the story are references to the Frobisher expedition of 1578, a voyage in which the Queen and most of her Court, members of the Cathay Company, were investors, the Earl of Oxford having the largest interest after the original promoter, Michael Lock, though it seems that the latter had disposed of most of his shares before the expedition returned, a failure.

For two Venetian names in the drama, "Antonio, the Merchant of Venice," and "Bassanio, his Friend," the author made double use of the name of a Venetian musician, Antony Bassano (anglicised form), then resident in London. "In 1579, Antony Bassano, a Venetian, obtained from Queen Elizabeth, in recognition of his good service in *scientia sive arte musica* a fee of 20d. a day, or £16. 2s. 6d. a year." (Middlesex County Records, I, 249, in *Survey of London*, VIII, "Shoreditch," p. 69.) As the Earl of Oxford was a remarkable amateur musician, it may be assumed that he was well acquainted with the Venetian, a professional in the art.

In the character of "*Shylock*, a Jew," the author took a subtle revenge upon a man who had cheated him. When Frobisher returned from his disappointing voyage, he charged Michael Lock with having known before the expedition started that the sample ore, on which the high hopes of the investors had been built, contained no gold, and especially declared him to be "a cozenor to my Lord of Oxford." The Court and City resounded with the scandal and Lock was sent to the Fleet. The Earl of Oxford had his own way of dealing with the knavish promoter and immortalized him as the merciless Jew. The word "shy" has a colloquial meaning, "of questionable character, disreputable, shady," and as a prefix to "Lock," makes that individual what

might today be called a "shyster" promoter. Obviously, the original of *Shylock* was tricky Michael Lock, "cozenor to my Lord of Oxford."

No title of a play suggestive of *Twelfth Night* appears in the records of the Court Revels for the reason that, about the time it was written or shortly after, the Earl of Oxford lost the Queen's favor. It can be placed in point of time through a statement made by Francis Peck in his "Desiderata Curiosa," to the effect that he proposes to publish (though he failed to do so) "a pleasant conceit of Vere, Earl of Oxford, discontented at the rising of a mean gentleman at the English Court, circa 1580." The one person at the English Court, whose great rise in fortune in 1580 would have discontented the Earl of Oxford, was Sir Christopher Hatton, Captain of the Queen's Bodyguard, a large investor in Drake's successful voyage which ended in 1580. Hatton had for years used every means in his power to supplant Oxford in the Queen's favor, but as Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* he is made such an object of mockery that one may well believe that the Earl felt he had evened scores with him.

The Queen was the original of "*Olivia*, a rich Countess," though this identification is not indicated by the name. Like Elizabeth, Olivia was a "Cataian," that is, a member of the Cathay Company, about which so much had recently been heard in connection with the disappointing Frobisher voyage of 1578. Olivia says, "There is no slander in an allowed fool," and it may be assumed that the Queen had been heard to make a similar remark, for she permitted Lord Oxford wide latitude in his mischievous ridicule of courtiers in plays presented at Court. Until the end of 1580, he was in highest favor with her, as told by Fulke Greville.

While the name "*Malvolio*, Steward to Olivia," does not identify Sir Christopher Hatton as the original of this character, the signature to the forged letter, "The Fortunate Unhappy," does, for it is the translation of his Latin "posy"—*Fortunatus Infelix*. Sir Toby's reference to Malvolio as a "sheep-biter" is another allusion to the letter Hatton had long ago written to the Queen, mentioned in the comments on *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Like the Steward's attitude towards Olivia, the Captain of the Queen's Bodyguard fancied himself as almost a suitor to Elizabeth, some of his extant letters being quite amazing in this respect. When *Twelfth Night* was written, Hatton was temporarily out of the Queen's favor on account of his position regarding the question of the French marriage.

(To be continued)

The Stratford Defendant Compromised By His Own Advocates

By LOUIS BÉNÉZET

Part One

The adherents of the Stratford story are like the devoted followers of a deep-seated religion. To doubt is to commit sacrilege. When one high priest of Stratford was shown the photographic plates which betrayed that the Ashbourne portrait had been tampered with, he walked away as though he were in a trance. Someone had slain his God.

It is strange to see the straws to which the Stratfordians cling, to keep their heads above the rising Oxford tide.

