

CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX



AFTER THE DISASTROUS Martin Marprelate affair, Lord Oxford retired from the theatrical world, as active patron, to "sit in idle cell," as Spenser put it, rather than "himself to mockerie to sell." But long ago the Earl had said that he never was "less idle, lol than when I am alone." And this was still true of him. Although to some extent a recluse, mainly from court-life, he was at work upon poems and sonnets, as well as on the revision of many of his old court-dramas; and he seems to have shown himself now and then in Bohemia.

As a matter of fact, the "idle cell" in which the disaffected dramatist spent certain of his leisure hours was literally—as Mr. Barrell astutely observes—the cellar at the Steelyard, in the vaults of which, already some hundred years old, the Hanscatic merchants dispensed Rhenish wine, smoked ox-tongues, salmon and caviare to the gour-

¹⁰ Mr. Allen and, toward the end of his life, Captain B. M. Ward. It must, however, be stated that we had arrived at the conclusion that Southampton was the son of Oxford and the Queen almost a year before we heard that anyone else had entertained the suspicion.

meats of London. We have noted how, in *Cynthia's Revels*, Asotus "cloth learn to make strange sauces, to eat anchovies, macaroni, bovoli, fagoli, and caviare, because he [Amorphus] loves them."

When so many noble families still lived in the city, the house enjoyed a reputation similar to that . . . of the neighboring tavern, the Boar's Head, in which Shakespeare made the bulky Falstaff and the light-hearted Prince Harry quaff their cups of sack. It was not only the merchants who relished the good things of the Steelyard, for bishops and nobles, and even the Lord Chancellor himself, and many a distinguished Privy Councillor did not disdain to honour these vaults with their presence, or to taste the dainties of the foreigners.¹

Both the Steelyard and the Boar's Head Tavern were very near Oxford Court by London Stone, where until recently the Earl had lived. It is in Nashe's *Epistle Dedicatorie*, printed in 1593, that we first learn of Oxford's being an habitué; Jonson's testimony belongs to a later date.

Although he continued to consort with his literary friends, he had been obliged, after the disbanding of his and the Queen's theatrical companies, to curtail his patronage, and he had vacated Fisher's Folly in 1591. Immediately, as if an earthquake had shattered their foundations, loud yelps and groans over their financial straits emanated from Greene, Peele, Marlowe, Nashe, and Lyly. Lyly even sent long-winded petitions to the Queen on the subject—though much good it did him! The first petition, of 1590, says in part:

Most gracious and drad soueraigne, I dare not pester your highness with many words. . . . I was entertained your Maiesities servant by your gracious fauor, strengthened with conditions that I should ayme all my courases at the Revelles . . . for which these 10 years I haue attended with vnwearied patience.² And nowe I know not what Crabb took me for an Oyster . . . that hath thrust a stone between the shells to eate me aliue that onely liue on dead hopes. . . .

The second, of 1593, shows greater despondency:

Thirteen years your highnes servant but yet nothing. Twenty friends that though they says they wilbe sure I find them sure to be slowe. A thowsand hopes but all nothing, a hundred promises but yet nothing. . . .

That Lyly understood Lord Oxford's necessity in terminating his service would seem to be implied in a letter he wrote Sir Robert Cecil nearly two years later, in which he says:

Among all the overthwartes of my poor fortunes this is the greatest, that where I most expected to show my dutiful affection I am cut off from the means.³

¹ Charles Wisner Barrell: *New Milestones in Sh. Research*, Sh. Tell. Quarterly, Oct. 1944; cit. Dr. Reinhold Pauli, *Pictures of Old London* (1861).

² We have seen him as Peter Quince, Master of the Revels for the production of *Pyramus and Thisbe* in *M.N.D.*

³ Ward, p. 273.

All Lyly's dramatic writing had been done while he was in the service of Lord Oxford; and although he lived a dozen years longer and was out of work, he still wrote not a single play. It is no wonder that he had hoped to show his "dutiful affection." He owed everything to the Earl.

In *Pierce's Supplication* Gabriel Harvey wrote of Lyly:

Himself a mad lad as ever twang'd; never troubled with any substance of wit, or circumstance of honesty; sometime the fiddlestick of Oxford, now the very babble of London.

