CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

The Winter's Tale, which covers significant events dating from 1584 through 1586, contains an "abstract" of one incident "of the time" which seems profoundly to have affected the premier Earl of England, not only exciting his compassion but also tormenting his conscience. In the performance of his duty—his prime duty to his sovereign, to which honor and the oath of allegiance compelled him —he had been obliged to violate the dictates of his heart, as well as a still deeper code of humanity and of manhood. Whereupon he turned upon himself in a savage mood and created the preposterous Leontes in what he conceived to be his own image. For Leontes, while also a symbol of entrenched if not tyrannical power, is of course largely Oxford again, but Oxford in a moment of revulsion, scorning himself for his own iniquities, sparing himself no less than he has hitherto spared Burghley, Leicester, and the Queen for theirs: in fact, as he says in the Sonnets, though in a different connection,

Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss. (35.)

This was characteristic of him, who, temperamental idealist that he was, responded to injustice, to dishonored *noblesse,* with emotional violence.

The play is replete with casual allusions to public persons and events—notably to Ralegh and his affairs, including the colonizing of Virginia. But the central core is the terrible ordeal of Hermione, and her integrity and nobility of spirit in the face of inimical authority. Foredoomed, she stands before Leontes and his court and defends herself with a poise and dignity truly regal.

As we see it, Lord Oxford, in order to disguise and thus play down the situation, which it was reckless even for Elizabeth's Turk to

dramatize in such crucial times, was willing to pillory himself, willing to have it seem simply his own former jealousy and *personal tyranny* that he was portraying. But admirably disguised though it is, Hermione's trial is that of Mary Stuart, which had just taken place, in October 1586, while Leontes represents English authority (Leo) in the person of the English peers and lawyers who participated in the legalistic formality, their unanimous verdict a foregone conclusion.

Whether the Earl of Oxford, who sat at the head of the row of peers when Mary faced them alone in her defense—whether the Earl believed in the Scottish Queen's innocence we cannot say. When Hamlet had accused Queen Gertrude of complicity in his father's murder, she had exclaimed, as if deeply shocked, "As kill a king!" So he had seemed to exonerate her there: that is Mary—of Darnley's murder. But he would have understood her point of view; and nothing could be clearer than that he honored Mary Stuart for her pride and personal integrity, while loathing himself that he was forced to be a party to her doom.

As far back as 1572, Elizabeth had remarked to Fénelon, "There seems to be something sublime in the words and bearing of the Queen of Scots that constrains even her enemies to speak well of her." [1] The Earl of Oxford would have been sensitive to this quality, as other poets had been—for Mary had been eulogized by Ronsard, du Bellay, and Brantôme—and he appears to have been moved to pay her what honor he could.

Someone has said that it is a great pity any correspondence Oxford may have had with Burghley on the subject of the Queen of Scots has not survived. A pity, yes, but once more, highly significant. He had fought for the Duke of Norfolk when he had been convicted of a conspiracy with Mary in 1571. We make no doubt that he fought again now. For Oxford would have understood and condoned the fact, as Burghley, Walsingham, Leicester, and other militant Protestants could—or would—not, that Mary Stuart had from the beginning acted according to the religious dictates of her conscience. She devoutly believed in her own divine right to the sovereignty of England. The Catholic Church did not recognize Henry VIII's divorce from his first wife, therefore Elizabeth was a bastard: this was to Mary the only acceptable truth, any other view sheer sophistry. Blind to purely secular authority, a zealous adherent of the Church and its ordained spokesman, she felt herself inspired by a righteous cause. With such powerful supporters as the Guises in France and King Philip of Spain and Portugal, to say nothing of many great

[1] E. Chamberlin: *The Sayings of Q. Eliz.;* p. 235.

English and Scottish nobles, she was certainly justified in her belief that her position was unimpugnable.

Yet she had done her best to be friends with Elizabeth, she had yielded much and might have yielded more, had affairs been ordered differently. But Burghley had been her enemy from the first, and Leicester became in time a potent one. As long before as 1562, when a plan was being considered for a meeting between Elizabeth and Mary, for which Mary was especially eager and Elizabeth amenable, "Cecil looked coldly upon it, although, as usual, his opposition was indirect and covert" [2]—and, one may add, as usual, successful. Elizabeth had often felt warm impulses toward Mary, but the remorseless Burghley maintained control, while for once Leicester saw eye to eye with him. Elizabeth and Oxford shared a feudal attitude toward anointed kings; but Burghley was a practical politician, and not without cause had England been called *regnum Cecilianum*.

In *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes is king of Sicily, or of *regnum Sicilianum;* the pronunciation is almost the same. He speaks directly for Elizabeth when he says (II.1.46-7):

> There is a plot against my life, my crown;
> All's true that is mistrusted.

