

CHAPTER EIGHTY-FIVE



JAMES WAS PROCLAIMED KING on March 24, 1603. Before he left Edinburgh, on April 5, he issued an order for the release of Southampton from the Tower. Since there had been no opposition to his accession, he could afford to do honor to Essex's friend as well as to the Earl of Oxford, for whom many subsequent acts on his part indicated that James had a high esteem.

On his leisurely way south, the new monarch was entertained at Belvoir Castle by the Earl of Rutland, at Burghley by Thomas Cecil, now Lord Burghley, and at Theobalds, "where he met his secret correspondent, Sir Robert Cecil, for the first time, in the flesh."¹

Shortly before his arrival there, Cecil received the following letter from Lord Oxford, requesting instructions:

Sir, I have always found myself beholden to you for many kindnesses and courtesies; wherefore I am bold at this present, which giveth occasion of many considerations, to desire you as my very good friend and kind brother-in-law to impart to me what course is devised by you of the Council and the rest of the Lords concerning our duties to the King's

¹ Ward, p. 340.

Majesty; whether you do expect any messenger before his coming to let us understand his pleasure, or else his personal arrival to be presently or very shortly. And if it be so, what order is resolved amongst you either for the attending or meeting of His Majesty; for by reasons of mine *if my house is not so near that at every occasion I can be present as were fit, either I do not hear at all from you or at least the latest; as this other day it happened to me, receiving a letter at nine of the clock, not to fail at eight of the same morning to be at Whitehall; which being impossible, yet I lasted so much (that) I came to follow you into Ludgate, though through press of people and horses I could not reach your company as I desired, but followed as I might.*

I cannot but find great grief in myself to remember the Mistress which we have lost, under whom both you and myself from our greenest years have been in a manner brought up; and although it hath pleased God after an earthly kingdom to take her up into a more permanent and heavenly state, wherein I do not doubt but she is crowned with glory; and to give us a Prince wise, learned, and enriched with all virtues, yet (considering) the long time which we spent in her service, we cannot look for so much left of our days to bestow upon another, neither the long acquaintance and kind familiarities wherewith she did use us, we are not ever to expect from another Prince as denied by the infirmity of age and common course of reason.

(It is clear that the Earl of Oxford felt bereaved if not crushed by the Queen's death: something of himself was gone; he felt incomplete and at a loss. It is also clear that Robert Cecil used no special consideration towards him.)

In this common *shipwreck* mine is above all the rest, who *least regarded though [most] often comforted of all her followers*, she hath left to try my fortune among the alterations of time and chance, either without sail whereby to take advantage of any prosperous gale, or with anchor to ride till *the storm* be overpast.²

There is nothing therefore left to my comfort but the excellent virtues and deep wisdom wherewith God hath ended our new Master and Sovereign Lord, who doth not come amongst us as a stranger but as a natural Prince, succeeding by right of blood and inheritance, not as a conqueror but as the true shepherd of Christ's flock to cherish and comfort them.

Here, although we have the same feudal attitude towards an anointed sovereign expressed in *Richard II*, we find a new religious note in the Earl's utterance. The man who not many years before had written, "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow," in bitter negation and proud skepticism, had been humbled by disappointment, frustration, and grief, as well as weakened by his terrific expenditure of cre-

² See Appendix, note 4 (3) b, for an early expression of this same idea. For "mine infirmity," in par. 1, above, see Prospero's speech (*Temp.*: IV.1.160.) It is to be noted that, in the transcription of this letter, the spelling has been modernized; but the editors of the plays have left the spelling "wrack" and "shipwreck." There are other characteristic Shakespearean phrases here: "our greenest years," etc.

ative energy. This seems to us one of the saddest features of his brilliant yet tragic life, that even his intellectual poise was now shaken. Of course, Edward de Vere always officially upheld the conventions of his time, but the attitude he expressed in the above paragraph corresponds in general tone with Wolsey's speeches of resignation, as well as with Sonnet 146. No longer would he struggle with his demon, the "invisible commander," or ravage his strength in rebellion. As a man he had lost what he held most dear: his soul must profit by his defeat. It almost seems that, with Elizabeth's death, he felt his own life was finished. If we are to judge by the attitude in similar circumstances of Kent towards Lear and the Bastard towards King John, and by the sense of mystic unity voiced in *The Phoenix and the Turtle*, he did feel so.

