CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

FOR THIS EXTRAORDINARY STORY we shall make an interlude here, returning afterwards to the early 1590's, which saw the first version of *King Lear,* as well as the composition of many heartfelt sonnets and the publication of the two poems signed "William Shakespeare," *Venus and Adonis,* and *The Rape of Lucrece.*

Our object in analyzing the plays so fully as we have done has been primarily to show their integral connection with the events of Lord Oxford's life and era, with his own personality, preoccupations, his *milieu,* and the personalities of his intimate associates: to interpret also the clues with which he so assiduously infused his works, in order to tell his story. Although he could be, like Benedick, "secret as a dumb man, but on my allegiance, mark you that,—on my

allegiance"; although his story was, as Lucio put it, "a secret (which) must be locked within the teeth and the lips," he found ways to disclose his identity, not only in the dramas but in the Sonnets as well. At times he speaks so plainly that one is amazed that generations of scholars have failed to harken. For instance, in the final poem of *The Passionate Pilgrim,* he refers to *shadows like myself,*

As take the pain, but cannot pluck the pelf,

repeating the statement when addressing the Fair Youth, in Sonnet 38:

If my slight Muse do please these curious days,
The pain be mine, but *thine shall be the praise.*

The Sonnets were not, of course, written for contemporary publication, though many of them were passed about among the Earl's friends, as was the custom of the day with poets of high degree, "who purpose not to sell." It was not until five years after Lord Oxford's death that Thomas Thorpe published the collection called *Shake-speare's Sonnets.* This was done very inconspicuously. The little book sold for the equivalent of one dollar in our money; the purpose, of course, being to send it forth to make its own way, as the poet had known it would do. Someone regarded this as a sacred trust.

In September 1591, the Earl had married again. In 1596, he and his wife settled at Hackney, where they resided for the remainder of his life. One theory is that the Sonnets came to light when the widowed Countess of Oxford was moving away from the house there, in 1609, and that W. Hall, a kind of publisher's scout, living in the village nearby, somehow got possession of them and turned them over to the printer, who expressed his appreciation by dedicating them to Hall, whose wedding had occurred nine months before.

Another theory is—and this was held by Mrs. Stopes, biographer of the Third Earl of Southampton—that the Sonnets were found by William Harvey, third husband of the Countess of Southampton, during the year following her death in 1607, while he was preparing his house for his new wife, and that *he* was the "Mr. W. H." of the cryptic dedication.

A third notion is that Bacon got hold of them and made himself responsible for their publication, writing his name in cipher upon the title-page. Perhaps Sir Horatio Vere had something to do with it all. He had been solemnly charged to clear the "wounded name" which he bore in common with the Earl. However, his name never appears in connection with either the Sonnets or the First Folio—a fact not, of course, surprising—although he was in close touch with both Southampton and the Eighteenth Earl of Oxford, in the Low Countries as well as at home.

In our opinion, whoever may have arranged for the publication, it was not because the Sonnets had come *accidentally* to light. They had been too fondly treasured by Lord Oxford ever to have been lost or misplaced. Certain it is that both Southampton and the Countess of Oxford well knew that they had been intended for posterity's eyes. Had not their author said so, again and again, in the Sonnets themselves?

> For such a time do I now fortify
> Against confounding age's cruel knife,
> That he shall never cut from memory
> My sweet love's beauty, though my lover's life:
> His beauty shall *in these black lines be seen,*
> *And they shall live, and he in them still green.* (63.)

The poet, Chapman, in one of his acidulous passages upon the Earl of Oxford, replete with E. Vere puns, described the collected Sonnets thus:

> And as the foolish poet that still writ
> All his most self-loved verse in paper royal,
> Of parchment ruled with lead, smoothed with the pumice,
> *Bound richly up, and strung with crimson strings:*
> Never so blest as when he writ and read
> The ape-loved issue of his brain, and *never*
> But joying in himself, admiring *ever.*[1]

He is evidently playing upon Oxford's own words in No. 62:

> Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye
> And all my soul and all my every part;
> And for this sin there is no remedy,
> It is so grounded inward in my heart.

But it is of his "other self," the Fair Youth, that he is speaking, for he continues,

> But when my glass shows me *myself* indeed,
> Beated and chopp'd with tann'd antiquity,
> *Mine own self-love* quite contrary I read;
> Self so self-loving were iniquity.
> *'Tis thee, myself,* that *for myself* I praise,
> Painting my age with beauty of thy days.

The book Chapman describes is surely the one we see held by Lord Oxford in the Ashbourne portrait: the portrait in which the courtier's costume has been altered—as X-ray and infra-red-ray photographs show—to one appropriate for an author of humble birth: the lace ruff painted over to appear that of a common citizen, the cape painted

[1] *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois:* II.1. "The ape-loved issue of his brain" is, of course, the plays, loved by himself as actor in them. Chapman is here making the same point Jonson makes in the secondary title of *Cynthia's Revels, The Fountain of Self-Love.*

over, the date changed, and the Trentham coat of arms (of the Earl's wife) blanked out.

It is the Book of Sonnets, which celebrates the Fair Youth—who is also "the little western flower . . . purple with love's wound," and again "beauty's rose"—which Lady Capulet cryptically describes when speaking of the County Paris (*R. and J.:* I.3.77-92):

> *Lady Capulet. Verona's* summer hath not such a *flower.*
> *Nurse.* Nay, he's a *flower;* in faith, a *very flower.*
> *Lady Capulet.* What say you? Can you love the gentleman?
> This night you shall behold him at our feast;
> Read o'er the *volume* of young Paris' face
> And find delight writ there with *beauty's* pen;
> Examine every married lineament,
> And see how one another lends *content;*
> And what *obscur'd* in this *fair volume* lies
> Find written in the margent of his eyes.
> This precious *book of love,* this *unbound lover,*
> To beautify him only lacks a cover:
> The fish lives in the sea, and 'tis much pride
> For *fair without* the *fair within* to hide:
> That *book* in *many eyes* doth share the glory
> That in gold clasps locks in *the golden story.*

This passage undoubtedly belongs to a late revision of *Romeo and Juliet.* It obviously has a secondary meaning; no one could seriously take it as a forthright description of a young man. "The golden story" is the story of the Fair Youth in the Sonnets. (We strongly suspect that "many eyes" is a pun on "many I's"; he puns thus elsewhere.)

Every kind of evidence points to the conclusion that during the 1590's the Fair Youth had assumed, as his actor's name, the pseudonym of the poet. It was as Shake-speare that the older man wrote:

> *You still shall live,* such virtue hath my pen,
> Where breath most breathes,—even in the mouths of men. (81.)

By the name "Will Shake-speare," or "William Shake-speare," he meant that the Fair Youth would live: this Will, the actor, whom Nashe, as we believe, called "Will Tony" (sometimes "Toy"), as Oxford, in his early days had called himself "Shepherd Tony," and who apparently acted only in private theatres. He himself, the real Shakespeare, the poet, would be obliterated.

> *Your name* from hence immortal life shall have,
> Though I, once gone, to all the world must die;
> The earth can yield me but a common grave,
> When you entombed in men's eyes shall lie.
> Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
> Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read;
> And tongues to be your being shall rehearse,
> When all the breathers of this world are dead. (81.)

What "name" could he have meant save that of Shakespeare, the name under which the Sonnets were to be, and finally were, published? (As for the dedications of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, these were a blind, the latter none too effective.)

In Jonson's *The Poetaster* (quarto 1602) the allusions to the two Shakespeares, as, significantly, Ovid *senior* and Ovid, added to the revelations in some of the Sonnets, are unmistakable. (" 'Tis thee, myself . . .")

Ovid, instead of conscientiously studying law, writes poetry. He reads a long poem, two lines of which are:

> *Thy* scope is mortal: *mine eternal fame,*
> Which *through the world shall ever chaunt my name;*

and winding up with an even clearer paraphrase of Sonnet 81:

> *My name shall live,* and my best part aspire.
> *Enter* Ovid, *senior,* etc.
> *Ovid se.* Your name shall live indeed, sir!

Later young Ovid says:

> I am not known unto *the open stage,*
> Nor do I traffic in their theatres;

meaning that he played only before the gentry, in private theatres, and of course at court.

In *Cynthia's Revels* (quarto 1601, but performed earlier) we have unmistakable evidence that Oxford exchanged masks—or pseudonyms—with Southampton. It is apparent that Jonson had seen some of the Sonnets in manuscript and knew by this time that the youth he called Asotus was the *son* of Amorphus, though naturally he dared not say so outright. He has the two fall in love at first sight (I.1), as was actually the case.