Bohemia may be taken to be the new colony of Virginia: this in the first part; later it seems to mean the theatrical quarter of London. For we think there is a strong likelihood that the first version of the play ended at the close of Act III, *scene* 2, with only parts of Acts IV and V included. The remainder, with its fulsome reference to John and William Shaksper, with Florizel now become the Fair Youth and Perdita the plays, is obviously a much later addition and will be discussed in its proper context.

We shall deal as briefly as possible with the analogy of Hermione and Mary Stuart. There is a close resemblance between the account of Mary's trial and that of her dramatic counterpart—or rather, of her partial counterpart, for Hermione is, ostensibly, the wronged wife again, the victim of calumny or of her husband's jealousy.

The Babington plot took its name from a wealthy young Catholic, who had adopted the cause of the tragic Scots Queen with an idealistic fervor, attracting other hot-headed youths to join him. "A strange circle was formed, including a fanatical priest named Ballard, a desperado aptly called 'Savage,' and various young gentlemen with more money than brains, who had read *Plutarch's Lives* and entertained cloudy dreams of heroism." [3] Although the thought of murder

[2] Hume: *The Gr. Ld. B.;* p. 132.
[3] Stefan Zweig: *Mary Q. of Scotland and the Isles;* pp. 307, 310-27.

was foreign to Babington's nature, he soon became so deeply involved —pricked on, as he was, by *agents provocateurs* engaged by Walsingham, who was thoroughly informed of the activities of the conspirators and only needed an assassination-plot to clinch the case—that he and three of his associates finally swore to make an end of Elizabeth with poison or dagger. Whereupon Walsingham sprang the trap which he had so dexterously prepared. Mary disclaimed acquaintance with Babington, but correspondence between them was found.

An interesting point is Ralegh's implication in the plot through "some curious unexplained circumstances. . . . The wretched Babington founded all his hope of pardon on Ralegh." But Babington was tortured and executed, and Ralegh not only went free but was granted "nearly every acre of the broad lands in five English counties once possessed by Babington . . . together with all his goods and property . . . with the sole exception of *a curious clock* which Her Majesty kept for herself." [4]

There are two references in the text to clocks which, taken together with other matters peculiar to Ralegh, indicate the dramatist's intention. Hermione assures Leontes (I.2.43-4):

> I love thee not a jar o' *the clock* behind
> What lady she her lord.

And Leontes, working himself up to a passion of jealousy, asks himself apropos of Hermione and Polixines,

> Skulking in corners? wishing *clocks* more swift? (I.2.289.)

These are merely contributory touches.

Polixines seems to be a lightly sketched, not at all realistic, portrait of Ralegh, whose colony, Roanoke Island in Virginia, is the rough kingdom Archidamus speaks of deprecatingly to Camillo in the opening scene of the play:

> . . . you shall see, as I have said, great difference betwixt our Bohemia and your Sicilia.

It is a wild country, where Antigonus was subsequently to be pursued by a bear. (III.3.) Life is so stringent that flowers are not grown in the gardens, only herbs for utilitarian purposes.

> *Perdita.* For you there's rosemary and rue; these keep
> Seeming and savour all the winter long.
> . . . . . .
> . . . the fairest flowers o' the season
> Are our carnations, and streak'd gillyvors,
> Which some call nature's bastards: of that kind

[4] Hume: *Sir Walter Ralegh;* p. 31.

Our rustic garden's barren, and *I care not*
To get slips of them. . . .
. . . . . .
. . . Here's flowers for you:
Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram;
The marigold that goes to bed wi' the sun,
And with him rises weeping. (IV.3.74-106.)

Hume says, "Most of the misfortunes which befell Ralegh's attempt to settle his new dominion [Virginia] arose from the fact that his duties near the Queen prevented him from giving it his personal supervision." [5] The truth was that Elizabeth scarcely ever permitted the handsome captain to leave her side. (Naturally, Oxford did not relish this state of things, which of course complicates Leontes-Oxford's jealousy.)

Here we have the foundation for Leontes's insistence that Polixines remain longer in Sicilia, in spite of his own kingdom's claims upon him. Many of the courtiers were jealous of this new and powerful favorite. Naunton recorded that "Ralegh had gotten the Queen's ear in a trice, and she began to be taken with his elocution, and loved to hear his reasons to her demands; and the truth is, she took him for a kind of *oracle,* which nettled them all." It is highly significant therefore that Leontes, who, as English authority, is partly Elizabeth the monarch, sent for the "oracle's" verdict upon the conduct of Hermione: to hear his "reasons" to *his* "demands." The word "oracle" is used in this play a dozen times.

One must assume that Ralegh was not actually guilty of participation in the Babington plot, the innocence of Polixines in his relations with Hermione being self-evident. In making this clear, the Earl was repaying in full measure the kindness Ralegh had done him several years before through getting him restored to the Queen's favor.