The writer once took part in a debate at an East-ern college, with the professor who teaches Shakespeare courses, before an audience composed largely of the latter's students.

My opponent, at one stage of the debate, cried out, "I don't know. I can't answer these questions. I'd like to hear George Lyman Kittredge answer them." But when he had recovered his poise, he came forth with his last trump card, his crushing counterattack. It was based on a drawing, the frontispiece of Miss Caroline Spurgeon's book, *Shakespeare's Imagery*.

As through an arch the violent roaring tide
Outruns the eye that doth behold his haste,
Yet in the eddy boundeth in his pride
Back to the strait that forced him on so fast,
In rage sent out, recalled in rage, being past.

This quotation from Lucrece is given by Miss Spurgeon, who tells how, from the eighteenth arch of Clopton's bridge over the Avon at Stratford, she had observed this same phenomenon, water flowing through the center of the arch, then eddying near the shore and gradually edging up stream again near the side of the arch, as proved by straws or small blades of grass afloat on the surface.

My opponent read the description of this eddy as given by Miss Spurgeon. There was triumph in his tone. He had demonstrated, beyond question, that *Lucrece*, at least, had been written by the Stratford man!

I asked whether there was anything peculiar in

the Stratford atmosphere that would cause water to run uphill. No, there was not. If there existed elsewhere an arch of the same shape and a stream of the same force, the same phenomenon would take place? Yes, presumably. And Shakespeare would never have used the simile unless he were sure that his readers had all witnessed this sight, of water flowing through an arch with such force that it piled up and had to retrace its direction alongside the main current? Well, possibly.

I turned to the audience and said: "Nothing, ladies and gentlemen, so illustrates the poverty of the Stratford case as the fact that it rests its proof on so flimsy an argument as this, catching at straws in the Avon to save itself from drowning."

And while we have Miss Spurgeon's book before us, let us examine it for evidence as to the identity of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare is full of allusions to sports and games. His first interest is falconry, and the games that he knows best are "bowls, football and tennis, but his images from bowls, which he clearly knew and liked best, are about three times as many as from any other game."

Miss Spurgeon may not realize it, but in effect she is telling us that Shakespeare was an aristocrat. Tennis was a game played only by the court and the nobility. And as for bowls, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* tells us how the common people were prohibited from indulging in this game by an act of Parliament, passed in 1541 and not repealed until 1845. Only a gentleman whose land brought in an income of £100 yearly might obtain a license to play on his own green. Drake and Hawkins might indulge in bowling, but not a "prompter's attendant" nor an actor.

In her next chapter Miss Spurgeon speaks of Shakespeare's many "images of riding and of bird-snaring and falconry," and she speaks of strong "evidence of personal experience." Here again emerges the picture of the aristocrat. Falconry was an expensive pastime. None but wealthy nobles could afford it. And as for horseback riding, which is so prominent in Shakespeare, and is mentioned in

every one of the plays of the First Folio except *The Tempest*, it was largely confined, in Elizabeth's time, to the aristocracy. The word "cavalier," meaning a rider, was synonymous with "aristocrat." Horses were the property chiefly of the gentry and nobility.

Again consulting the *Encyclopædia*, we read: "The use of horses for work-a-day purposes of transport and tillage is a modern development. In Britain oxen were the only plough animals until the end of the 18th century."

In comparing Shakespeare with Marlowe, Dekker, Jonson, Chapman and other writers of the time, Miss Spurgeon says: (p. 32) "There is, however, one point in these images in which Shakespeare practically stands alone, and that is in the evidence of sympathy with the animal hunted or snared, and in his understanding and feeling for the horse and his movements and response."

After commenting on Jonson's and Chapman's interest in the bourgeoisie ("fairly well-to-do town types"), "which interest Shakespeare comparatively little," and showing that the latter's characters are nobles or better classes, Miss Spurgeon comments on "Shakespeare's love of humanity" and his "sympathy" with "the poor and broken bankrupt" and the underdog in general. Again the lady does not realize that she is proving that the plays could never have been written by the man who sought to send the impoverished debtor to jail, knowing that the man's family were dependent on his labor. Far more probable, as their author, is the kind-hearted nobleman, who himself knew what it was to be "lame, poor . . . despised" (Sonnet XXXVII) after he had lost his fortune and his standing at Court.