Thomas Nashe took it upon himself to reply to this, as part of his protracted quarrel with Harvey:

For Master Lillie . . . he is better able to defend himselfe than I am able to say he is able to defend himselfe. . . . With a black sant he meanes shortly to bee at his [Harvey's] chamber window for calling him the Fiddlestick of Oxford.

Probably the principal reason why Lyly's affair was said by Harvey to be "the babble of London" was that it was one facet of the general alteration in Oxford's activities, including the publication, that year, of *Venus and Adonis* under a pseudonym: an incident which must have caused much "babble" in itself, only comparatively few persons—these, of course, including Nashe and Harvey—having knowledge of the poet's identity. But not the least important change, and provocative of the loudest preliminary babble, had been the Earl's withdrawal of his support from the University Wits, who had become so reckless and licentious that the Puritans were determined to destroy them and their influence, while Oxford himself, restricted as he was by the state of his own affairs, was unable longer to sponsor or direct them.

However, that he was still on terms of friendship with Greene and Nashe is attested by the latter's reply to an attack Harvey made upon Greene's memory soon after Greene's death:

A good fellow he was and would have drunk with thee for more angels than the lord thou libelledst on⁴ gave thee in Christ's College. . . .

I and one of my fellows, Will Monox—hast thou never heard of him and his great dagger?⁵ were in company with him a month before he died, at that fatal Banquet of Rhenish wine and pickled herring (if thou wilt needs have it so) and then the inventory of his apparel came to more than three shillings. . . .

Financial strictures continued to harass the Earl. There is a record of correspondence between his agent, Thomas Churchyard, and a

⁴ I.e., Oxford. See Chap. Eighteen.

⁵ The reference is obviously to Oxford and his special weapon, rapier (wit), sword (words), which was to become the "signature" of his *nom de plume*.

Mistress Julia Penn regarding rooms taken in her house by Oxford and not promptly paid for. Churchyard writes the irate landlady:

I stand to that bargain, knowing my good Lord so noble—and of such great consideration—that he will perform what I promised. . . . I absolutely here, for the love and honour I owe my Lord, bind myself and all I have in the world, for the satisfying you for the first quarter's rent of the rooms my Lord did take. And further for the coals, billets, faggots, beer, wine, and any other thing spent by his honourable means, I bind myself to answer; yet confessing that napery and linen was not in any bargain I made with you for my Lord, which indeed I know my Lord's nobleness will consider. . . .⁶

All this sharply recalls Mistress Quickly's complaints against Sir John Falstaff. Point is added by the fact that, during his early forties, Oxford seems for a brief period to have increased in weight and girth—as is shown in the Hampton Court portrait of "Shakespeare," which has been crudely altered to represent a man of lower rank, the Sword of State and rapier clumsily blacked out, the courtier's lace ruff smeared, etc. Undoubtedly the gourmand, Burghley, was no stranger to the Steelyard. Sir Nicholas Dawtre, too, would have been a familiar of the place. And with him, Burghley, and the jovial aspect of Oxford himself, we have a wonderful composite presentation of the Fat Knight.

We get, moreover, a vivid glimpse of the way the Earl fictionalized his own experiences when comparing Mistress Penn's letter with Mistress Quickly's speeches. (2*HIV*.II.1.) Not to be overlooked is the passage about Falstaff's "weapon." (11-17.) The whole scene comes to life with a rollicking humor when one realizes that Falstaff's gift of gab is that of the Earl when in high fettle. Jonson said of him in the character of Amorphus: "The wife of the ordinary gives him his diet to maintain her table in discourse; which is indeed a mere tyranny over her other guests, for he will usurp all the talk." Mistress Penn writes:

You know, my Lord, you had anything in my house whatsoever you or your men would demand, if it were in my house. If it had been a thousand times more I would have been glad to pleasure your Lordship withal. Therefore, good my Lord, deal with me in courtesy, for that you and I shall come at that dreadful day and give account for all our doings. . . . I would be loth to offend your honour in anything. . . . But my Lord, if it please your Lordship to show me your favour in this I shall be much bound to your honour, and you shall command my house, or anything that is in it whensoever it shall please you. . . .⁷

And Mistress Quickly:

Ah, thou honey-suckle villain! . . . thou honey-seed rogue! . . . By this heavenly ground I tread on, I must be fain to pawn both my plate and the tapestry of my dining-chambers. *Falstaff*. Glasses, glasses, is the only drinking; and for thy walls, a pretty slight drollery, or the story of the Prodigal, or the German hunting in water-work is worth a thousand of these bed-hangings and these fly-face, and draw thy action. Come, thou must not be in this humour with me; dost not know me? Come, come, *I know thou wast set on to this*. (51-53.)