Whether we are justified in going further and inferring a similar exoneration of Mary Stuart is a question. We can at least, however, be sure that Lord Oxford admired and sympathized with her. And he did her what permanent honor he could in the trial scene of *The Winter's Tale.*

Hume writes that, after the Babington plot was revealed,

> the question was submitted to the Privy Council. The Catholic members advocated only a further stringency in Mary's imprisonment. Leicester was for solving the difficulty by the aid of poison, while Burghley, followed by Walsingham and others, proposed *a regular judicial inquiry, which was now legally possible* by virtue of the Act of Association passed by Parliament the previous year. A commission was consequently issued on the 6th of October for the trial of Mary, containing the names of forty-six of the principal peers and judges, and all the Councillors.[6]

[5] Op. cit.; p. 77.

The criticism has been made that only after the execution of Babington and his confederates was the trial held, and that the confessions of these men had been extorted under fear of imminent death. Mary Stuart protested against the reading of her letters to and from Babington in transcript rather than from the originals. "Nay," she said, "bring me my own handwrit; anything to suit a purpose may be put in what you do call copies."

Mary's physician, Burgoing, as he was called (or Burgoigne), recorded in a diary, begun on August 11, 1586, most of the circumstances of her life at Fotheringay and of the trial held there. We quote from the Honourable Mrs. Maxwell-Scott, who derived her material from this source:

> At the upper end [of the hall where the trial was staged] stood the dais of estate, emblazoned with the arms of England, and surmounting a throne the emblem of sovereignty. . . . At the side of the throne, a seat had been prepared for Queen Mary, "one of her crimson chairs, with a cushion of the same" for her feet.
>
> Benches were placed on each side of the room: those on the right were occupied by the Lord Chancellor Bromley, the Lord Treasurer Burghley, and the Earls; on the left the Barons and Knights of the Privy Council . . . In front of the Earls sat the two premier judges and the High Baron of the Exchequer, while in front of the Barons were placed four other judges, and two doctors of civil law. . . .
>
> At nine o'clock the Queen made her entrance, escorted by a guard of halberdiers. She wore a dress and mantle of black velvet, and over her pointed widow's cap fell a long white gauze veil. Her train was borne by one of her maids of honour, Rénée Beauregard. Mary was supported on each side by Melville and Burgoing; and although, owing to the want of exercise and the severe rheumatism from which she suffered, she walked with great difficulty, it was with undiminished dignity of mien. She was followed by [various members of her entourage].
>
> As the Queen advanced the Commissioners uncovered before her, and she saluted them with a majestic air; then perceiving that the seat prepared for her was placed outside the dais and in a lower position, she exclaimed—
>
> *"I am a queen by right of birth* [and have been *consort of a king of France*];[7] my place should be there, under the dais"; but quickly recovered her serenity and took her seat, and looking round at the assembled dignitaries, whose faces bore no sign of sympathy for their victim, she said mournfully to Melville—
>
> "Alas! *here are many counsellors, but not one for me.*"
>
> Her desolate position, without counsel to defend her, without secretary to take notes for her, despoiled even of her papers, must have seemed strange to Mary's generous nature.

[6] *The Gr. Ld. B.;* p. 406.
[7] Other records give this phrase, so we insert it here.

"I am the daughter of James V, King of Scotland, and grand-daughter of Henry VII. . . . I came to England relying upon the friendship and promises of your Queen. Look here, my lords," she exclaimed, drawing a ring from her finger; "see *this pledge of love and protection* which I received from your mistress. . . . Trusting this pledge, I came amongst you. . . ."

Burghley was cold and formal in his questions to Mary and in his insistence upon her guilt in conniving with plotters against Elizabeth's life.

"You are indeed my enemy," Mary exclaimed.

"Yes," replied Burghley, "I am the enemy of the enemies of Queen Elizabeth."

. . . . . .

. . . Later on Mary was again reproached by the lawyers for having relations with the King of Spain.

"It is not your affair," replied she, in a tone of authority. "It is not your affair to speak of matters concerning princes, and to inquire whether they have secret intelligences with each other."

Mary [afterwards] said that she had remarked visible signs of sympathy and compassion upon the countenances of several of the Commissioners, and that she would like to know their names, that she might always bear them in grateful remembrance.[8]

But the stern Puritan Paulet assured her that none had been sympathetic to her case.

Surely she had met the expressive eyes of the Earl of Oxford and seen compassion there! She had heard of him and, in happier days, had written Elizabeth teasing letters about having taken so young a courtier for her lover. Here was drama equal to anything his sensitive imagination had ever "bodied forth." He must have been profoundly stirred. It was a scene which he was unable later to banish from his thoughts.

Can there be any doubt that the trial of Hermione is staged upon lines similar to that of Mary Stuart, when Leontes opens it with the words (III.2):

> This sessions, to our great grief we pronounce,
> Even pushes 'gainst our heart: the party tried
> *The daughter of a king, our wife,* and one
> Of us too much belov'd. Let us be clear'd
> Of being tyrannous, since we so openly
> Proceed in justice, which shall have due course. . . .

Elizabeth had been extremely loath to have a royal queen, who was her kinswoman, brought to public trial and had only after much procrastination yielded to pressure on the part of Burghley and the Council. This was the sole way she could justify herself, quite as it was Leontes's only way. Both trials were a travesty of justice, for the defendant was pre-judged.