Miss Spurgeon speaks of Shakespeare's wonderfully musical ear and "his real musical knowledge, both theoretical and technical." She proves that he must have been an expert performer. Again we see the picture of the Earl of Oxford, composer and musician, of whom John Farmer wrote that as an amateur he had "overgone" most of the professionals.

She speaks of Shakespeare's "horror of bad smells." Again she has nominated the delicate aristocrat and barred the boy who killed calves for his patron, and was brought up in "the dirtiest village in England" by a father whose offal pile was of too rank a stench for even his hardened neighbors.

Next the lady speaks of Shakespeare's fastidiousness in eating, of his "sensitive digestion," again painting the dainty aristocrat.

Miss Spurgeon goes on to say that he was a "competent rider and loved horses, as indeed he did most animals," except that his fastidious senses revolted from the dirty way in which house dogs were fed at table.

He had, in short, an excellent eye for a shot, with bowl or with arrow, and loved exercising it. He was good at all kinds of athletic sports and exercise, running, dancing, jumping and swimming. He had an extraordinarily sensitive ear for time. . . .

Here again is a perfect description of the young Earl, capped by Miss Spurgeon's wonder how, with his sensitiveness to odors and foul things, "he managed to survive the dirt and smells of Elizabethan England." In contrast we remember the unclean surroundings of the Stratford man's youth and recall that he deliberately chose to go back to them in middle life.

Miss Spurgeon names, as "the five outstanding qualities of Shakespeare's nature—sensitiveness, poise, courage, humour and wholesomeness. . . . If he is abnormally sensitive, he is also unusually courageous, mentally and spiritually."

He is "gentle, kindly, honest, brave and true, with deep understanding and quick sympathy for all living things." Here again she is describing the refined and sensitive nobleman, who wrote such a bitter lament over "the loss of his good name," who was so loyal to his friends and so just and kindly in his dealing with many servants and retainers, rather than the usurer who refused to repay his wife's loan to the poor shepherd and worked against his fellow townsmen in the matter of enclosing the village green.

Miss Spurgeon devotes many pages to her description of Shakespeare's interest in well-kept gardens, with pruning and grafting, transplanting and manuring, indicating that he was familiar with and took great delight in the kind of horticulture that a nobleman might watch, with trained and experienced gardeners attending his grounds.

Some Stratfordians, among them J. Q. Adams, Frank Harris and J. Dover Wilson, have drawn a picture of Shakspeare as something of a parasite, fastening upon the wealthy and improvident young Earl of Southampton, adopting him as a patron, tapping him for a thousand pounds (as per legend), accompanying him on a trip to Italy under the ciceronage of John Florio, and so forth.

But Miss Spurgeon paints for us the portrait of a man like Oxford, who was contemptuous of all sycophants, refusing to kow-tow even to the Queen, sick at heart over the faithfulness of his friends,

among them his own half-sister who tried to have him declared a bastard. I quote:

It is quite certain that one of the things which rouses Shakespeare's bitterest and deepest indignation is feigned love and affection assumed for a selfish end. He who values so intensely devoted and disinterested love, turns almost sick when he watches flatterers and sycophants bowing and cringing to the rich and powerful, purely to get something out of them for themselves. It is as cer-

tain as anything can be, short of direct proof, that he had been hurt, directly or indirectly, in this particular way. No one who reads his words carefully can doubt that he had either watched someone, whose friendship he prized, being deceived by fawning flatterers, or that he himself had suffered from a false friend or friends, who, for their own ends, had drawn out his love while remaining "themselves as stone."

(To be continued)

The Authorship of Othello

Margaret Webster's production of *Othello* with the distinguished American Negro actor, Paul Robeson in the title-role recently completed the most successful run of any Shakespearean play ever staged in the history of the American theatre.

Othello was first presented by the present group at the Shubert Theatre, New York, on October 30, 1943, and the last performance took place on the evening of July 1, 1944. In compiling this brilliant, not to say astounding record, Mr. Robeson's remarkable characterization of the tragic Moor was supplemented by two really great impersonations of the parts of Iago by Mr. Jose Ferrer and of Desdemona by Miss Uta Hagen. Miss Webster's direction of the masterpiece must also (again) be accorded high honors.