> *Amorphus.* Both your desert and your endeavours are plentiful . . . but your sweet disposition to *travel* . . . hath made you *another myself* in mine eyes and struck me *enamour'd on your beauties.*

(Sonnet 42 says: ". . . my friend and I are one"; No. 62, " 'Tis thee, myself.")

Asotus deplores the expense of travelling.

> *Asotus.* I think it be a great charge, though, sir.
> *Amorphus.* Charge! why 'tis nothing for a gentleman that *goes private,* as yourself. . . . (*He takes a fancy to Asotus's hat.*) 'Tis so pretty and fantastic; what! is it a *beaver?*

Now, a beaver, or a visor, in armor, was a mask for the face. Horatio recognized the Ghost because "he wore his beaver up." (*Ham.:* I.2.229.) Mercutio, demanding "a case to put *my visage* in," says, "A visor for a visor." (I.4.30.)

Asotus insists upon giving his hat to Amorphus.

> *Amorphus.* I take your love, gentle Asotus; but let me win you to receive this in exchange. (*They exchange beavers.*) . . . Sir, shall I say to you for that hat? It is a relic I could not so easily have departed with, but as the *hieroglyphic* of my affection; you shall alter it *to what form* you please, *it will take any block.* [i.e., assume any character.]

(Beatrice says of Benedick-Oxford—*M.A.:* I.1.73-5—". . . he wears his faith but as the fashion of his *hat;* it *ever* changes with the next *block.*")

The "hat," then, is simply another word for the helmet—or visor, or beaver—which bestows invisibility, as Pallas Athena's helmet did. The insignia of the conjurer Prospero's art were his "magic garment" (I.2.24) and his "hat and rapier." (V.1.84.) It is not without ulterior design that Jonson has an important scene concerning the "rapier," or spear, in *Every Man Out* (Chap. Seventy-one), while in *Cynthia's Revels* he concentrates his insinuations upon the "hat," or helmet.

When Asotus-Southampton accepts Amorphus-Oxford's hat, or mask, as the "hieroglyphic," or symbol, of his affection, he is accepting the *nom de plume* as his own. Could this be plainer? And it is the name "William Shakespeare" which "Ovid, Jr.," who is simply another presentment of Southampton, says "shall live."

Amorphus continues—and here we have another unmistakable allusion to the Sonnets,

> . . . it will preserve your complexion *to eternity;* for no beam of the sun . . . hath power to approach it by two ells.

It should be added—though we have spoken of this before—that, under pretense of teaching Asotus to be a courtier, Amorphus schools him in the profession of acting, as Prospero, more subtly, schooled Ferdinando. And Southampton's biographer, Mrs. Stopes, says that he "went to the theatre every day, first to see a play, then to hear a play, and then to study the art of actor." She had no way of knowing he had been going there since childhood.

Oh no; it was not *accidentally* that the Sonnets were found and preserved for posterity in 1609. That the Earl of Oxford intended them to live had apparently become an open secret in the literary world. Sonnet 18 expressly says:

> So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
> So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

But they could not have been published during his lifetime or that of the Queen; and it is likely that his daughters would have suppressed them, if possible, for a longer period at least.

For the Third Earl of Southampton was the son of Oxford and

Elizabeth. He was the "little changeling boy." Of this fact we shall undertake to furnish enough evidence to satisfy any reasonable mind.

It will already have become apparent to the discerning reader that in this story of Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, as author of the dramas and poems published under the pseudonym of "William Shakespeare" we are overwhelmed by a superabundance of material, a weight of evidence. (How different from the case of the Stratford man, in which every scrap of information is seized, stretched, magnified, in the hope that it may help to piece out even a faintly realistic picture! And why should it be so vague? Elizabeth's era is well-documented.) Here, especially, we find ourselves almost confounded by the wealth of testimony; for not only has Oxford told "the golden story" in the Sonnets, he has told it in the long and short poems and in the plays, insistently, pointedly, copiously; many contemporary writers have made reference to it; and quite apart from all this, certain external events speak for themselves.

Let us begin with the youthful Edward de Vere, commencing in his 'teens to write verses at court, already encouraged by the Queen, who, though seventeen years older than he, was a glamorous figure, proclaimed a beauty, with her red-gold hair, clear gray eyes, delicate white hands, and regal bearing. It was not only her beauty, grace, and authority which dazzled the young courtier, but perhaps even more her wit and learning; whereas the delight she took in him stimulated his precocious intellect and turned his vain young head. For he had beauty too, rare intelligence, and a wit surpassing that of any other among Gloriana's cultivated entourage. His "dancing and valiantness" delighted her. He was a skilled swordsman. He excelled at the tilt, as well as at hawking and in the hunt. He was as proud as she, of nobler lineage; and he had never in his life been seriously crossed. If he was quick to take offence, he was warm-hearted and generous too, and he appreciated sincerity and genuine kindness.

One of his early signed sonnets gives a picture of his relationship with the Queen and testifies to his full realization of her interest in him. We have quoted this before, but it must be repeated, as part of the story which almost tells itself.

LOVE THY CHOICE

Sonnet by Edward de Vere

Who taught thee first to sigh, alas! my heart?
  Who taught thy tongue the woeful words of plaint?
Who filled your eyes with tears of bitter smart?
  Who gave thee grief and made thy joys to faint?
Who first did paint with colours pale thy face?
  Who first did break thy sleeps of quiet rest?

Above the rest in court who gave thee grace?
  Who made thee strive in honour to be best?
In constant truth to bide so firm and sure,
  To scorn the world, regarding but thy friends,
With patient mind each passion to endure,
  In one desire to settle to the end?
Love then thy choice wherein such choice thou bind,
As nought but death may ever change thy mind.

Since no specific dates have been assigned to these early poems, we use the order which seems inherent in them.

VERSES ASCRIBED TO QUEEN ELIZABETH

When I was fair and young then favour graced me;
Of many was I sought their mistress for to be.
But I did scorn them all, and answered them therefore,
Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
  Importune me no more.

How many weeping eyes I made to pine in woe;
How many sighing hearts I have no skill to show;
Yet I the prouder grew, and answered them therefore,
Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
  Importune me no more.

Then spake fair Venus' son, that *proud victorious boy,*
And said, you dainty dame, since that you be so coy,
I will so pluck your plumes that you shall say no more
Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
  Importune me no more.

When he had spake these words such change grew in my breast,
That neither night nor day I could take any rest.
Then lo! I did repent, that I had said before
Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
  Importune me no more.
    E. of O.

"Fair Venus' son" was of course Cupid. Oxford must have been called Cupid during his early days at court, for later he was Phoebus, Apollo, etc., the Boar when he was obstreperous—his cognizance being the Blue Boar—and often, by the Queen, her Turk.[2]

In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona,* Silvia-Elizabeth says to Proteus, who represents the unruly side of Oxford (which made him forsake his wife):

Therefore be gone, *solicit me no more.* (V.4.40.)

Now, it will be noted that the poem quoted above is entitled, *Verses Ascribed to Queen Elizabeth;* yet it is signed with the initials,

[2] Partly, no doubt, to tease him for his attractiveness to women and his high-handed ways; partly as a pun on the Gaelic word, Torc, meaning Boar.

E. of O. And here we have an exact duplicate of an incident in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (II.1.108 *et seq.*), where Valentine-Oxford has written a love-letter for Silvia-Elizabeth to a "secret *nameless* friend of yours," not realizing that she had intended the letter for himself. She thanks him, saying it is "very clerkly done." And Speed, Valentine's servant, cries:

> O excellent device! was there ever heard a better?

adding presently (150):

> Why, she woos you by a *figure.*
> *Valentine.* What *figure?*
> *Speed.* By a *letter,* I should say.

Since the only "figure" in Arabic numerals which is also a "letter" is O, the implication is plain enough, even without the many Vere clues scattered throughout the scene.

> *Valentine.* Why, she hath not writ to me?
> *Speed.* What need she, when she hath made you write to yourself?—

precisely as the flirtatious Queen had made Oxford do in the verses just quoted.[3]

We are given an idea of the kind of hold Elizabeth had upon her young favorite in Valentine's words (III.1.182-4):

> She is my essence; and I leave to be,
> If I be not *by her fair influence*
> *Foster'd, illumin'd, cherish'd,* kept alive.

He was boyish, ardent, and must have been hungry for affection as well as for intellectual stimulus.

This play has enormous significance for the present question and will be consulted again. It is in fact so pointed and so personal that it was never published until the First Folio appeared.