[8] *The Tragedy of Fotheringay.*

The Officer reads the indictment:

> Hermione, queen to the worthy Leontes, King of Sicilia, thou art here accused and arraigned of high treason. . . .

As Mary Stuart had commented bitterly upon the fact that of all the lawyers present, there was not one to represent her, so Hermione (21-5):

> Since what I am to say must be but that
> Which contradicts my accusation, and
> *The testimony on my part no other*
> *But what comes from myself,* it shall scarce boot me
> To say 'Not guilty.'

She adds (34-41) that this

> . . . is more
> Than history can pattern, *though devis'd*
> *And play'd to take spectators.* For behold me,
> *A fellow of the royal bed,* which owe
> A moiety to the throne, *a great king's daughter,*
> *The mother to a hopeful prince,* here standing
> To prate and talk for life and honour 'fore
> Who please to come and hear.

This was exactly Mary Stuart's attitude. She knew Elizabeth had staged this trial—"devis'd" it to "take spectators"—simply for its effect on public opinion. She also, as Hermione does, expressed an indifference to the continuance of her life. She was by now broken in health and spirit. "I do not fear death," she said, "and shall suffer it with a good heart." A "king's daughter," she was great grand-daughter to "a great king," Henry VII, and grand-niece to Henry VIII. She had also been "a fellow of the royal bed" of France, and was of course "the mother to [significant words] a hopeful prince."

Leontes maintains coldly, not unlike Burghley in his examination of Mary (and how masterly a stroke to have made him *Rex Sicilianum!*):

> I ne'er heard yet
> That any of these bolder vices wanted
> Less impudence to gainsay what they did
> Than to perform it first. (53-6.)

Hermione's response is delivered with the same dignity and restraint as were Mary's answers to Burghley. And it might be Mary herself protesting when she says (70 *et seq.*):

> Now, *for conspiracy,*
> I know not how it tastes, though it *be dish'd*
> *For me to try how;* all I know of it
> Is that Camillo was an honest man . . .

And here, for the moment, Camillo stands for Babington.

Mary's extreme physical weakness and her protestations regarding the absence of proof are set forth in Hermione's speech to Leontes (103 *et seq.*):

> . . . lastly hurried
> Here to this place, i' the open air, before
> I have got strength of limit. Now, my liege,
> Tell me what blessings I have here alive,
> That I should *fear to die.* Therefore proceed.
> But yet hear this; mistake me not; *no life,*
> *I prize it not a straw:*—but for mine honour,
> Which I would free, if I shall be condemn'd
> Upon surmises, all proofs sleeping else
> But what your jealousies awake, I tell you
> *'Tis rigour and not law.*

This was precisely Mary Stuart's position: she had not had a fair trial. It was "rigour and not law." In fact, the only way to explain Leontes's extraordinary behavior is on the ground that it is allegorical.

Hermione's words to Leontes (II.1.95-9) might well have been spoken by Mary Stuart to Elizabeth:

> How will this grieve you
> When you shall come to clearer knowledge that
> You thus have publish'd me! Gentle my lord,
> You scarce can right me thoroughly then to say
> You did mistake.

We say no letter from Lord Oxford on this subject has been preserved. But here was certainly his plea to the Queen.

After the Queen of Scots was found guilty, Elizabeth chafed and fretted, unable to make up her mind to carry out a sentence of execution. She tried to pass on the responsibility to the Council, railing at them for their cowardice in refusing to help her out of her predicament. She complained more than once to Davison that something ought to be done, to prevent the necessity of an execution. Stafford reported to Mendoza in Paris, "Cecil writes that the Queen is so peevish and discontented that it was feared she would not live long. Her temper is so bad that no Councillor dares to mention business to her and when even he [Cecil] did so, she told him that *she had been strong enough to lift him out of the dirt,* and was able to cast him down again." [9]

Leontes takes this identical attitude towards Camillo:

> . . . if I
> Had servants true about me, that bare eyes
> To see alike mine honour as their profits,
> Their own particular thrifts, they would do that

[9] Hume: *The Gr. Ld. B.;* p. 426.

> Which should undo more doing: ay, and thou,
> His cup-bearer,—whom I *from meaner form*
> *Have bench'd and rear'd to worship,* who mayst see
> Plainly as heaven sees earth, and earth sees heaven,
> *How I am gall'd,*—mightst bespice a cup,
> To give mine enemy a lasting wink;
> Which draught to me were cordial. (I.2.308-18.)

That the Earl of Oxford was allowed the freedom to speak so plainly is amazing. That anyone else in England might have done so is unthinkable.

But the Earl was repudiating himself too as he wrote this play. He held no brief of course for the conspirators, as he had amply shown in *Henry V,* where the young King made short shrift with them. But he was intensely romantic; and the Queen of Scots, at once feminine and majestic, facing her accusers alone, had appealed to his ingrained chivalry.