As *Othello* drew capacity audiences during its continuous run of 286 performances, even the most casual admirer of the works of the Bard must give some thought to the overwhelming power of creative genius which has made this play a smash hit on sophisticated Broadway nearly four hundred years after it was conceived.

The chief secret of *Othello's* vitality is that the very stuff of life is represented in its composition. This would argue strongly that the author had himself experienced and observed at first hand the emotional reactions that his leading characters project with such breath-taking realism.

Claims that the public was primarily interested in seeing a Negro in the character lead of *Othello* are not the real answer—arresting as Mr. Robeson's delineation may have been. For it must be remembered that this same artist has appeared in many other good plays that have not enjoyed anything like the run of Shakespeare's work. No: here again "the play's the thing." And whoever was responsible for so great an achievement must be

searched out and given full credit in the general distribution of kudos.

Who actually did write *Othello*? Bearing in mind that it combines within the judicious bounds of disciplined art the courtly charm, high poetic fire and subtly brewed villainy of the Renaissance, are we to accept without question the approved assumption that it is nothing more than the journeyman's stint of a naive young man from a provincial town—a fellow without even a grammar school certificate, the son of illiterate parents and himself the father of a fully grown daughter who could not write her own name—in short, one Willm Shakespeare of Stratford? Or are we to give open-minded hearing to the more rational claims of a trained and experienced creative writer of the same day who is known to have been interested in the development of Elizabethan dramatic art for a long period of time, who spent a fortune on intellectual pursuits, who was rated by his contemporaries as a poet and dramatist of outstanding genius—though no plays bearing his name or title have ever been found—a "wayward" and "eccentric" nobleman who was the boon companion of "lewd" players and writers, and whose nickname among this set was "gentle master William" or "Willy," while his countenance was publicly described as of the type that "shakes a spear"—in other words, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford?

In considering the problem of the authorship of *Othello*, no set of circumstances speaks with such authority as the following:

The Elizabethan Earl of Oxford is the only recorded playwright of the period who can be definitely shown by contemporary documentation to have himself experienced the same general series of tragic events, growing out of a deliberately "planted" conspiracy to wreck his domestic happi-

ness which provide the basic dramatic action of *Othello*. When it is further shown that poisonous conceits reflecting on his young wife's chastity were set afloat by the Earl's own receiver-steward and fanned into destructive malice by Oxford's alleged friend, Lord Henry Howard—the arch-Iago of his age—it should be apparent that much of *Othello's* deathless vitality may be due to the real author's personal interest in his subject matter. It can also be taken as significant that this conspiracy was hatched while the literary Earl was visiting Venice and other old Italian cities—and *planning to visit Cyprus and "the Turk's Court."* The verisimilitude of the Venetian color in the play has frequently been remarked upon; also the fact that the key Italian folktale, *Il Moro di Venezia*, existed only in Italian and French versions during the Bard's lifetime, and while there is no evidence at all that the Stratford citizen could read a word of either language, the Poet Earl of Oxford purchased works in both Italian and French and had an excellent command of Latin. Moreover, Oxford had practical experience as a military man, commanded his own ship at the time of the Armada, had viewed the "multitudinous seas incarnardine" with his own two eyes, and knew exactly what it meant to be frustrated in the fulfillment of military ambitions through the intrigues of private enemies. No known Elizabethan playwright could have written Othello's cry of agony in his farewell to the military life with more feeling than Lord Oxford, remembering his own abrupt dismissal as General of the Horse for the Aburts in 1586, through the wire-pulling of Leicester:

Farewell the plumed troop and the big wars
That make ambition virtue! O, farewell,
Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner and all quality,
Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war!

* * * * *

Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone!

Yes, if the unmistakable thumb-prints of a creative artist's own hand mean anything—as Dickens left them in *David Copperfield*, as Mary Ann Evans can be traced in *The Mill On the Floss* and as Count Tolstoy, the humanitarian aristocrat, can be found in *War and Peace*, the frustrated and victimized Earl of Oxford appears in *Othello*. We have only skimmed the surface here. The play can be shown to be throughout a most revealing human document. The evil conspiracy of the under-officer

against his commander's peace of mind, the sufferings of the innocent wife, the pangs of artificially inspired jealousy, the blind injustice of the hood-winked soldier-husband, followed by remorseful acts of revenge—each and every one of these main threads of dramatic action can be documented in the life-records of Edward de Vere. To deny the creative validity of such evidence in the career of a known playwright—none of whose plays were ever publicly acknowledged—and especially when this type of testimony is backed by a hundred other "coincidences" of equal or greater weight, is to reject out of hand the whole theory and practice of modern biographical research.