Among the sonnets in *The Passionate Pilgrim* are several which foreshadow *Venus and Adonis* (who are of course Elizabeth and Oxford), in which Cytherea likewise does the courting.

IV.

> Sweet Cytherea, sitting by a brook
> With young Adonis, lovely, fresh, and green,
> Did court the lad with many a lovely look,
> Such looks as none could look but *beauty's queen.*
> *She told him stories to delight his ear;*
> She show'd him favours to allure his eye;

[3] A similar device is employed in *A Lover's Complaint,* where Elizabeth confides to an old rustic, who, like Touchstone and Autolycus, had been a courtier, "Sometime a blusterer, that the ruffle knew, Of court, of city," etc., the love-affair she had had with the young Earl of Oxford.

> To win his heart she touch'd him here and there,—
> Touches so soft still conquer chastity.
> But whether unripe years did want conceit,
> Or he refus'd to take her figur'd proffer,
> The tender nibbler would not touch the bait,
> But smile and jest at every gentle offer:
> Then fell she on her back, fair queen, and toward:
> He rose and ran away; ah! fool too froward.

(Note "beauty's queen." Elizabeth will be called "beauty" throughout the Sonnets.)

Numbers VI, IX, and XI in *The Passionate Pilgrim* are in this same vein, prefiguring *Venus and Adonis,* and, according to the Vere practice, probably tell the essential truth.

The record shows that in her progress of July 1572, the Queen visited Lord Oxford at Havering of the Bowre, after which, "instead of going to Enfield, she lay at Theobalds."[4] She had previously visited Havering in 1568. (Reference is made to this visit in *The Spanish Tragedy:* II.2.42, and II.4.4.) The ancient seat is described as follows:

> This charming spot . . . commands a beautiful and extensive prospect over a great part of Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, and Surrey, with a view of the Thames, and *ships continually passing.* . . . Havering Bowre was an ancient retiring place of our Saxon kings, particularly . . . Edward the Confessor. [Morant's *History of Essex* says] "When Queen Elizabeth was here in 1572 it was the property of her Lord High Chamberlain, Edward de Vere, whose first lady was Anne, daughter of the great Burghley. The park contained 1000 acres." . . . [On 22nd July] Her Majesty was at Theobalds.[5]

(Here Burghley's hospitality and love for his sovereign are extolled at length and with great emphasis.)

The Rev. Severne A. Majendie, in his *Account of the Family of the de Veres* (p. 42), speaks of Elizabeth's visit in 1572 to Havering Bowre, the property of the Earl of Oxford, "who doubtless entertained his Queen magnificently."[6]

During this same year, Gilbert Talbot wrote his father, the Earl of Shrewsbury:

> My Lord of Oxford is lately grown into great credit, for the Queen's Majesty delighteth more in his personage and his dancing and his valiantness *than any other.* . . . My Lady Burghley unwisely hath declared herself, as it were, jealous, which hath come to the Queen's ear, whereat she hath been not a little offended with her.[7]

[4] Nichols: *Progresses;* vol. I, pp. 307-8. For visit of July 14-15, 1568, p. 307, note.
[5] Op. cit.; p. 308, notes.
[6] Allen and Ward: *An Enquiry.*
[7] Ward; cit. *Illustrations of British History;* Lodge; 1791. Vol. II, p. 100.

Poole, of Newgate, remarked that "The Queen made love to the Earl of Oxford." [8]

The Earl of Oxford had married Anne Cecil in December 1571. To judge by the clearly autobiographical *All's Well,* he would seem to have been a reluctant bridegroom; and it will be recalled that the wedding had been abruptly postponed once. No wonder Lady Burghley felt considerable concern about the imperious demands made upon the young husband by the Queen.

It was before the spring of 1573 that Oxford wrote the poems published in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres.* The first which appears over the posy, *Meritum petere, grave,* has the line,

That Venus pines for burning jelousie.

Another, which we have previously quoted (Chap. Five), is headed:

An absent lover doth thus encourage his Lady to continew constant,

and begins,

Content thy selfe with patience perforce,
And quench not love with droppes of dark mistrust:
Let absence have no power to divorce,
Thy faithful friend *who meaneth to be just.*

There are a third and fourth written from the point of view of the lonely wife.[9]

He was evidently seriously disturbed by the double life he was being forced to lead, but he was certainly infatuated with the Queen. From one poem patently addressed to her, it is evident that they had been at Bath together, as is also attested by the long series of verses which brings the collection to an inconclusive conclusion, *Dan Bartholmew of Bath.* Over his acknowledged posy, *Meritum petere, grave,* he wrote:

If ever man yit found the Bath of perfect blisse,
Then swim I now amid the Sea where nought but pleasure is.
I love and am belov'd (without vaunt be it told)
Of one more fayre than she of *Greece* for whom proud Troy was sold.
As bountifull and good as *Cleopatra* Queene:
As constant as *Penelope* unto hir make was seene.
What would you more? my pen unable is to write
The least desart that seems to shine within this worthy wight.
So that for now I cease, with hands held up on hye,
And crave of God that when I chaunge, I may be forst to dye.

The last line is reminiscent of the last line of his earliest sonnet, *Love Thy Choice,* while the expression (only these italics ours) "I love and am belov'd" will be repeated in Sonnet 25:

[8] Allen: *Who Were the Dark Lady and Fair Youth?,* an unpublished brochure.
[9] See Appendix, Note 4, (2)—a, and b.

Then happy I, that *love and am belov'd,*
Where I may not remove nor be remov'd.

All the verses in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* which the editor does not definitely attribute to George Gascoigne were obviously written by Oxford himself, and of these all but about a half dozen relate to his affair with the Queen, specifically to his loyalty and her faithlessness in love.

Elizabeth's discovery of Leicester's secret marriage to Lady Sheffield probably caused her to concentrate most of her attentions upon her young favorite. (Though Leicester denied the marriage, he later recognized the son of the union.) Hatton, constant and always available, she apparently used at will.

However, as Thomas Wyat had truly said, Elizabeth was "wyld for to hold"; although she kept her Turk in her toils, she herself was frequently unfaithful. And the young Earl, adopting another posy, *Spreta tamen vivunt* (*The disdained will nevertheless live*), gave vent to his indignation and disgust at her light behavior. In this case, the rival is patently Christopher Hatton, since Oxford uses epithets which he customarily applies to the Queen's slavish and, to him, despicable, lover. We quote this poem in full, as much because of the spirited independence it shows as of the revelation it makes.

The lover being disdainfully abjected by a dame of high calling, who had chosen in his place a playe fellowe of baser condicion: doth therefore determine to step a side, and before his departure giveth hir this farewell in verse.

Thy byrth, thy beautie, nor thy brave attyre,
(Disdainful Dame, which dooest me double wrong)
Thy high estate which sets thy hart on fire,
Or new found choyce, which cannot serve thee long,
Shall make me dread, with pen for to reherse,
Thy skittish deeds, in this my parting verse.

For why thou knowest, and I my selfe can tell,
By many vowes how thou to me wert bound:
And how for joye thy hart did seem to swell,
And in delight how thy desires were drownd.
When of thy will, the walles I did assayle,
Wherein fond fancy fought for my avayle.

And for the rest my body was not brave,
But able yet of substance to allay,
The raging lust, wherein thy limbes did rave,
And quench the coales, which kindled thee to play.
Such one I was and such always wilbe
For worthy Dames, but then I meane not thee.

For thou hast caught a proper paragon,
A theefe, a coward, and a Peacocke foole:

An Asse a mylksop, and a minion,
Which hath none oyle, thy furious flames to coole,
Such one he is, a pheare for thee most fit,
A wandering guest, to please thy wavering wit.

A theefe I compt him, for he robs us both
Thee of thy name, and me of my delight: [10]
A coward is he noted where he goeth,
Since every child is macht to him in might.
And for his pride, no more but mark his plumes,
The which to prinke, he dayes and nights consumes.

The rest thy selfe, in secret sort can judge,
He rydes not me, thou knowest his sadell best:
And thogh these trickes of thine, mought make me grudge
And kyndle wrath, in my revenging brest:
Yet of my selfe, and not to please thy mind,
I stand content, my rage in rule to bind.

And farre from thee now must I take my flight
Where tongues may tell (and I not see) thy fall:
Where I may drinke these dragges of thy despight,
To purge my Melancholicke mind withall.
In secret so my stomacke will I sterve,
Wishing thee better than thou dost deserve.