Falstaff had called Prince Hal the "young lion." (2 *H.IV:* I.2.198.) Now the Prince's prototype appears in another guise, as *Leo*ntes. (Oxford's crest as Lord Bolebec was a lion shaking a spear. He was Posthumus *Leo*natus—the Lion-born—in *Cymbeline,* as well as the son of Coeur de Lion in *King John.*) And Leontes allows jealousy to make a tyrant of him, as the young Lord Oxford had done ten years before, when he had returned from the Continent in a rage of humiliation that gossip reported his daughter was not his own.

Leontes describes a father's doubts as "goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps,"—as

> . . . scandal to the blood o' the prince my son,
> Who I do think is mine, and love as mine. (I.2.330-1.)

There are the usual bitter reflections upon calumny, always coincident with the chaste-wife-falsely-accused motif:

> The shrug, the hum or ha, these petty brands
> That *calumny* doth use . . .
> . . . for *calumny will sear*
> *Virtue itself.* (II.1.70-73.)

It had been the thought of the tongues wagging behind his back which had galled him so when he had first come home. He had written Burghley that the matter might have been arranged

> through private conference before, and had not needed to have been made *the fable of the world* if you would have had the patience to have understood me.

It was the bandying-about of his good name which he, like Leontes, could not bear.

> *Leontes.* They're here with me already, whispering, rounding,
> "Sicilia is a so-forth." (I.2.217-8.)

Of course the incident of Paulina's bringing his little daughter to him (II.3) is precisely that of Lady Suffolk's bringing the baby Elizabeth Vere to Oxford, December 1577, in the hope of winning him over. (Chap. Thirteen.) The Duchess of Suffolk would seem to have had the same high-handed manner that Paulina has. In the absence of factual evidence, we can only judge that her ruse was no more successful than Paulina's. Leontes—and we must suppose Oxford—was still too raw to yield. But Lord Oxford now pays her a tribute in the words of Emilia (II.2.42-6):

> Most worthy madam,
> Your honour and your goodness is so evident
> That your free undertaking cannot miss
> A thriving issue: there is no lady living
> So meet for this great errand.

Perhaps he was making belated amends for his former recalcitrance. One thing is apparent: this dramatist knew his great ladies.

The Earl gives his bitterness full scope in Leontes's speech to his son (I.2.187 *et seq.*):

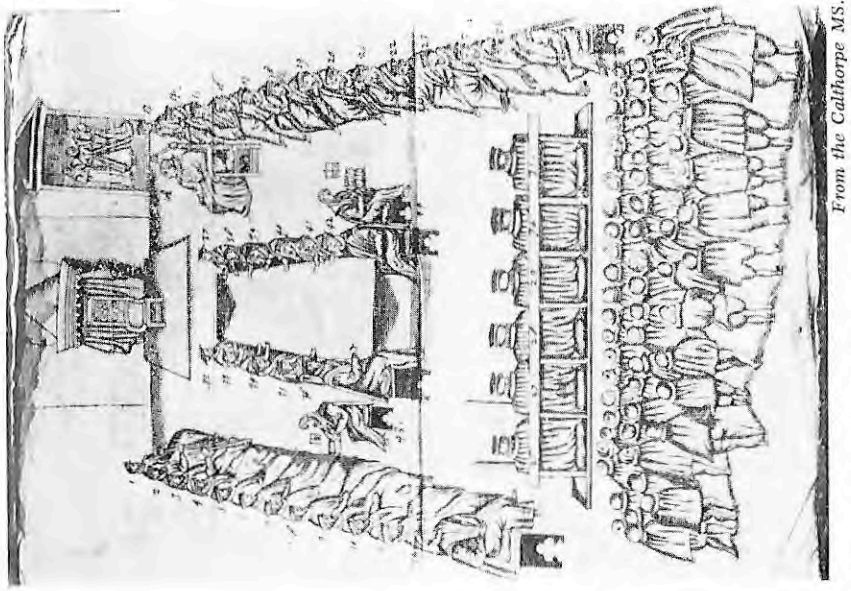
> Go play, boy, play; thy mother plays, and I
> Play too, but so disgrac'd a part, whose issue
> Will hiss me to my grave: contempt and clamour
> Will be my knell. . . .

But here he is not confining himself—as it would appear from the context—to being made a cuckold: he speaks of his connection with the theatre—"I play too"—and also of the "bewailed guilt" which ruined his good name for ever, as he feared. Moreover, he is speaking directly to the Fair Youth, to whom he will soon be writing about this in the Sonnets, if he has not already begun doing so. For we suppose Mamilius to be acted by the same boy who has been taking the part of the Page in *The Merry Wives* and *Henry IV;* he is quite small for his age, and so he can fill the part of a child of eight or ten. Leontes calls him "sir page." (I.2.136.) And presently he says (154-9):

> Looking on the lines
> Of my boy's face, methought I did recoil
> *Twenty-three years,* and saw myself unbreech'd,
> In my green-velvet coat, my dagger muzzled,
> Lest it should bite its master, and so prove,
> As ornaments oft do, too dangerous.