The Shakespeare authorship problem originally arose because no biographer of Willm Shakspeare, former butcher's apprentice of Stratford-on-Avon, has ever been able to document the man's own life either in contemporary literary circles or in the creative fabric of the immortal masterpieces attributed to him. It is preposterous to argue that the person who sued small town traders for trifling sums, who hoarded malt to cash in on famine prices, who never wrote a known letter or owned a known book, who lodged with wig-makers in London while his alleged plays were being revived for the personal delectation of a drama-loving King—it is preposterous, on the face of the records, to believe that any such will o' the wisp personality could have given the world such works of cosmopolitan genius and experience as *Hamlet* and *Othello*. To fit such a candidate into the heroic mould of the author of the First Folio we need a great deal more than a puzzling memorial in an out-of-the-way church and a few cryptic and posthumous remarks which lack all contemporary corroboration. Nor will it suffice, merely to turn to the plays and say: "Despite all negative evidence, these show that the poor boy who worked as a butcher's apprentice and a holder of horses was really a cosmopolitan creative artist, a statesman among dramatists and poets, in fact, the greatest writer that has ever used the English language." Yet the time-honored custom has been blandly to assume conjectural miracles from beginning to end. In consequence, scholars have recklessly stultified their own calling by claiming that the Bard had little if any intellectual training, no cosmopolitan experience as a traveler—despite his frequent references to continental travel and his liberal and accurate use of foreign color and topography—and the shadowiest kind of contact with the great minds of his age. Under such circumstances, how the dramatist ever became the

living voice of the Renaissance, the spokesman of the aristocracy, is indeed the greatest mystery of all.

The 3rd Earl of Southampton is assumed to have been a close personal friend of the Stratford man. Volumes are written on the subject. But every one is a synthetic, fictional creation. Not a single line or word of contemporary record, dated during the lifetime of either Southampton or Shakspeare can be produced to prove that Southampton ever knew any such person as William of Stratford. Of course he knew the author of *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece* and the *Sonnets* and the creator of *Othello* and Sir John Falstaff. Persistent efforts were made during a period of two years or so to have Southampton affianced himself to the eldest daughter of the Poet Earl of Oxford. The first seventeen of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are believed by most authorities to have been written to promote this particular marriage. But the reasons why the most versatile and gifted of the Court poets—as Oxford is several times described—should call upon an unknown young provincial from Stratford-on-Avon to handle so delicate a problem in poetic diplomacy as the forwarding of his eldest child's matrimonial fortunes, involving the ultimate disposition of vast estates, are never made plain. It would surely seem that in such a relationship as this, the father would write all such poetic appeals to the young and temperamental nobleman himself—especially in view of the fact that Lord Oxford had all of the experience, technical skill and motivation requisite to the task. As a matter of fact, it has been amply proven that this gifted veteran actually did write the *Sonnets*. His intimate life-story is made plain for all the world to read therein. He told too much—very much too much for the peace of mind of his survivors. And that is why all of his works, except a few fugitive poems and his personal letters, were published under his carefully selected pen-name of "William Shakespeare"—while the deception was posthumously cloaked under the colorless personality of William of Stratford, a close-mouthed, penny-pinching fellow, (and a distant, poor relation of the Earl) who fulfilled some business function, such as receiver of Oxford's share in the profits of the Lord Chamberlain's Company, Oxford himself being the *real* Lord Chamberlain of England, just as he was the authentic Bard.

It seems highly appropriate thus briefly to restate some of the Poet Earl's claims to the authorship of *Othello*, in particular, at this time when so many reasons are being discussed for the drama's phenomenal popularity.

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Official organ of The Shakespeare Fellowship—American Branch—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."

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The Editors

The Shakespeare Fellowship

Quarterly

Telephone
Wickersham 2-1127

17 East 48th Street,
New York 17, N. Y.

Progress and a Handicap

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