There can have been no one else at court who would have written thus in outrage against this "dame of high calling." He is describing her lover precisely as Hamlet (III.2.284-8) described the Queen's. In any case, the young Earl's particular quality is evident throughout, not only his quality of expression but of personality. Under this same posy he wrote a second poem, which has lines so similar to other verses of his that they constitute a signature; for example:

And swallow like I sing, as one enforced so,
Since others reape the gainful crop, which I with paine did sowe.[11]

In January 1573, Oxford accompanied the Queen on a visit to the Archbishop at Lambeth, where they stayed all night. Another visit is

[10] Compare the following lines from "Shake-speare's Sonnets":

I do forgive thy *robbery,* gentle *thief* (No. 40),

and

Where thou art forc'd to break a twofold truth:—
Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee,
Thine, by thy beauty being false to me. (No. 41.)

[11] (1) For he that beats the bush the bird not gets,
But who sits still and holdeth fast the nets. (Letter intro. *Cardanus Comfort.*)

(2) "Wander," a word for shadows like myself,
As take the pain, but cannot pluck the pelf. (*Pass. Pilgrim; st.* XIV.)

(3) If my slight Muse do please these curious days,
The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise. (Son. 38.)

recorded by Nichols in the summer of 1573, during the progress to Kent, but who was with her at this time is not stated. Ward notes that, in March 1574, the Earl of Oxford accompanied the Queen on a visit to the Archbishop of Canterbury.[12] Nichols records this visit she paid the Archbishop on March 2, 1574, attended by members of the court, but he says nothing about the Earl of Oxford's being with her. It is glaringly evident that the documents which provide Nichols's sources have been edited, with Burghley played up and Oxford blotted, if not blotted out.[13] This is, of course, an event which Burghley would have wished deleted from the record.

In May 1574, elaborate preparations were made for a second visit by the Queen to Archbishop Parker, *but it was deferred.*[14]

Nevertheless, in May 1574, *the Queen paid another visit to the Earl of Oxford at Havering.* Gilbert Talbot writes his father, Lord Shrewsbury, on May 10:

> The Queen's Matie goeth Saturday cum se'night to Havering of the Bower, and *there remaineth tyle she begins her Progress to Bristo(l);* the gests be not drauen, but *she is determined for sertain to go to Bristo(l.)*

In Nichols's *Progresses* occurs the following notation for May 1574:

> But the Queen was now melancholy and so had been for many days; occasioned by some weighty causes of state; and *how to interpret the same was uncertain.*

On the 24th of this same month, Gilbert Talbot again writes to Lord Shrewsbury:

[12] P. 93. And see E. K. Chambers: *Elizabethan Stage;* vol. IV, p. 90.

[13] For instance, Nichols repeats as "an anecdote" the slander against the Earl that because Burghley would not intercede to save the Duke of Norfolk's life, Oxford had said "with the greatest fury that he would revenge himself by ruining his countess . . . and from that hour he treated her with the most shocking brutality and having broke her heart, sold and dissipated the most part of his great fortune." (Vol. I, p. 329, note.) This has been allowed to stand, yet its source was merely "an anecdote," unauthenticated, which Steevens says came from Camden. Wright repeats it as a historical fact in his *History of Essex.* By the time Sir Sidney Lee has interpreted it, we have the following:

"The Earl of Oxford was a poet and lover of poetry, but the new culture left no impress on his manners. Boorish and sullen tempered, Lord Burghley's new son-in-law assimilated the crude vices of the Renaissance. His nature rejected its urbanities." (*Great Englishmen of the XVI^th^ Century;* p. 70.)

This, be it noted, of the man who was *known* to have written the gracious and eloquent Introduction to Bartholomew Clerke's translation of *The Courtier* and also the prefatory letter to *Cardanus' Comfort.* But it is the characteristic method of Lee, biographer of the Stratford man, whom he calls "Shakespeare" even when quoting the signatures on the will. Sir George Greenwood, M.P., justly accuses and convicts Lee, again and again, of writing "dishonest biography."

[14] Nichols: op. cit.; p. 385. The Queen's Usher of the black Rod had been sent ahead to prepare lodgings. Arrangements were made for certain nobles, including "My Lord of Oxford."

There is some taulcke of a Progress to Bristo; but by reason of the unseasonableness of the yeare, there is greate meanes for heere not going on so long a Progress; but *her Maties greate desire is to go to Bristow. Mr. Hattoun by reason of his greate syckness is minded to go to the Spaw* for the better recoverie of his healthe.

There is no mention of when the Queen left Havering. Lord Talbot writes again, before the end of May, that she *"passed six days in retirement at Havering, and was meditating a longer progress."* But we have no further information as to where she was between the latter part of May and the 28th of June.

Since the Queen was "determined for sertain to go to Bristo (l)" in May 1574, she may have gone there. She had been there before and would go soon again. Bristol is not far from Bath. Also it is in the "west." In *The Dream,* Cupid took a certain aim

> At a fair vestal throned by the *west.*
> . . . . . .
> But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
> Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
> And the *imperial votaress* pass'd on,
> In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
> Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
> It fell upon *a little western flower,*
> Before milk-white, now *purple* with love's wound,
> And maidens call it *Love-in-idleness.* (II.1.157-68.)

This is the "purple flower" born from the blood of Adonis (*V. and A.*). It was Henry Wriothesley (or Wroseley), the "beauty's rose" (or Tudor Rose) of the Sonnets. In *Every Man Out* (II.2) Deliro says:

> But yesterday I saw thee at our *garden,*
> Smelling on *roses,* and on *purple flowers.*[15]

Shake-speare's Sonnets 153 and 154, last-numbered but, it would seem, first-written, relate an apparently mythological idyl at Bath:

> Cupid lay by his brand and fell asleep:
> *A maid of Dian's* this advantage found,
> And his love-kindling fire did quickly steep
> In a cold valley-fountain of that ground;
> Which borrow'd from his holy fire of love
> A dateless lively heat, still to endure,
> And grew *a seething Bath,* which yet men prove
> Against strange maladies *a sovereign cure.*
> But at my mistress' eye Love's brand new-fired,
> The boy for trial needs would touch my breast:
> I, sick withal, the help of Bath desired,
> And hither hied, a sad distemper'd guest;
> But found no cure: the Bath for my help lies
> Where Cupid got new fire, my mistress' eyes. (153.)

[15] This is especially pointed, since the word "garden," as well as "garland," was used for collections of verse, whether signed by "posies" or not.

> The little Love-god lying once asleep
> Laid by his side his heart-inflaming brand,
> Whilst many *nymphs that vow'd chaste life to keep*
> Came tripping by; but in her *maiden hand*
> *The fairest votary* took up that fire
> Which many legions of true hearts had warm'd;
> And so the general of hot desire
> Was, sleeping, by *a virgin hand* disarm'd.
> This brand she quenched in a cool *well* by,
> Which from Love's fire took heat perpetual,
> Growing a bath and healthful remedy
> For men diseas'd; but I, my mistress' thrall,
> Came there for cure, and this by that I prove,
> Love's fire heats water, water cools not love. (154.)

The "fairest votary" is, of course, the "imperial votaress"; "well" may be read "wyll." Both sonnets are daringly allusive.

Sir George Greenwood wrote, of Sonnets 153 and 154:

> These are but versions of a fine Greek epigram. . . . In the original the slumbering Love had given his torch to the nymphs' keeping, and they, to quench it, dip it into the waters, but the torch kindles the waters, and 'the amorous nymphs pour hot water thence into the bathing-pool.' In Shakespeare's version it is not 'amorous nymphs,' but 'nymphs that vowed chaste life to keep,' and it is not the nymphs generally, but *one of them* that is said to take up the heart-inflaming brand. This nymph is described as 'the fairest votary,' and in the companion sonnet as 'a maid of Dian's.' Who is meant? I cannot doubt that (she) is the same as 'the Imperial Votaress' of *Midsummer Night's Dream.* . . . In Sonnet 153 . . . note, 'I . . . hither hied.' Whither? Surely here is an allusion to the city of Bath, popular in Elizabethan times as 'against strange maladies a sovereign cure.' . . . In 154 . . . we have . . . 'Came there for cure.' . . . Here, then, I believe we have an allusion to the poet's 'Mistress,' the Virgin Queen, and to the city of Bath.[16]

But astute as Sir George was, he did not, certainly at this time, realize the full import of the allusion.