"Twenty-three years" before 1586 Oxford was thirteen. If the Fair Youth had been born in the summer of 1574, as we believe he was, he would have been in his thirteenth year at the close of 1586. Leontes's devotion to his little son would seem a counterpart of Oxford's to the "little changeling boy" whom he had made an "ape,"

List of Names, in Beale's handwriting, *Accompanying the Calthorpe Drawing.*



A Contemporary Drawing of the Trial of *From the Calthorpe MS.*

The Ashbourne Portrait.

". . . what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me."
Hamlet, Act V, *Scene* 2, *Lines* 344-5

or actor, and to whom he now says, "Go play, boy, play," adding cynically, "Thy mother plays." As indeed she did! (When Mamilius dies, however, it is in the Oxford-Anne frame of reference, and it is their only son whom they have lost, after all their vicissitudes.)

As we have suggested, there is, in Leontes's jealousy of Polixines, a passing hint of Oxford's current feeling about Ralegh, who has supplanted him as high favorite. Hence the reference to the mother's philandering. But presently he simplifies the situation to that of his jealousy and doubt of Anne Cecil when Leontes summons the lords to the trial (II.1.195-7):

> Come, follow us:
> We are to speak in public; for this business
> Will raise us all;

and Antigonus comments, aside,

> To laughter, as I take it,
> If the good truth were known.

And here we recall Mariana of "the moated grange," whose "reputation was disvalu'd in levity," while he speaks again of being laughed at (II.3.23-4):

> Camillo and Polixines
> Laugh at me; make their pastime at my sorrow.

So Leontes playing the tyrant is Oxford castigating himself for having once done so, and when tragedy ensues, he is engulfed in remorse.

> Prithee, bring me
> To the dead bodies of my queen and son:
> One grave shall be for both: upon them shall
> The causes of their death appear, *unto*
> *Our shame perpetual.* Once a day I'll visit
> This chapel where they lie, and tears shed there
> Shall be my *recreation:* so long as nature
> Will bear up with this exercise, so long
> I daily vow to use it. (III.2.232-40.)

He would not hide from the world this "shame perpetual" which he felt for his injustice to Anne.

Sonnet 76 reads:

> Why write I still all one, ever the same.
> And keep invention in a noted weed,
> That every word doth almost tell my name,
> Showing their birth and where they did proceed?

With tears he re-created—made a "re-creation" of—this and another tragic circumstance of his life again and again, keeping "invention in a noted weed": his jealousy, his shame, his bewailed guilt; so

that anyone who knew about his life would be in no doubt as to the authorship of the plays. "Every word doth almost tell my name."

And what indeed could be clearer, from the testimony of every word that he has written? Yet, so skilfully have the documents been winnowed, "slanted," as we say nowadays, and even altered, that one student of the Elizabethan period, whose research was comprehensive and painstaking, could find no more to say, when speaking of his part in the fight against the Armada, than,

> The earl of Oxford, in expiation perhaps of some of those violences of temper and irregularities of conduct by which he was perpetually offending the queen and obstructing his own advancement in the state, equipped on this occasion a vessel which he commanded.[10]

In this connection, and in view of Oxford's secret service grant made at this very period—1586—it is especially interesting that Antigonus, who has been entrusted with Perdita (sometime the plays) is chased by a "bear"—which stands for Authority—crying (III.3.56-7),

> This is the chase:
> I am gone *for ever;*

while, just one act later (IV.3.812-14) the Clown says,

> . . . and though *authority* be a stubborn *bear,* yet he is oft led by the nose with gold.

So we are given to understand that the Queen and the Council imposed an oath of secrecy upon the author. The bear begins to devour Antigonus—gradually, as the Clown reports.

Autolycus (partially Oxford's comedic aspect) observes (IV.3.296-7):

> I can bear my part; you must know 'tis *my occupation.* . . .

And Mopsa answers:

> It becomes thy *oath* full well,
> Thou to me thy *secrets* tell.

At times Perdita represents the small band of Virginia colonists left on a distant shore to face the hazards and dangers of a wild country. There is a correspondence between the letter its Governor, Ralph Lane, sent by Grenville to Walsingham, which concluded, "God will command even the *ravens* to feed us," and the prayer of Antigonus (II.3.184-6):

> Come on, poor babe:
> Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and *ravens*
> *To be thy nurses!*

The return of Perdita, accompanied by Florizel, after "some sixteen years" apparently alludes, topically, to the sudden return of the

[10] Lucy Aikin: *Memoirs of the Court of Q. Eliz.;* vol. II, p. 221.

colonists, after a stay of about sixteen months. But the "sixteen years" referred to when Camillo says (V.3.49-50),

> My lord, your sorrow was *too sore laid on,*
> Which *sixteen winters* cannot blow away,

is the span of Oxford's married life: 1571–87.