His letter concludes:

Wherefore, I most earnestly desire (of) you this favour, as I have written before, that I may be informed from you concerning these points. And thus recommending myself unto you, I take my leave.

Your assured friend and unfortunate brother-in-law,

E. OXFORD³

There are certain passages in *King Henry VIII* so strikingly illustrative of Lord Oxford's feelings at this time that we cannot forbear to quote a few of them. Queen Katharine's speech to her attendants, whom her death will leave friendless and unprotected, expresses Oxford's sense of being forsaken and anonymous; indeed, he uses the very word he had used in his letter to Cecil:

Alas! poor wretches, where are now your fortunes?
Shipwreck'd upon a kingdom where no pity,
No friends, no hope; no kindred weep for me;
Almost no grave allow'd me. Like the lily,
That once was mistress of the field and flourish'd,
I'll hang my head and perish. (III.1.147-52.)

He felt great sympathy for Katharine, for she, too, had been abandoned by a monarch, her consort, to whom she had given the best of her life.

While he naturally does not altogether identify himself with Wolsey—in whose character one finds echoes of old Burghley, notably in Buckingham's speech, beginning, "This holy fox" (I.1.158), and part of Griffith's (IV.2.48)—yet Wolsey's renunciation of worldly glory is distinctly his own. And so we have the Earl of Oxford of 1603, elderly now, as a man of more than fifty was in that day, expressing his resignation in Wolsey's moving words:

³ Ward, cit. Hatfield MSS., 99-150. Endorsed: "25/27th April 1603, Earl of Oxford to my master."

... Nay then, farewell!
I have touch'd the highest point of all my greatness;
And from the full meridian of my glory,
I haste now to my setting: *I shall fall*
Like a bright exhalation in the evening,
And no man see me more. (III.2.223-8.)

In other words, like the Star of England, falling into oblivion.

Farewell! a long farewell, to all my greatness!
This is the state of man: today he puts forth
The tender leaves of hopes; tomorrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost;
And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do. I have ventur'd,
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
This many summers in a sea of glory,
But far beyond my depth: *my high-blown pride*
At length broke under me, and now has left me,
Wearied and old with service, to the mercy
Of a rude stream that must for ever hide me.
Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye:
I feel my heart new-open'd. *O! how wretched*
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours!
There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
The sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars or women have;
And when he falls, *he falls like Lucifer,*
Never to hope again. (III.2.352-73.)

This speech is a symbolic biography of Lord Oxford and his acceptance of annihilation. In 1583, Burghley had written Hatton about Oxford's "fall in her [Majesty's] Court." Lucifer was not only the proud angel who fell into the depths of hell: Lucifer is also "the light-bringing morning star."⁴ Mindful of all this, the dramatist had said, in the person of Antony:

When my good stars . . .
Have . . . shot their fires
Into the abyssm of hell.

Lord Oxford is expressing his own feeling again in Wolsey's statement about the new "fortitude of soul" he feels (III.2.389).

If another hand did finish, or edit, this play—and perhaps, because Wolsey says to Cromwell, "I taught thee," William Stanley did in part, or Fletcher: no one knows—Cromwell's words might have come from that loving hand:

O my Lord!
Must I then leave you? must I needs forgo
So good, so noble, and so true a master?
The king shall have my service; but my prayers
For ever and for ever shall be yours. (III.2.422-8.)

But Wolsey's reply—in part, at least—is utterly Oxford:

Cromwell, *I did not think to shed a tear*
In all my miseries; but thou hast forc'd me,
Out of thy honest truth, to play the woman.
... when I am forgotten, *as I shall be,*
And sleep in dull cold marble, *where no mention*
Of me more must be heard of, say I taught thee,
Say Wolsey, that once trod the ways of glory,
And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,
Found thee a way, out of his wrack, to rise in.
Cromwell, I charge thee, *fling away ambition:*
By that sin fell the angels. . . .
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,
And God's, and truth's. . . .
And my integrity to heaven is all
I dare now call mine own. O Cromwell, Cromwell!
Had I but serv'd my God with half the zeal
I serv'd my king, he would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies. (III.2.429-38.)

So Elizabeth had left him—with the Fair Youth in the Tower and Cecil at the helm of the ship of state. "She hath left [me]," he wrote, "to try my fortune . . . either without sail whereby to take advantage of any prosperous gale, or with anchor to ride till the storm be overpast." Wolsey had felt no more bereft than Lord Oxford did when those words were written.