This shrewd observation no doubt goes for Mistress Penn too, for she was the mother-in-law of Burghley's private secretary, Michael Hicks. Oxford was on to Burghley's tricks. "I know thou wast set on to this," he says. The Lord Treasurer liked to make his bohemian affairs difficult.

Mistress Quickly has brought action, and has called in the Justice of the Peace, quite in the fashion of Mistress Penn, who has—as she writes Churchyard—"made Her Majesty understand of my bond, touching the Earl."

Quickly. I pray ye, since my exion is entered, and my case so openly known to the world, let him be brought in to his answer. A hundred mark is a long one for a poor lone woman to bear; and I have borne, and borne, and borne; and have been fubbed off, and fubbed off, and fubbed off, from this day to that day, that it is a shame to be thought on. There is no honesty in such dealing; unless a woman should be thought an ass, a beast, to bear every knave's wrong. Yonder he comes; and that arrant malinsey-nose knave, Bardolph, with him. (29-39.)

No doubt the Earl satisfied Mistress Penn quite as happily as Sir John pacified Mistress Quickly. But the publicity had nettled him. Quickly's remark that her case is "so openly known to the world" recalls the young Oxford's rage when he discovered that his wife's reported inconstancy had been "made the fable of the world." He was infuriated with Burghley then, and he must have been infuriated now, when Mistress Penn had been "set on" to make her report to the Queen. He could take what he must, he could revel with his "lewd friends" when he chose, but the one thing his pride would not tolerate was that his doings should be tattled of and his name cried aloud in the streets by a usurer.

Oxford continued to be hard-pressed for funds: the state of his affairs remained unsatisfactory and confused. On the 5th of August, 1590, we find him dispatching a letter to his father-in-law, in part as follows:

⁶ Ward, p. 302; cit. Lansdowne MSS., 68, 113.
⁷ Ward, p. 302; cit. Lansdowne MSS., 68, 114.

I therefore most earnestly desire your Lordship to signify your liking to me in writing, to dispose of the said lease at my pleasure; *otherwise there is not any will deal with me* for the same nor for any part thereof.

In September, he writes another letter; and this must have been before Churchyard brought the Julia Penn matter to his attention, for he assures Burghley that he is one

whom in all my causes I find mine honourable good Lord and to deal more fatherly than friendly with me, for which I do acknowledge—and ever will—myself in most especial wise bound.

This was courtly and gracious of Oxford. It is to be hoped he really felt that way and was not desperately trying to believe in the Lord Treasurer's humanity—if any. He knew the acquisitive old busybody was sorely tried by what seemed his profligate ways. But "more fatherly than friendly" may mean more than meets the eye. Burghley was looking out for Oxford's daughters far more than he was, or ever had, for the Earl himself. He did all he could to reassure Burghley of his good will, though of course he could never put the paradox into words: "As a man, I am friendly to you, even at times sympathetic and affectionate; as your son-in-law, I hold you in respect. But my work is something apart. It is the invisible commander, not my personal self, which forces from me the revelations which burn free of dross in the plays." Of course, the Lord Treasurer did his part in maintaining the surface amenities, just as he had for so many years with Leicester, who was ever a thorn in his flesh; but it is undeniable that he hated both men with the cold abiding hatred peculiar to his (and Shylock's) type. Although Oxford seems to have been incapable of fully realizing this fact, Burghley was working for his downfall from the moment he became convinced that he could not be his master.

Perhaps it was not unnatural that the Lord Treasurer, constitutionally hostile to the arts, was especially inimical towards the theatre. As one commentator puts it, "When the Lord Mayor writes Burghley of the difficulty he is having in forbidding playing in the city, he shows no doubt that Burghley will uphold him in his task."⁸

Although we should never accept the testimony of Sir Sidney Lee in regard to the fabulous synthetic creation he called "Shakespeare"—full as it is of far-fetched rationalization and garbling of facts, with conjecture forming the cornerstone of an elaborate structure passed off as biography—still, we may at least note in passing his statement about the Lord Treasurer, since in this case, he had no reason for special pleading. It is to the effect that "when the Countess [of Oxford] died on June 6th, 1588, [Burghley] showed little inclination

to relieve his son-in-law's necessities."⁹ This seems to be a clear record of fact.