Yet at other times Perdita is undoubtedly the plays: "a shepherd's [poet's] daughter" (IV.Chorus.27.) The actual Shepherd is John Shaksper of Stratford and the Clown, his son, Willm. All this pertains to a subsequent date, and a subsequent chapter; but it will be noted that the Shepherd gets gold by adopting Perdita as his own "child," and his son becomes a gentleman.

Autolycus (*Auto*-lycus) is, as we say, partly, whimsically, the bohemian side of Oxford and partly a man named Wotton, noted in Fleetwood's report (1585) as a gentleman by birth who, however, kept an alehouse and taught boys to be pickpockets. Like Touchstone, the Fool, Autolycus had been a courtier, and had, he frankly admits, for one of his "virtues," been "whipped out of the court." (IV.2.90.) He has irresistible verses for sale, and "sweet gloves"; he is "a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles" (IV.2.26); and when he says (51),

> O! that *ever I* was born!

the Clown—who is William Shaksper and now proves it—responds:

> I' the name of me!

But since the name is Shakespeare, which is of course quite like "the name of" Shaksper, this scene patently belongs to the later date, Oxford not having publicized his pseudonym until 1593, nor caused it to appear on his plays before 1598.

There are other pointed allusions to Ralegh in *The Winter's Tale* that must be mentioned. One is the matter of the "warden pies" (IV.2.46), which refers to his having been made Lord *Warden* of the Stanneries; another is the repetition of the world "fardel" used six times in this play to one in all the others combined, and that in *Hamlet,* III.1.76, also for Ralegh), which is apropos of his father's being Walter Ralegh of *Fardell,* in Devon. In 1584 Ralegh had been granted the privilege of exporting "woollen cloths." Hence the passage (IV.2.32-4):

> *Clown.* Let me see: every 'leven weather tods; every tod yields pound and odd shilling: fifteen hundred shorn, what comes the *wool* to?

This—the untutored William Shaksper's computation—has a double significance. Young Shaksper was a butcher's apprentice, his father a butcher. Wool was a profitable by-product of the trade. There was a wool-shop attached to Shaksper's house in Stratford. As a matter

of fact, John Shaksper sued one John Walford, in 1599, for 21 pounds, the price of 21 *tods of wool.*[11] That both father and son were mercenary, bent upon making every penny they could, is the outstanding fact in their meagre record.

Furness quotes Stafford's *Breefe Conceipte of English Pollicye,* published in 1581, as giving the price of a tod of wool at twenty or two-and-twenty shillings; which would make the medium price exactly "pound and odd shilling," as the Clown says. The rate probably remained stable until 1586, when the war with Spain was imminent.

(John Shaksper also dealt in grain. Jonson, in *Every Man Out,* shows Sordido, who is John Shaksper, hoarding grain to sell it at a high profit during a hoped-for shortage. In 1597, William Shaksper was the third largest hoarder of grain in Stratford.)

Autolycus threatening dire punishments upon the Shepherd (IV.3.777 *et seq.*) is another version of Touchstone (*A.Y.L.I.:* V.1.56 *et seq.*) warning William of all kinds of death, and of Puntarvolo (*E.M.O.:* V.4) avenging himself upon Carlo. In each case it is the fate of the plays which is in question: Perdita, Audrey, Sir Puntarvolo's dog.[12]

In the following passage, the words "moon" and "water" make pointed allusion to Elizabeth's fondness for Ralegh at this time, her nickname for him having been Water:

> He says he loves my daughter,
> I think so too; for never gaz'd the *moon*
> Upon the *water* as he'll stand and read
> As 'twere my daughter's eyes. (IV.3.171-4.)

But the most striking reference to Ralegh appears in Leontes's passage with Mamilius (I.2.120 *et seq.*):

> *Leontes.* . . . Mamilius,
> Art thou my boy?
> *Mamilius.* Ay, my good lord.
> *Leontes.* I' fecks?
> Why, that's my *bawcock.* What! *hast smutch'd thy nose?*
> *They say it is a copy out of mine.* Come, *captain,*
> We must be *neat;* not *neat,* but cleanly, *captain:*
> And yet the steer, the heifer, and the calf
> Are all call'd *neat.* Still *virginalling*
> Upon his palm!