In any case, why should *Wolsey* say there must be "no mention" of him "heard of" after his death? There has been a great deal, in the natural order of things: his name and his story have survived. It is the Earl of Oxford speaking here, and speaking prophetically; for there has been almost "no mention" of the fact that *he*, Edward de Vere, "once trod the ways of glory, And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour." When Wolsey finishes with,

Farewell
The hopes of court! my hopes in heaven do dwell,

⁴ (Oxford Dict.) It is, therefore, the herald of the dawn (*anthe*): Oberon (Anthe-ron).

he is speaking precisely as Oxford speaks in Sonnet 146. This is beyond all doubt the noble Shakespeare's farewell.

But Sir Robert Cecil, the Queen's Principal Secretary and confidential adviser, who had been in secret correspondence with James for some years before her death, authoritatively reported that the Queen's last words to him had been pronounced upon that very day:

I will that a King succeed me, and who should that be but my nearest kinsman, the King of Scots?

There is a marked discrepancy in the stories. This one has it that Cecil and Lord Keeper Edgerton had put the question to her the day before she died, and such they stated had been her reply. Interesting that the Queen had said the very thing Cecil had wished her to say, in words that sounded, oddly enough, like a paraphrase of her statement to the Lord Admiral. But Robert Cary declared that the Queen had been *unable to speak at all on the day before she died*, but had simply made a sign accepting James. However, Cecil would have interpreted any word or sign in the way he wished, and the Council would have concurred. For many months his authority had been supreme. Incidentally, he had settled the succession with James long ago. "The gratuities, amounting to many thousands of pounds, and the annuity of £2500, subsequently raised to £5000, granted to King James, would have been common knowledge at Court." ⁷ Elizabeth's dictum was no longer important.

Of course, after Cecil's declaration of the Queen's ultimatum, the matter was settled. And Oxford seems to have given up. He acquiesced in James's sovereignty with a good grace and gave him his loyal allegiance.

Wolsey had said that the removal of the King's support had left him naked to his enemies. After the death of King Henry IV, the Lord Chief Justice felt similarly forsaken:

The service that I truly did his life
Hath left me open to all injuries. (2*H.IV*: V.2.7-8.)

The Earl of Oxford knew that Robert Cecil was not really his friend. Whether he believed him a positive enemy is uncertain; but Oxford would surely have counted it an injury, a most serious one, that Cecil had so maneuvered affairs that James's accession had been inviolably assured, to say nothing of having put into the Queen's mouth the definite statement that James was her "nearest kinsman." It is not, of course, for us to pass judgment upon the practical wisdom of Cecil's machinations. Even if he had had any respect for Southampton's abilities, he would have abhorred the idea of his claim's being publicly recognized. However, Hume called James a "base craven." ⁸ And

Southampton, already a splendid soldier, developed into a man of integrity and personal distinction. Cecil was, as usual, looking out for Cecil.

The fact remains that Oxford believed Southampton the rightful heir to the throne, and, quite apart from his deep devotion to his son, he had an inbred dynastic fervor which could not have failed to influence his attitude. Elizabeth's statement to Lord Howard showed the same conviction. Robert Cecil was too much his father's son, too consummate a politician, not to have handled the situation with great finesse; while Oxford, with his new religious acceptance and charity of spirit, to say nothing of his weariness, remained forbearing. But one notes that the two business letters he wrote his brother-in-law after James was proclaimed King are more formal than heretofore and, though kindly, contain fewer protestations of warmth.

These two last letters were written between the Proclamation of March 24th and the Coronation, July 7th. We quote the first practically in full for the mention made of Havering, the beautiful estate where, it will be remembered, Elizabeth had twice visited the young Earl of Oxford during the height of their romance, also for the reference to Henry VIII, about whom Lord Oxford had so recently been writing his final drama, and further for certain characteristic utterances which speak for themselves.