The 1573 collection of poems—supposed to be an anthology, but actually, in our opinion, containing the work only of Oxford and Gascoigne—which was called *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres,* because of the variety of posies used, concludes with a very long piece entitled, *The delectable history of sundry adventures passed by Dan Bartholmew of Bathe.*[17] Related by a Reporter and by Dan Bartholmew him-

[16] *The Sh. Prob. Restated;* p. 127.

[17] It is of interest that in 1133, Henry I had granted a charter for a fair to be held at W. Smithfield to his former *jester* who had turned *monk* (founder of St. Bartholomew's priory.) This fair became famous for its pigs; and reference to this fact is made in Doll Tearsheet's words to Falstaff (*2 H. IV:* II.4.235): "Thou whoreson little tidy Bartholomew boar-pig." Since Falstaff stood here for Oxford, the boar-epithet was apt. "Dan" is, of course, Cupid's first name.

self—both of whom are obviously Lord Oxford—it is the story of the early months of his love-affair with the Queen. We shall quote a series of telling excerpts.

The Reporter speaks first. Dan Bartholmew, who is very young, very passionate, and a poet, is easily recognizable from his description:

> Learned he was, and that became him best,
> For though of birth he came of worthy race,
> Yet beauty, birth, brave personage, and the rest,
> In every choice must needs give learning place.
> . . . . . .
>
> His name I hide, and yet for this discourse,
> Let call his name *Dan Bartholmew of Bathe,*
> Since in the end he thether had recourse,
> And (as he said) did skamble there in skath.
> . . . . . .
>
> For though he had in all his learned lore
> Both redde good rules to bridle fantasie,
> And all good authours taught him evermore,
> To love the meane, and leave extremitie,
> Yet kind had lent him such a qualitie,
> That at the last he quite forgat his bookes,
> And fastned fansie with the fairest lookes.
>
> For proofe, when greene youth lept out of his eye
> And left him now a man of middle age,
> His happe was yet with wandring lookes to spie
> A faire yong impe of proper personage,
> Eke born (as he) of honest parentage:
> And truth to tell, my skill it cannot serve,
> To praise hir bewtie as it did deserve.

The lady of the story, though somewhat disguised, is clearly identified; she is the "beauty" of the Sonnets.

> First for hir head, the heares were not of gold.
> But of some other metal farre more fine,
> Whereof each crinet seemed to behold,
> Like glistring wiers against the sunne that shine,
> And there withall the blazing of hir eyne,
> Was like the beames of *Tytan,* truth to tell,
> Which glads us all that in this world do dwell.
>
> Uppon hir cheekes the lillie and the rose
> Did entremeete, with equall change of hew,
> And in her gifts no lacke I can suppose,
> But that at last (alas) she was untrue.
> Which flinging fault, bycause it is not new,
> Nor seldom seen in kit(e)s of *Cressides* kind,[18]
> I mervaile not, nor beare it much in mind.

[18] This phrase is repeated by Pistol (*H.V.:* II.1.78.) The "lillie and the rose," in the first line of this stanza, are characteristic imagery. (Original italics.)

> Dame Natures frutes, wherewith her face was fraught,
> Were so frost bitten with the cold of crafte,
> That all (save such as *Cupides* snares had caught)
> Might soone espie the fethers of his shafte:
> But *Bartholmew* his wits had so bedaft,
> That all seemd good which might of hir be gotten,
> Although it proved no sooner ripe than rotten.
>
> That mouth of hirs which seemde to flowe with mell,
> In speech, in voyce, in tender touch, in tast,
> That dympled chin wherein delight did dwell,
> That ruddy lippe wherein was pleasure plast,
> Those well shapt hands, fine armes and slender waste,
> With all the gifts which gave hir any grace,
> Were smiling baites which caught fond fooles apace.

But, the narrator asks himself, why should he "strive . . . to paint her name with praise" when he had found that "of hir cage Inconstance kept the keyes,"

> And Change had cast hir honoure down in dike:
> Since fickle kind in hir the stroke did strike.

He says he will call her *Ferenda Natura:*

> I can appoint hir well no better name,
> Than this, wherein dame Nature beares the blame.

After this unmistakable description of Elizabeth, we have, in the ensuing verse, three characteristic utterances of Lord Oxford (which we italicize), Adonis to Elizabeth's Venus:

> And thus I say, when Bartholmew *had spent*
> *His pride of youth (untide in links of love)*
> Behold how happe *contrary to intent,*
> (Or *destinies* ordeined from above,
> From which no wight on earth may wel remove)
> Presented to his view *this fierie dame,*
> *To kindle coles where earst had bin no flame.*

When Dan Bartholmew had vowed "To serve this Saint for terme of all his life," he found "Lo here both roote and rind of all his strife."

The Reporter will not expatiate upon

> His *suite,* his *service,* nor his sorie fare:
> His observaunces, nor *his queynt aray,*
> His skalding sighes, nor yet his cooling care,
> . . . . . .
> But to conclude muche worth in little writte,
> The *highest flying hauke* will stoupe at laste.
> . . . . . .
>
> And when he had with mickle payne procured
> The calme consent of hir unwieldie will,
> When he had hir by *faith and troth* assured
> To lyke him beste, and ay to love him still,—

then,

> What man but he had ever such delight?

He was so much in thrall to her

> That selde he coulde hir companie eschewe,
> Or leave such lookes as might his lacke renewe.
> But if by force he forced were to parte,
> Then mighte you see howe fansie fedde his mynde,
> Then all alone he muzed on his marte.
> All companie seemd then (but hirs) unkind:
> Then sent he tokens true love for to bind,
> Then *wrote he letters, lines and loving layes,*
> So to begyle his absent dolefull dayes.

There follows a long section devoted to "Dan Bartholmew his Triumpes," with allusions to the Greek-Trojan story clearly foreshadowing *Troilus and Cressida.* Of this, one passage especially is not only so revealing but also so characteristic of Oxford's early manner that we quote it:

> Me thinks I heare hir speake, me thinks I see hir still,
> Me thinks I feele hir feelingly, me thinks I know hir will.
> Me thinks I see *the states, which sue to hir for grace,*
> Me thinks I see *one looke of hirs repulse them all apace.*
> Me thinks that houre is yet, and evermore shall be,
> Wherein my happie happe was first, hir heavenly face to see;
> Wherein I spide the writte, which woond betweene hir eyne,
> And said behold, be bold, *for I, am borne but to be thine.*[19]

"Dan Bartholmew's Dolorous discourses" record his disillusion:

> I have entreated care to cut the thread
> Which all to long hath held my lingring life.
> And now (with care) I can record those dayes,
> And call to mind the quiet life I led
> Before I first beheld thy golden rayes
> When thine untruth troubled not my hed.
> Remember thou, as I cannot forget,
> How I had layd, both love, and lust aside,
> And how I had my fixed fancie set,
> *In constant vow, for ever to abide.*[20]

He continues:

> What neede I say? thy self for me can sweare,
> *How much I tendred thee in tender yeares:*
> Thy life was then to me (God knoes) full deare,
> My life to thee is light, as nowe appears.

[19] Italics in this last line are the poet's; the others, ours. It is obvious that the reference is to the Queen.

[20] Cf. Oxford's signed sonnet, *Love Thy Choice:* "In constant truth to bide so firm and sure." (*Line* 9.)

He confesses with the candor which was one of his salient traits,

> I shame to write, in this waymenting verse,
> With how small fight I vanquisht thee in fielde;

and he is forced to admit that she forsook him for an "unworthy man," deploring the fact that, after all,

> *I found naught else but tricks of Cressyds kynde.*

He recounts his own passionate wretchedness. Then:

> And whyles in toyle, this lothsome life I lead,
> Camest thou thy selfe the fault for to confesse,
> And down on knee before thy cruell foe,
> Didst pardon crave, accusing me for all,
> And saydst I was the cause, that thou didst so,
> And that I spoon the thred of all thy thrall.
> Not so content, thou furthermore didst sweare
> That *of thy selfe thou never meant to swerve,*
> For proofe whereof thou didst the colours weare,
> Which might be wray, *what saint yu ment to serve.*
> And that thy blood was sacrificed eke,
> To manyfest thy stedfast martyrd mynde,
> Till I perforce, constraynde thee for to seeke,
> These raging seas, adventures there to finde.

The young poet could scarcely say more openly that Elizabeth blamed him for seducing her, that she never meant "to swerve" from her intention to remain chaste—to wear "the colours" of Diana: "the saint yu ment to serve"; and that her blood—or the descent of her royal line—was sacrificed to this steadfast purpose of her "martyrd mynde." Whereupon he, her lover, ran away to sea. Recalling that the Earl had evidently run away in the summer of 1571, to avoid his marriage, just as Bertram did, we can read between the lines what he was unable to disclose and can, therefore, ascribe this poem to Oxford's twenty-first year.