Von Klarwill's *Elizabeth and Some Foreigners* gives a description of the Christmas dance at Greenwich, December 27, 1584, as follows:

> As long as the dancing lasted, she [the Queen] summoned young and old and spoke continuously. All of them knelt before her. She chatted and jested most amiably with them, and pointing with her finger at the face of one Master or *Captain* Rall [Ralegh], told him that *there was smut on it.* She also offered to wipe it off with her handkerchief, but he anticipating her removed it himself. They say that she now loves him beyond all others, and this one may easily credit, for but a year ago he could scarcely keep one servant, whereas now owing to her bounty he can afford to keep five hundred.[13]

The fact that Leontes calls the little boy "captain" is significant of course, since that was Ralegh's title, and further, Elizabeth's new favorite had an aquiline nose which everyone said was markedly like her own. The pun on "neat"—which means ox—is especially pointed: he uses all the synonyms, or near-synonyms, but the obvious one. Besides all this, Oxford is teasing both his friend Ralegh and the Queen, not only in calling him a "bawcock," but in using the word "virginalling." The palpable punning references here are to the colony, Virginia, and to Elizabeth's playing upon the virginals; however, if anyone wished to see in it an edged allusion to the behavior of this so-called "virgin," the Queen's "allowed fool" was the last man in the world to object. She took a great deal from her Turk. Favorites came and went, but her appreciation of his genius and his wit was constant and permanent.

All these little personal observations were of course the "unconsidered trifles" of which Autolycus was the "snapper-up."

Leontes's query to Mamilius (I.2.162),

> Will you *take eggs for money?*

refers to Kildare's defense against Cardinal Wolsey's charge that he had not pressed hard enough to capture Desmond, in the Irish rebellion. Campion wrote:

> What my cousin, Desmond, hath compassed, as I know not, so I beshrew his naked heart for holding out so long. But . . . what is Kildare to blame for it, more than my good brother of Ossory, who, notwithstanding his high promises, having also the king's power, is glad to *take eggs for his money,* and to bring him in at leisure.[14]

One reason Lord Oxford wrote this play in 1586 was because Drake had returned in July of that year with the remnant of the Virginia colonists, including Governor Ralph Lane. It was the latter, by the way, who on his arrival introduced tobacco into England. In the dramas Oxford produced after this, he had no occasion to refer to tobacco. He himself probably never adopted its use and was therefore not concerned with it. His prime indulgence, which curiously enough he seems to have shared with Burghley, was sack.

[11] Percy Allen: *The Life-Story,* etc.; p. 242; quot. from an entry in *Common Pleas,* 40, 1626 (353, d.); cit. by Prof. J. L. Hotson, in *The Times,* London, 22 Nov., 1930.

[12] This subject is discussed at length in Chap. Seventy-two.

[13] E.T.C.: *Hidd. All.;* p. 542; quot. Von Klarwill; p. 238.

[14] E.T.C.: op. cit.

We have observed elsewhere that, far from Oxford's having "borrowed" from Greene's *Pandosto* in writing *The Winter's Tale,* the younger man may actually have written his work at the Earl's instigation. As for the familiar comment upon the dramatist's ignorance in providing Bohemia with a seacoast, it is a matter of record that in the thirteenth century the King of Bohemia extended his territory to the Adriatic. Ben Jonson, who first made this criticism, was simply diddling posterity again; he was well aware of what Bohemia stood for in this play.

Now, one or two more points. When the Clown remarks (IV.3.751) that "Advocate's the court-word for a pheasant," the allusion is to a distinguished family of advocates named Phesant, very much in evidence at Gray's Inn and in the courts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Peter Phesant was a Reader at Gray's in 1582.

Paulina's words to Leontes (V.1.46-7),

> . . . Care not for issue,
> The crown will find an heir,

are quoted verbatim from Golding's translation of Justin, dedicated to his nephew, Lord Oxford.

It is a fact of special interest here that statues in Elizabeth's day were painted, as Hermione's was supposed to be. Professor William Lyon Phelps, in his *Autobiography with Letters,* tells of the erection of a statue of Queen Elizabeth at Lud Gate *in 1586.* It was later removed to old St. Dunstan's Church, "the only known contemporary statue of the great Queen. . . . Painted she was originally; and very likely in colors much stronger than those which make her look so fresh today. Elizabethans, like men of the Middle Ages, could not think of a statue unpainted."

The Winter's Tale, written *in 1586,* obviously celebrated this same new statue of Gloriana. Leontes says (V.3.23 *et seq.*):

> Her natural posture!
> . . . . . .
> . . . O! thus she stood,
> Even with such life of majesty—warm life,
> As now it coldly stands—when first I woo'd her.
> . . . . . .
> . . . O royal piece!
> . . . . . .
> There's magic in thy majesty. . . .

This brings the Earl and his royal mistress very close to us, with a stirring vividness and warmth.

It remains but to note that there are many phrases in this play which give a foretaste of *Macbeth,* so soon to be written, and others which have a distinct flavor of *Henry V,* to say nothing of several

of the Sonnets. There is a suggestion of *Venus and Adonis* followed by *The Rape of Lucrece* in the latter part of Florizel's speech (IV.3.30-35):

> *Golden Apollo,* a poor humble swain,
> As I seem now. Their transformations
> Were never for a piece of beauty rarer,
> Nor *in a way* so *chaste,* since my desires
> Run not before mine honour, nor my *lusts*
> *Burn hotter than my faith.*

Identity-clues abound.

The Winter's Tale is called a comedy, but there is much tragedy in it. This was the last so-called comedy that the Earl of Oxford wrote. From now on he saw life more darkly.