My very good Lord, I understand by Master Attorney that he hath reported the state of my title to the Keepership of the Forest of Waltham and of the House and Park of Havering, whereby it appears to His Majesty what right and acquit is therein. Till the 12th of Henry VIII. mine ancestors have possessed the same, almost since the time of William Conqueror;⁹ and at that time—which was the 12th year of Henry VIII.—the King took it for term of his life from my grandfather; since which time, what by the alterations of Princes and *Wardships*, I have been kept from my rightful possession; yet from time to time both my father and myself have, as opportunities fell out, not neglected our claim. Twice in my time it had passage by law, and judgment was to have been passed on my side; whereof Her Majesty the late Queen, being advertised, with *assured promises and words of a Prince to restore it herself unto me*, caused me to let fall the suit. But so it was *she was not so ready to perform her word, as I was too ready to believe it*; whereupon pressing my title further, it was by Her Majesty's pleasure put to arbitrament; and although it was an unequal course, yet *not to contradict her will the Lord Chancellor, Sir Christopher Hatton, was sole arbiter*; who, after the delays devised by Sir Thomas Heneage and the Queen's counsel in law then being, *was ready to make his report for me, but Her Majesty refused the same and by no means would hear it*. So that by this and the former means I have been thus long dispossessed.

⁹ Note that he says "William Conqueror," omitting "the," as Sly, in *The Taming of the Shrew* says "Richard Conqueror."

⁷ Ward, p. 339.
⁸ *Sir Walter Raleigh*, p. 252.

Lord Oxford must surely have realized, for all that he speaks cautiously here, that Hatton had circumvented him: he knew what a deadly enemy he had had in this vain lover of the Queen. The reference to "Wardships" indicates an awareness of Burghley's restrictive efforts also. Elizabeth's meanness and mendacity require no comment; she had been influenced by powerful and unscrupulous men. The letter continues with a statement so characteristic that we have already quoted it on two or three occasions:

But I hope truth is subject to no prescription, for truth is truth though never so old, and time cannot make that false which was once true, and though this three-score years both my father and myself have been dispossessed thereof, yet hath there been claims made thereto many times . . . therefore I shall most earnestly desire your friendship in this, that you will join with my Lord Admiral, my very good Lord and friend,¹⁰ to help me to His Majesty's resolution. . . . From Hackney, this 7th of May.

Your Lordship's most assured friend and brother-in-law to command,
E. OXFENFORD¹¹

(It should be stated that the Queen had, however, allowed Lord Oxford to occupy Haverling; for the record of her visiting him there in the early 1570's, as well as in 1568, is unimpeachable.)

Of the second letter, dated the 19th of June, we shall quote only a few lines, for it consists for the most part of business details:

My Lord, I understand how honourably you do persevere in your promised favour to me, which I taking in most kind manner can at this time acknowledge but by simple yet hearty thanks, hoping in God to offer me at some time or other the opportunity whereby I may in a more effectual manner express my grateful mind. . . . Wherefore I most earnestly desire your Lordship to procure and end this my suit, in seeking whereof I am grown old and (have) spent the chiefest time of mine age.

It is a pleasure to record that, at long last, success crowned Lord Oxford's efforts to bring about the restoration of some of his hereditary estates, thus leaving the earldom in fair shape after all his vicissitudes of fortune. Ward states:

On July 18th the King granted him the Bailiwick, or custody, of the Forest of Essex and the Keepership of Haverling House; about the same time he appointed him to the Privy Council; and in the following month he renewed his £1000 a year from the Exchequer in exactly the same words that Elizabeth had used in the original grant.¹²

¹⁰ We have spoken before of the close friendship existing between Lord Oxford and Lord Admiral Howard. In 1601, Oxford had given Howard his proxy when prevented, no doubt by his infirmity (as Ward says), from attending the House of Lords. It was at this time of course that he had been crushed and humiliated by Southampton's disgrace and imprisonment.

¹¹ Ward, p. 343; cf. Hatfield MSS., 99.161.

¹² Ward explains that, though the records of the Privy Council for 1602-13 were burned in a fire at Whitehall in 1613, a manuscript notice of Lord Oxford's death describes him as having been "of the Privy Council to the King's Majesty that now is." (Harleian MSS., 41.48).

The renewal of the grant is especially significant. By 1602 only three companies of actors were licensed to perform in London: Lord Chamberlain Hunsdon's, Lord Admiral Howard's, and the company which had been formed by the merging of those of the Earls of Worcester and Oxford. Upon his accession, James took over the patronage of the Chamberlain's company, Queen Anne assumed that of Oxford's and Worcester's, and Prince Henry the Lord Admiral's. "Never before," says Ward, "had the stage stood in such high favour."