It was in August 1591, that Oxford had written Burghley to suggest commuting his "pension" into five thousand pounds ready money, to which he would add three thousand pounds for the purchase of the domain of Denbigh, in the furtherance of his desire "to have an equal care with your Lordship over my children." He thought he could make a profit in Denbigh, which "shall be presently delivered in possession to you for their use. . . . So shall my children be provided for, myself at length settled in quiet, and I hope your Lordship contented. For to tell truth, I am weary of an unsettled life. . . ."

This particular project had come to nothing. But late in 1591 the Earl had remarried; so he must have attained to an at least more settled life. The bride was Elizabeth Trentham, a Maid of Honour at court; and for once the Queen took a gracious attitude about a marriage. She had treated her Turk none too kindly; she knew what strains and stresses he had endured: here was something she could make pleasant for him at no cost to herself. Perhaps she hoped this marriage would pacify him and prevent explosions. She may have been concerned about the life he was leading.

Goneril says to Lear, when expressing dissatisfaction with his numerous attendants, that they are

Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd, and bold
That this our court, infected with their manners,
Shows like a riotous inn: epicurism and lust
Make it more like a tavern or a brothel
Than a grac'd palace. (1.4.241-5.)

And Regan asks (II.1.95 *et seq.*):

Was he [Edgar] not companion with the riotous knights
That tend upon my father? . . .

King Lear was being written at the turn of the decade.

Not much is known about the second Countess of Oxford, who seems to have been nine or ten years her husband's junior; but what is known is altogether to her credit. In April 1582, J. Farnum had written Roger Manners,

Mistress Trentham is as fair, Mistress Edgcomb as modest, Mistress Radcliff as comely and Mistress Garrat as jolly as ever.¹⁰

She was a young woman of means, intelligent, well-bred, considerate, and, it would seem, deeply devoted to her lord.

On December 2 of this year, Lord Oxford alienated the ancient

⁸ Alden Brooks: *Will Shakespeare, Factotum and Agent*; p. 46.

⁹ *Dict. Nat'l Biog.*

¹⁰ Ward; p. 907; cit. Rutland MSS., 1.94.

estate of the Veres, Castle Hedingham, to Burghley and his three daughters. Not long afterwards he was writing the following passage:

Fool. Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

Leat. No.

Fool. Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house . . . to put his head in; not to give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns without a case. (*K.L.*: 1.5.25-31.)

Since Earl's Colne, the tomb of his forefathers, now no longer belonged to him, he may have been moved at this time also to write Sonnet 81:

The earth can yield me but a common grave. . . .

Ward believes that, because the Castle had been unoccupied since 1583, parts of it would have fallen into disrepair, and that this is, of course, why, "just before Lord Burghley took it over, Oxford issued a warrant authorizing the dismantling of part of the building and many of the out-houses. This perfectly natural precaution," he adds, "has been stigmatized by historians as a savage act of vandalism. . . . Had they taken the trouble to ascertain the true relations between Oxford and Burghley . . . they would have avoided making themselves ridiculous."¹¹

In 1592 Oxford initiated the first of a series of suits to the Queen for certain monopolies which would furnish him a source of income. The annual payment of £1000 from the Secret Service fund continued, but that went for the expenses of what he called his "office" and not for personal requirements. One of the few ways Elizabeth had to raise money, of which the Treasury was in drastic need at this time of huge war-expenditure, was by the sale of such benefits. Lord Oxford's first suit—for the monopoly of oils, wools, and fruits—failed; and late in 1593 he wrote Burghley regarding the Custody of the Forest of Essex, which belonged to him by rights:

My very good Lord, I hope it is not out of your remembrance how long sithence I have been a suitor to Her Majesty . . . to try my title to the Forest of Essex at the law. But I found that so displeasing unto her, that in place of receiving that ordinary favour which is of course granted to the meanest subject, *I was browbeaten and had many bitter speeches given me.* Nevertheless at length, by means of some of the Lords of the Council, among which your Lordship especially, Her Majesty was persuaded to give me ear.