But he discovered that these protestations regarding her steadfast purpose and "martyrd mynde" were merely "guyles" on her part. And he began to

> beate my simple shiftlesse brayne
> For some *device,* that might redeem thy state.

This is the still young, vengeful Earl who will not rest until with "some device" he can "pay Despite his due," and who will later, as Hamlet, resolve that "the play's the thing" with which he'll "catch the conscience of the King."

He reproaches the faithless dame:

> Behold the man which ever truly ment,
> And yet accusd as author of thine yll,

Beholde the man which all his life hath spent
To serve thy selfe, and aye to worke thy will:
Beholde the man, which onely for thy love,
Did love him selfe, whome else he set but light:
Beholde the man, whose blood (for thy behove)
Was ever prest to shed it selfe outright.
And canst thou nowe condemn his loyaltie?
And canst thou crafte to flatter such a friend?
And canst thou see him sinke in jeoperdie?
And canst thou seeke to bring his life to ende?
Is this the right reward for suche desert?
Is this the fruite of seede so timely sowne?
Is this the price appoynted for his part?
Shall *truth* be thus by treason overthrowne?

This construction is typically Oxfordian.[21] There was no other poet in England writing in this manner. No wonder it was necessary for Gascoigne to claim sole authorship of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres!* The trick had to be done while the Earl of Oxford was in Europe; and the Queen appointed Gascoigne Poet Laureate immediately afterwards, Gascoigne thanking her cryptically in terms of "deep desire" and "due desert": Oxford's own expressions. This was one of the causes of Timon's disillusionment and despair; it was why he said to Alcibiades-Gascoigne:

Promise me friendship, but perform none (IV.3.73);

and,

I prithee, beat thy drum, and get thee gone. (IV.3.96.)

Coming home, in 1576, to face the scandal about his wife, Lord Oxford had not only found his finances low and himself being called "a so forth," he had also found himself conspired against, in the matter of his book, by his friend Gascoigne and his mistress, the Queen, who thus betrayed him again.

One set of verses in *Dan Bartholmew of Bathe* is entitled, "The extremitie of his Passion." The poet writes in an almost suicidal mood; indeed, he makes "His last will and Testament" and adds "The Subscription and seale," before appending "His Farewell":

Farewell deere love whome I have loved and shall,
Both in this world, and in the world to come.
. . . . . .
Farewell my lyfe, farewell for and my death,
For thee I lyv'd, for thee nowe must I dye,
Farewell from *Bathe*, whereas I feele my breath
Forsake my brest in great perplexitie,

[21] It occurs in his early poem, *Love and Antagonism*, in *The Spanish Tragedy*, in *Lucrece*, *st.* 141, in *3 H. VI:* II.5.26-40, and III.3.186-91. See Chap. Six.

Alas how welcome were this death of mine,
If I had dyde betweene those armes of thine.

To this he signs the posy, *Fato non Fortuna.*

The affair eventually took, however, a turn for the better; for the Reporter's conclusion leaves the situation up in the air; Dan Bartholmew learned that he was only one of many men who had been blind to "Cressides" tricks. But he survived, after all.

Here we have been given a very personal and direct account of de Vere's youthful entanglement with the Queen. It is interesting, and deeply moving as well, that the "Farewell" the boyish lover writes to his "deere love," is thoroughly in keeping with the last poem the Earl ever wrote to his Queen, to whom he was loyal and devoted to the end—in death as he had been throughout his life.

On June 28, 1574, young Talbot wrote his mother, Lady Shrewsbury:

> Her Matie styrreth litell abrode, and since the stay of the *Navy to sea*, here hath been all things very quieat.[22]

Upon this mention of "the sea," and recalling the description of the view from Havering of "the Thames and ships continually passing," we return to the passage from *The Dream* in which Titania—originally called "the Queen"— speaks of the little changeling boy as the child of "a votaress of my order," whom we take to be the personal aspect of the sovereign Elizabeth:

The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was *a votaress of my order:*
And, in the spiced Indian air by night,
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side,
And sat with me *on Neptune's yellow sands,*
Marking the embarked traders on the flood;
When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Following,—her womb then rich with my young squire,—
Would imitate and sail upon the land;
. . . . . .
But she, *being mortal,* of that boy *did die;*
And for her sake I do rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him. (II.1.122-37.)

The side which "being mortal . . . did die," was, we believe, the personal, maternal, not the divinely sovereign, aspect.

Now another quotation, this time from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (II.1.43 *et seq.*):

[22] Nichols: *Progresses;* vol. I, p. 388.

Valentine. But tell me, dost thou know my lady Silvia?
Speed. She that you gaze on so as she sits at supper?
. . . . . .
Is she not hard-favoured, sir?
Valentine. Not so fair, boy, as well-favoured.
. . . . . .
Speed. . . . not so fair as, of you, well-favoured.
Valentine. I mean that her beauty is exquisite, but her favour infinite.
Speed. That's because the one is painted and the other out of all count.
. . . . . .
Valentine. How esteemest thou me? I account of her beauty.
Speed. You *never* saw her since she was *deformed.*
Valentine. How long hath she been *deformed?*
Speed. Ever since *you loved her.*
Valentine. I have loved her *ever* since *I* saw her, and still I see her beautiful.
. . . . . .
Speed. Because Love is blind. . . .
Valentine. What should I see then?
Speed. Your own *present folly* and her *passing deformity.* . . .

There is no explanation in the play of any "deformity" on the part of Silvia. How can we possibly take it but as the same kind of "passing deformity" which precedes birth—the kind that caused the "votaress of my order," in *The Dream,* to walk upon "Neptune's yellow sands . . . with pretty and with swimming gait?"

So we have Elizabeth at Havering, with a view of "ships continually passing," at the close of May 1574, and Talbot later writing that "since the stay of the Navy to sea, here hath been all thinges very quieat."

Then Talbot writes Lord Shrewsbury, June 28, 1574:

> The Queen remaineth sad and pensive in the month of June . . . [it seemed] she was so troubled for some important matters then before her. It was thought she would go to Bristow [Bristol.] . . . Mr. Hattoun (not well in health) took this opportunity to get leave to go to the Spaw, and Dr. Julio [the Queen's court-physician] with him, whereat the Queen shewed herself very pensive, and very unwilling to grant him leave, for he was her favourite.

Since this information came from Lord Talbot, the Queen's apparent unwillingness to allow Hatton to go was, of course, his own idea, or court-gossip perhaps. No doubt Elizabeth, past-mistress of the art of dissimulation, feigned this very convincingly. But the fatuous Hatton would certainly never have left her side, had she really wished him to remain.

Talbot's letter to his father continues significantly:

> As also that the Lord Treasurer Burghley intending to wait upon the Queen when she came to Woodstock, as she had appointed him, Secretary Walsingham signified to him, that he, with the Lord Keeper, *should tarry at London; the cause whereof was unknown to the Lord Treasurer, but seemed to surprise him;* but he said he would do as he was commanded. The Queen seemed *apprehensive of some danger* in her absence *(which might give occasion to her melancholy),* and therefore thought it advisable for these staid counsellors to remain behind.

We believe the child was born in June. The Queen had been "apprehensive" and "melancholy"; she had sent both Hatton and the great court-physician, Dr. Julio, to the Continent; and she refused to see her chief ministers. Of course, one can scarcely expect to find a more definite record than this!

The Queen's visit to the Archbishop of Canterbury, in March 1574, with Lord Oxford, seems highly significant. She planned to go again in May but changed her mind. In those days a betrothal ceremony with an exchange of rings was as binding as a marriage. There is much emphasis given in the plays to an exchange of rings between lovers, and a very clear statement made in certain unsigned poems which we take to be de Vere's.[23] Not to be overlooked are a pair of scenes from *Twelfth Night* which concern Olivia-Elizabeth and Sebastian. Naturally the dramatist was compelled to be indirect, but he has said that he and his son are one, and thus we read Oxford himself here for Sebastian, the time alluded to being the early 1570's.

Enter Olivia and a Priest.
Olivia. Blame not this haste of mine. If you mean well,
Now go with me and with this holy man
Into the chantry by; there, before him,
And underneath that consecrated roof,
Plight me the full assurance of your faith.
. . . . . .
Sebastian. I'll follow this good man, and go with you;
And *having sworn truth, ever will be true.*[24]
Olivia. Then lead the way, good father; and heavens so shine
That they may fairly note this act of mine! (IV.3.22-35).