Although his name has been as nearly as possible expunged from the record, the Earl of Oxford is found to have occupied, during the last year of his life, as eminent a position of influence and authority, with regard to the English drama, as that he had held in his youth, when, having begun by producing masks and interludes at court, he became a dramatist of high distinction, the leading patron of writers and playwrights, more responsible than any other man for lifting the theatre out of its vile estate into a respected and valued medium of art and literature. Not only did he write the greatest dramas of the Elizabethan era, he created, through his encouragement and generosity, other dramatists, while providing them with a stage worthy of their best efforts. It may be truly said of him as the irresistible Falstaff had once remarked of his own stimulating vivacity, that he was not only witty in himself, but the cause that wit was in other men.

This statement belongs to the Second Part of *King Henry IV*. And there is, as it happens, strong internal evidence that Lord Oxford had taken up that play again near the end of his life, perhaps from a wistful desire to show Prince Hal—now the Fair Youth, a living Henry—succeeding to the throne of England. Years ago, in reading the latter scenes, we had wondered why the dramatist had so stressed the somewhat unpleasant action of the young Prince's trying on his father's crown while the King slept; for though he suspected, yet he was not sure, that his father was dead. Every reader of Shakespeare must have found in nearly every play some action similarly discrepant, or even incredible; but this is because there is so much in all the plays that is symbolic; and when the symbolism is understood, the rightness is understood and applauded.

In this case, Harry's trying on the crown evidently points to Henry Wriothesley's attempt, with Essex, to take away the crown of the Queen, who was no longer actively ruling the country, and was thus, like King Henry, symbolically *asleep*: indeed, to all practical purposes, dead.¹³ As Prince Hal steps into the adjoining room to try on

¹³ In *The Famous Victories*, the Prince also tries on the crown. The incident is historical, but actually it was quite matter-of-fact, not unduly significant, for the Prince and everyone else believed the King to be dead. Holinshed says: "Such as were about him, thinking verily that he had beene departed, covered his face with a linnen cloth."

the crown, so Essex and Southampton had rehearsed in Ireland before making their claims. The King is shocked—as Oxford had been profoundly shocked—at the reckless behavior into which an hereditary prince's sense of dynastic right had led him. The reconciliation in the play is touching and beautiful. The scene between Lord Oxford and the Fair Youth, upon the latter's release after more than two years' imprisonment, must likewise have been deeply moving.

Westmoreland's announcement (IV.4.87) points directly to the proclamation of James's accession as Rex Pacificus:

... Peace puts forth her olive everywhere.

This was practically synchronous with Southampton's release from the Tower, since James had acted immediately to restore his freedom.

King Henry. And wherefore should these good news make me sick?
Will Fortune never come with both hands full

But write her fair words still in foulest letters?

She either gives a stomach and no food:

Such are the poor, in health; or else a feast

And takes away the stomach: such are the rich,

That have abundance and enjoy it not.

I should rejoice now at this happy news,

And now my sight fails, and my brain is giddy.

Warwick. Be patient, princes: you do know these fits
Are with his highness very ordinary;

Stand from him, give him air; he'll straight be well.

Clarence. No, no; he cannot long hold out these pangs:

The incessant care and labour of his mind

Hath wrought the mure that should confine it in

So thin, that life looks through and will break out.

The river hath thrice flow'd, no ebb between;

And the old folk, time's dotting chronicles,

Say it did so a little time before

That our great-grand sire, *Edward*, sick'd and died.

Gloucester. This *apoplexy* will certain be his end. (IV.4.102-30.)

It is, of course, Oxford's condition described here. Henry IV was a man of action, not one exhausted from intense intellectual activity, though he had been subjected to some stress and anxiety.

Music was provided for the dying Lear. And King Henry, the self-same King Earl, makes a characteristic request, reminding us of former times when he had been Jaques and the young Lorenzo:

Let there be no noise made, my gentle friends;

Unless some dull and favourable hand

Will whisper music to my weary spirit. (IV.5.1-3.)

With the long night closing in, perhaps this finely attuned, noble spirit was able more clearly than ever to hear "such harmony" as "is in immortal souls."

Southampton would have observed far more change in Lord Oxford than the latter found in him. It was after the joy of their reunion that the poet wrote Sonnet 107, which announces, in almost the same words Westmoreland uses, "And peace proclaims olives of endless age," adding,

Now with the *drops* of this most *balmy* time
My love looks fresh, and *Death* to me *subscribes*.