The letter is too long to quote in full, but in the latter part he tells of having spoken to Her Majesty while at Greenwich. And Ward remarks that Sir Nicholas Dawtreay was at court there at this time, adding that "as constant suitors to the Queen they must often have

come into contact."¹² He explains that Oxford, of course, expected to pay an equitable price for the monopoly he had sought, but even so, this would not have been as advantageous a deal from the Queen's standpoint as her "gift" of Raleigh's wine monopoly, "in return for which he built ships and fought for her at sea."

Concerning the Earl's request to Burghley in the matter of the restoration to him of the Forest of Essex, we need hardly repeat that nothing came of it. As we have said elsewhere, only when James ascended the throne, long after Burghley's death, was this made.

By now, the Earl would have been all the more desirous of stabilizing his properties and securing the reinstatement of those due him by inheritance, because on February 24, 1593, a son had been born to him and his Countess. On the 31st of March, this heir, who would one day be the Eighteenth Earl, was christened in the Parish Church and given the name, new in de Vere and Trentham annals, of Henry. Some six weeks later Lord Oxford was dedicating "the first heir of my invention" to Henry Wriothesley.

Under date of July 7, 1594, Oxford wrote again to Burghley:

My very good Lord, If it please you to remember that about half a year or thereabout past I was suitor to your Lordship for your favour: that whereas I found sundry abuses, whereby both *Her Majesty and myself were, in my office, greatly hindered*, that it might please your Lordship that I might find such favour from you that I might have the same redressed. . . .¹³

The letter contains no explanation of the matter in question, only stating that there had been some delay because "mine attorney was departed the town, and I could not then send him to your appointment," and heartily desiring "your Lordship that it will please you to give care to the state of my cause," etc.

So we see he was continuing the work for which he had been allowed the sum of £1000 per annum. It was probably the Puritans who were making trouble; they were tireless in their opposition to the theatre. How much Burghley exerted himself in this affair cannot be guessed.

A terrible plague ravaged London in 1592, closing the theatres in June. (It is referred to in *stanza* 85 of *Venus and Adonis*.) Everyone who could remained in the country, and this may have been a fortunate necessity for Oxford, who had undoubtedly reached the lowest depths of his career during the two or three previous years, consorting with his literary friends in the taverns of Eastcheap. Thomas

¹² P. 311, note. He cites *The Falkstaff Saga*, by John Dawtreay, for evidence of Sir N. Dawtreay's presence at Greenwich. (A revision of *The Merry Wives* was performed in 1593.)

¹³ Ward, p. 313; cf. Lansdowne MSS., 9674.

Nashe, in an epistle to the publisher of *Pierce Pennilesse*, wrote that "fear of infection detained me with my lord in the countrey." Though he does not identify the lord by name, what he says elsewhere about "Will Monox" makes it appear that he was Oxford.

It was at this time that Lord Oxford was especially worried about the Fair Youth's bad associations, realizing that he had only himself to blame. Southampton would, of course, have come and gone as he chose, spending only a modicum of time, as report said, at court, like another Prince Hal, and visiting the theatrical underworld (including the Boar's Head Tavern) incognito. But the wits, having learned a good deal and no doubt suspecting more, pandered to him. Nashe undoubtedly knew that he was Oxford's son, as appears from *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, of 1592. The Earl was living with his new wife at Stoke Newington, just north of Shoreditch, where the Rose and the Curtain were situated. Although in their home they maintained a style proper to their station, Oxford did not relinquish the easy convivial life to which these last years had accustomed him. He saw what was going on with regard to Southampton's demoralization, and he feared he was losing his hold upon the wayward young Earl, because he was not allowed to claim him as his son.

The only one of the literary set with whom Oxford seems to have been on terms of relaxed familiarity was Thomas Nashe. Though he was jovial at times with the others, there is occasional evidence that he kept always somewhat aloof; they spoke of him with admiration and respect often touched with awe.

It was one of these others, Robert Greene, who, on his deathbed in 1592, a month after dining on "Rhenish wine and pickled herring" with Oxford and Nashe, gave vent to the long, more or less maudlin outpouring of mingled remorse and exhortation called *Groatsworth of Wit*. Greene, who had led a riotous and dissolute life, lay dying of dropsy, half-starved and it would seem also half-drunk. He repents his sins, including that of atheism; he indulges in self-pity; he exhorts his fellow-scribes to profit by his errors. And he undoubtedly alludes to Oxford when he warns two of them as follows:

With thee I joyne young Juvenall [evidently Nashe], that byring satyrists, that lastly with me together writ a comedie. Sweet boy, I might advise thee, be advised, and get not many enemies by bitter words . . . thou hast a libertie to reprove all and name none; for none being blamed, no man is injured. Stop *shallow water running*, it will rage; tread on a *worme*, and it will turne; then blame not Schollers who are vexed with sharp and bitter lines, if they reprove thy too much liberty of reproofe.