Undoubtedly Lord Oxford believed in the Queen's sincerity, and perhaps she herself did in that high moment. The other passage is the Priest's testimony:

Priest. A contract of eternal bond of love,
Confirm'd my mutual joinder of your hands,
Attested by the holy close of lips,
Strengthen'd by *interchangement of your rings;*
And all the ceremony of this compact
Seal'd in my function, by my testimony. (V.1.156-61.)

[23] For examples of these, see Appendix, Note 5, (1) and (2).
[24] Cf. final couplet, Son. 123, addressed to Q. Eliz.:
This I do *vow,* and this shall *ever* be:
I will be *true,* despite thy scythe and thee.

We have here a description of an Elizabethan betrothal ceremony, tantamount to marriage. An absolute Tudor monarch would hardly have allowed any such circumstance as a "pre-contract" to Anne Cecil to interfere with having the husband she believed she wanted. (Angelo was Mariana's "husband on a pre-contract."—*M. for M.*: IV.1.73). However, it is always possible that Elizabeth's and Oxford's betrothal had taken place before his *mariage de convenance* to Anne, and that there had been some private ceremony when the time arrived to hallow the Fair Youth's name. For in Sonnet 108, the poet says:

> . . . thou mine, I thine,
> Even as when first *I hallow'd thy fair name.*

This would explain Bertram's running away from Helena and Oxford's running away from his wedding to Anne. The proud young Earl of Oxford would have been shocked by the falsity of a secondary alliance contracted for the sake of expediency. (There is a pointed passage on this subject in *Richard III*—III.7.176-90—of which we shall speak later.)

Exactly what happened is a mystery that may never be solved. But the son who was born seems not to have been considered altogether a bastard, as ensuing developments show.

In his letter of June 28, 1574, Gilbert Talbot wrote his mother:

> The young Earl of Oxford, of that ancient and Very family of the Veres, had a cause or suit, that now came before the Queen; which she did not answer so favourably as was expected, checking him, it seems, for his unthriftiness. And hereupon his behaviours before her gave her some offence.

Young Talbot is merely relaying court-gossip. We do not know what the "cause or suit" may have been about, if indeed there were any such matter.

A notation in the State Papers dated July 8 [18?], 1574, says:

> The Earl of Oxford departed into Flanders without the Q Licence, and was revoqued by the Q. sending the Ge. Pensioners for hym.[25]

Ambassador Killigrew at Edinburgh wrote Walsingham July 18:

> My Lord of Oxford and Lord Seymour are fled out of England, and passed by Bruges to Brussels.[26]

Then strangely—and yet perhaps not so, after all!—we read that *the Second Earl of Southampton has fled to Spain.*[27]

[25] Kittle: *George Gascoigne;* cit. A Coll. of *State Papers,* 1571–96 (Wm. Murdon; 1769; p. 775).
[26] Ward; p. 93.
[27] Stopes: *The Third Earl of Southampton.* And Ward; p. 94; cit. S.P.Dom. Add. Edw. Woodshaw to Ld. B., Sept. 3, 1574, from Antwerp. This letter, written several months later, discusses the effect in Holland of the two Earls' departure.

(It is of especial interest in this connection to recall that Leicester ran away in 1561, the year his son was said to have been born to the Queen. No doubt she had with some violence blamed him for making her "swerve" from her steadfast purpose, just as she was later to blame Dan Bartholmew of Bath.)

In less than two weeks Lord Oxford was at home again. And in September the Second Earl of Southampton thanks Sussex for informing him of the Queen's "good opinion" of him. So whatever it was that had sent Lord Oxford and the elder Southampton fleeing from England was eventually smoothed out, both had been forgiven, and all was well.

It would have been quite in character if Elizabeth had flouted both of them and turned upon them in a rage. And surely the cause of the tempest would have been the "little changeling boy" whom Oxford yearned to have her acknowledge and whom she had decided to bestow upon the Second Earl of Southampton, to pass for his child who had been born in October 1573. She had resolved not to recognize the boy as her own, but calmly to pass on, "in maiden meditation, fancy free," maintaining the legend of her chastity.

An indication of her reasoning appears in a remark she made to La Mothe Fénelon on December 17, 1573: "The most gallant gentleman, and the most accomplished, who dwells today amongst mortal men, is nothing to me if he is not of royal blood and lineage." [28] It would be enlightening to know what provoked this statement. The Queen was certainly describing, whether admittedly or not, the Earl of Oxford, and announcing her resolution not to accept him as her husband. The chances are that Fénelon knew very well whom she meant.

At a later date she asserted that she would never marry a man younger than herself—this tacitly apropos of the Alençon match—for he might come to despise her, and she could not bear that.

All the known facts would seem to place the baby's birth in the summer of 1574, as we have said, in June. For besides, in July, the Queen's progress began, a very elaborate one. And Oxford ran away: like the repudiated lover, Dan Bartholmew of Bath, who was constrained

> . . . for to seeke
> These raging seas, adventures there to finde.

The Queen was still on her progress when, after his return, he made his peace with her, on August 7. Burghley notes that he was absent with Elizabeth on the progress from August 5 to September 16.[29]

Reporting to the Queen Regent of France on Elizabeth's progress,

[28] F. Chamberlin: *The Sayings,* etc.; cit. *Recueil des Dep.,* Cooper.
[29] Ward; p. 97.

Fénelon wrote that Queen Elizabeth was *"bien joyeuse de ce le comte d'Oxfort est rétourné à son mandement."* [30]

This time it is recorded that the Queen went to Bristol. Her first visit noted was to Sir Edward Umpton. From there she proceeded to Woodstock.

> On the 14th August the Queen arrived at Bristol. . . . [She was entertained at Wilton by] Henry [Second] Earl of Pembroch. . . . [After an elaborate celebration] Her Highnesse lay at Wilton House that Friday night, the Saturday and Sunday nights following; and on the Munday . . . removed to Salisbury; during all which time *her Majesty was both merry and pleasant.* . . . On the 5th of September, the Earl of Leicester writes that *"the Queen's health was much better."* [31]

Lord Oxford was with her at this time. His overture to the Queen for their reconciliation was written from the standpoint of a delinquent lover and one who, as Lord Great Chamberlain, was official Water-Bearer to the Monarch. Oxford was both.

> O! never say that I was false of heart,
> *Though absence seem'd my flame to qualify.*
> As easy might I from myself depart
> As from my soul, which in thy breast doth lie:
> That is my home of love: if I have rang'd,
> Like him that travels, I return again;
> Just to the time, not with the time exchang'd,
> So that *myself bring water for my stain.*
> Never believe, though in my nature reign'd
> All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,
> That it could so preposterously be stain'd,
> To leave for nothing all thy sum of good;
> For nothing this wide universe I call,
> Save thou, *my rose;* in it thou art my all. (Son. 109.)

(This was no doubt first written in his earlier manner and later polished, according to his inveterate practice.)

In his edition of *The Sayings of Queen Elizabeth,* Frederick Chamberlin remarks of these sayings that:

> They prove her great and small . . . broad and narrow . . . patient and irritable . . . slow and fast . . . strong and weak . . . bold and cautious . . . cruel and kind . . . brave and timid . . . hard and yielding . . . resolute and vacillating . . . direct and tortuous . . . steadfast and shifting . . . generous and miserly . . . constant and fickle . . . proud and modest . . . vain and simple . . . trustworthy and faithless . . . a good friend and a bad friend . . . loyal and treacherous . . . a saint and a murderess . . . truthful and a liar . . . sincere and a hypocrite . . . Catholic and Protestant. They prove her with only one principle—to make her country great!

[30] *Correspondence Diplomatique.* VI.205.
[31] Nichols: op. cit.

He quotes *in extenso* the prayers of Elizabeth's own composition written in her own hand, in Latin, Greek, French, Italian, English, and bound in a small jewelled book which she carried to her devotions for many years.

While we realize that it is not judicial to regard as "evidence" what a person says to the Almighty in a spirit of self-abnegation, we quote here several passages from her prayers for what they may be worth:

> . . . I know my transgressions, and the deeds I have wrought; but this, also, I know—that the greatness of my sins does not exceed the manifold long-suffering of my saviour. For thou didst not drive from thee *the sinful woman who approached thee with tears,* nor didst thou reject the publican. . . . etc. (This from the Greek prayer.)
>
> . . . Thou seest *whereof I came, of corrupt seed, what I am, a most frail substance:* where I live in a world full of wickedness: where *delights be snares,* where dangers be imminent, where sin reigneth, and death abideth. . . . (From her English prayer.)
>
> . . . I confess without hypocrisy that *I do not deserve to be honoured and served,* but forever should be abandoned and covered with disgrace. Nevertheless thou knowest that I am sorry and grieved that I have human infirmities. . . . Alas, my God, do not judge me according to my deeds, for *they are polluted.* . . . Have thou pity for me. . . . Govern me and defend me and my people against all my enemies . . . plotting always treason as work of iniquity. *Preserve then the mother and the children who have been given to her,* for thus we may better serve thee and thy (?devoted) Church. . . . (From the French prayer.) (Our italics.)

In an Appendix to Volume I, Nichols' *Progresses* records a prayer Elizabeth made at the conclusion of her 1574 progress. She thanks God for the

> manifold mercies bestowed . . . but spetially for *thy mighty protection and defence over me, in preserving me in this long and dangerous journey,* as also from the beginning of my lyfe unto this present howre from *all such perils as I should most justly have fallen into for myne offences.*

These confessions speak for themselves and seem to us to reveal the type of personal guilt which was uppermost in Elizabeth's mind. Even if we let pass the "sinful woman" as only one of a series of sinners cited, we cannot fail to seize the meaning of the "corrupt seed" whereof she came and her consequent frailty. ("Frail" was Oxford's word for the Queen from his earliest poems through *Hamlet.*) And as for the "mother and the children who have been given to her" —the guileless will take this to mean the sovereign and her people, while we who have learned to be wary will reflect that it is most unusual for Elizabeth to speak thus: she usually calls herself the Prince in this connection: she was anything but a maternal woman. But she knew her "Lorde God" would know precisely what she meant. As for us, we believe that, in her spirit of reverent humility, she was unwilling to withhold thanks for the children of her own who had been

"given her." In regard to her "journey," the *progress* had not been unduly "long" or "dangerous."

* * * * * * *

Concerning the part the Southamptons played in the story, we know a few pertinent facts. On June 18, 1570, Henry Wriothesley, Second Earl of Southampton, had been arrested for complicity with Bishop Ross in the Ridolfi plot. Kept in custody at first, he was committed to the Tower for life in October 1571, remaining there a year and a half, when by Elizabeth's order, he was returned to the custody of Sir William More at Loseley. On *May 5, 1573,* his wife was permitted to visit him; and in July he was released.

Early in *October, 1573,* the Second Earl of Southampton wrote to Sir William More that "this present morning" his "wife was delivered of a goodly boy."

There is no record of this "goodly boy's" having been christened, although among the nobility christenings were important ceremonials. The date of his birth has been fixed as October 6.

Mrs. Charlotte Stopes, who spent eight years in research, in order to write the life of the Third Earl, and who afterwards felt that her own life had been a failure because she had been unable to find proof of any connection between him and William Shakespeare, states that "It has always been said he was 'the second son,' but there is no authority for that."

What if he was, indeed, "the second son"? The Encyclopaedia Britannica says unqualifiedly that he was. What if the first—who certainly must have been a five-months' baby if born on October 6, 1573—had died, and Henry, the Third Earl, was a "little changeling boy"? What if the Countess of Southampton's child had been illegitimate? There is a dearth of information regarding the Third Earl's childhood, and the omission of a christening-record is for those times most unusual. Mrs. Stopes, puzzled though all unsuspicious, writes:

> I have been able to find only two MS references to the Wriothesley baby during his whole childhood. The first is the will of his grandmother, the Lady Jane, 26th July, 1574. By it she left various bequests "to my Son's son, Harry, Lord Wriothesley." This gives us at least the clue to his baby-name, and a reference to his baby "expectations."

Surely that again is strange for the scion of a noble house, one of the most famous earls in English history!

In 1577, the Second Earl and his wife separated; and the boy, still under four years of age, saw Lady Southampton no more during her husband's lifetime. In 1581 when the Second Earl died, he became a Royal Ward.

His own father—as we believe—who had evidently been begging the Queen for the boy—

> Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
> I do but beg a little changeling boy
> To be my henchman—

must have seen him at this time. Then he would have written Sonnet 104 in 1584; for he says:

> . . . Three winters cold
> Have from the forests shook three summers' pride,
> Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turn'd
> In process of the seasons have I seen,
> Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burn'd,
> Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.

Let us revert for a moment to a letter the Earl of Oxford had written Burghley from Europe in 1575, in reply to the announcement that he was soon to become a father: "My Lord, Your letters have made me a glad man . . . for now it hath pleased God to give me a son of my own (as I hope it is)," etc. Is not this a rather curious expression, "a son of my own"? Would not most prospective young fathers merely say, "to give me a son"? The explanation might be that he already had a son who was *not* his own. Lord Oxford was not careless in his use of words.

Elizabeth must at last have allowed him to have the boy to be his "henchman," or page. She was now in love with someone else—Ralegh, or Hatton again, perhaps. Oberon speaks of having met Titania "behind the wood,"—

> Her dotage now I do begin to pity:
> For, meeting her of late behind the wood,
> Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool,
> I did upbraid her and fall out with her;
> . . . . . .
> When I had at my pleasure taunted her,
> And she in mild terms begg'd my patience,
> I then did ask of her her changeling child:
> Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent
> To bear him to *my bower in fairy land.* (IV.1.49-63.)

The words "fairy land" may mean the world of make-believe, the theatre, for Southampton seems to have begun at once acting in his father's plays: in other words, was "made ape," like the little Page in *2 Henry IV.* We are bound to infer that he took the part of the diminutive Moth, Armado-Oxford's page in *Love's Labour's Lost,* of the young Lucius, son of Lucius-Oxford in *Titus Andronicus,* of Ariel in *The Tempest* and of Puck in *The Dream,* the tiny Page in *2 Henry IV* and *The Merry Wives,* of Mamilius in *The Winter's Tale.* Later, he played the parts of Viola and Rosalind, Lorenzo, the youthful Oxford, and so on. It was said of the young Earl of Southampton that he could not be kept away from the theatre.

We have spoken (Chap. Forty-six) of the gossip which was rife at the time Elizabeth was said to have had a son by Leicester, in 1561. Evidently at this time, 1574, even more care was taken to impose secrecy; but one very curious item cropped up in an out-of-the-way place which indicates that someone had confused the Queen's son, named Henry, with Arthur, the son she had by Leicester. It is quoted as of small consequence by Frederick Chamberlin in *The Private Character of Queen Elizabeth:* [32]

> The Maiden Queen's Son.—An entry in a well-kept, partially illuminated MS., preserved in the free school at Shrewsbury, runs as follows:—'Henry Roido Dudley Luther Plantagenet, filius Q.E. reg. et Robt. comitis Leicester.' Are any other facts in existence relating to this son of the 'Maiden Queen', beyond the tradition preserved at Shrewsbury regarding his having been brought up at this school? The MS. in question was the parish church book, and the entry is supposed to be in the handwriting of Sir John Dycher, who was then Vicar of Shrewsbury. *Antiquary* iii, May 24, 1873; p. 250.

Follows a Note to p. 6: The *Antiquary* for June 7, 1875.

> The MS., in which the entry mentioned is found is thus referred to in the list of Benefactions.—'1606. John Dicher, Clerk, Vicar of Shabury,' etc. . . . On the third page of this book, on the margin, is scribbled the entry noted by your correspondent. This appears to have been written merely as a piece of passing scandal in the book. . . . It is erased by a later ink which is faded. There is nothing official in this entry . . . and the book is not the parish book in the ordinary sense of the word. The handwriting is not that of John Dicher, Vicar.

Of course it is not "official." Nothing official would have been permitted. But the point of interest for us is that someone took the trouble to record that the Queen had had a son named "Henry Roido" etc., assuming Leicester to have been the father; whereas we believe the Queen had, indeed, had a son named Henry Wriothesley: pronounced Roseley; which is not very different from "Henry Roido." A person who had not only heard the name but had also seen it written might have made such a mistake.

Enormous care must have been taken to erase every possible reference to the true identity of Henry Wriothesley. But the perfect crime has never yet been executed: there is always a slip. As Launcelot says (*M.ofV.:* II.2.78-80):

> Give me your blessing; truth will come to light; murder cannot be hid long; a man's son may, but, in the end, truth will out.

And whoever supposes the author had no personal esoteric meaning in this passage is hereby politely informed that he errs.

[32] P. 188; second note; p. 203.