(We suspect that this admonition arose from Nashe's having too freely portrayed Southampton in *Summer's Last Will* as arrogant and

spoiled: a "liberty of reproofe" which Oxford would certainly have resented.)

Base-minded men, Greene says his friends are, if they do not take warning from his own plight; and now he speaks of his treatment at the hands of actors:

. . . for unto none of you, like me, sought those burres to cleave; those puppets, I meane, that speake from our mouths, those anticks garnisht in our colours. . . . Yes, trust them not; for there is an *upstart crow*, beautifull with our feathers, that, with his *Tyggers heart wrapt in a Players hyde*, supposes he is as well able to *bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you*; and being an absolute Johannes Factorum, is in his *own conceit the only Shakespeare* in a countrie. O that I might intreate your rare wits to be employed in more profitable courses, and let those *apes* imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admitted inventions. . . . whilst you may, seeke you better maisters; for it is pity men of such rare wits should be subiect to the pleasures of such rude groomes.

Partly because the phrase, "Tyggers heart wrapt in a [Players] hyde," comes from 3 *Henry VI*, the reference is assumed to be to Shakespeare himself—or, by the Stratfordians, to Shaksper, whom they arbitrarily call Shakespeare. They suggest that Greene may be quoting a line of his own, that he may have written that very passage—though why should he have? In any case, this is not particularly significant, since the point he is making concerns the effrontery of actors—"pup-pits," he calls them, and "groomes," because now they were licensed as Grooms of the Chamber—who fancy their own improvisations to be as witty as those of the playwrights. Hamlet had warned against this same abuse:

And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them; for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the mean time some necessary question of the play is then to be considered; that's villanous, and shows the most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. (III.2.39-46.)

To be so bold, an actor would naturally have a "Tyggers heart." Tarleton and Kemp were both "famous for their skill in improvising." The latter, who played Dogberry, was "equally famous for extemporal wit."¹⁴ Then there was Will Tony, said by Nashe to have been the one who impersonated Martin Marprelate on the stage. And couriers were sometimes called "crows."¹⁵

¹⁴ *Shakespeare's England*; vol. II, pp. 238-9.

¹⁵ Greene may have been punning on this word, for in 1590, he had written an imaginary dialogue between Trilly, the orator, and Roscius, the actor, in which the former says: "Why, Roscius, art thou proud with *Aeschop's crow*, being pranked with the glory of others' feathers? Of thyself thou canst say nothing. . . . What sentence thou utterest on the stage flows from the censure of our wits. . . ." This certainly indicates that the "upstart crow" was an actor, not a writer.

If Southampton was indeed at this time spoiled and arrogant—and the concluding lines of Sonnets 69, 94, and 95 give evidence that Oxford was disturbed about him—his privileged position in the theater may have led him to fancy himself “the only Shake-scene in a countie.”¹⁶ In any case, Nashe was sufficiently alarmed to burst immediately into print to disclaim any part in Greene’s diatribe:

Other news I am advised of, that a scald, trivial, lying pamphlet, called Greene’s *Groatworth of Wit*, is given out to be my doing. God never have care of my soul, but utterly renounce me, if the least word or syllable in it proceeded from my pen, or if I were in any way privy to the writing or the printing of it.

Later Chettle apologized, in a foreword to *Kindheart’s Dream*, for having given any offense in publishing Greene’s wry outpouring:

About three months since, died Mr. Robert Greene, leaving many papers in sundry book-sellers hands, among others his *Groatworth of Wit*, in which a letter written to divers play-makers is offensively by one or two of them taken. . . . With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted; and with one of them I care not if I never be. The other, whom at that time I did not so much spare as since I wish I had . . . I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault, because myself have seen his *demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes*. Besides, *divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, which approves his art.*

This happens to be the cautious, deferential way the Earl of Oxford was often spoken of. And he would certainly have taken offense at Greene’s emotional and irrational outburst. However, the man’s mind was wandering at the time; his pamphlet was, as Nashe said, “trivial”; and the whole incident has been given far more importance than it merits.