This sonnet obviously belongs to the period of this final revision of *Henry IV*. The King, ostensibly in rebuke to Prince Hal for trying on the crown, makes further use of its imagery, as well as that of the tragic No. 71 and No. 81:

... O foolish youth!

Thou seek'st the greatness that will overwhelm thee.

Stay but a little: for my cloud of dignity

Is held from falling with so weak a wind

That it will quickly drop: *my day is dim.*

Thy life did manifest thou lov'd'st me not,

And thou wilt have me die assur'd of it.

Let all the tears that should bedew my hearse

Be *drops of balm* to sanctify thy head.

Only *compound* me with *forgotten* dust;

Give that which gave thee life *unto the worms.*

For now is come a time to mock at form. (IV.5.95-117.)

The poet speaks here with deep conviction. Dynastic "form" is being mocked at when the rightful heir to the throne is superseded by an outsider. "... the sad augurs *mock* their own presage."

In the speech conveying Henry's forgiveness and devotion (IV.5.176 *et seq.*) there is the same sorrow expressed for his own guilt, which is, of course, historically the King's guilt in having deposed Richard II, but more significantly Lord Oxford's "bewailed guilt" for having allowed his name to receive "a brand," not only from traffic with the theatre but from the mad assumption that he could legitimately love a queen. Especially poignant is the fact that he is able to address his son by his right name.

Come hither, Harry: sit thou by my bed;

And hear, I think, the very latest counsel

That *ever* I shall breathe. God knows, my son,

By what by-paths and indirect crook'd ways

I met this crown; and I myself know well

*How troublesome it sat upon my head.
To thee it shall descend with better quiet,
Better opinion, better confirmation;
For all the soil of the achievement goes
With me into the earth. It seem'd in me
But as an honour snatch'd with boisterous hand,
And I had many living to upbraid
My gain of it by their assistances;
Which daily grew to quarrel and to bloodshed,
Wounding supposed peace. All these bold fears
Thou seest with peril I have answered;
For all my reign hath been but as a scene
Acting that argument; and now my death
Changes the mode: for what in me was purchas'd
Falls upon thee in a more fairer sort.*

*How I came by the crown, O God, forgive!
And grant it may with thee in true peace live.*

This is, of course, not merely King Henry who, though constantly harassed by inimical nobles, probably felt no strong sense of guilt, if indeed any at all, after his fourteen years' reign; but it is signally Lord Oxford with his long fight against Authority, against convention, against his enemies and his victims too, telling his story in the plays, speaking of his career as his "reign," as Timon did. Harken to his words:

*For all my reign hath been but as a scene
Acting that argument. . . .*

keeping "invention in a noted weed"; and now he bequeaths his son Harry the immortality won by his "achievement" without the "peril" and the blemish attached to the struggle for it. The Sonnets have clearly promised him this immortality.

The "honour snatch'd with boisterous hand" was the eminence he achieved as a dramatist by ruthlessly portraying the foibles and sins of "living" people, and there were many of these who were ready "to upbraid" him for attaining distinction by "their assistances," that is, by making use of them for dramatic purposes: of whom the first would have been Burghley. Another was Hutton, and still another Leicester; and so at last we have the inside story, not only of Leicester's resentment of *Hamlet*, as conveyed in *The Merry Wives*, but more specifically of his and Oxford's fight, reported by Nashe—"two peers being at jar, and their quarrel continued to bloodshed"—which occurred soon after the performance of *Love's Labour's Lost*. Oxford says here in unmistakable terms that people's resentment of the use he made of them

*. . . daily grew to quarrel and to bloodshed,
Wounding supposed peace.*

1196

He had, indeed, been the *enfant terrible* of the court. No one had been safe. And he had made bitter enemies—it is exhilarating to have him so freely and frankly tell us the whole story—but Elizabeth had stood by him. If she had not, we should have had no Shakespeare.

This death-bed scene presents an inexpressibly sad truth. For we are bound to see that, under the thin disguise of Henry IV bequeathing his honors to his son Harry, Lord Oxford is bequeathing the name, William Shakespeare, to his own son Harry, the Earl of Southampton. *He believed that Southampton would be known as the poet and dramatist.* No one would suppose so young a Shakespeare to have been writing about the Queen or caricaturing Lord Burghley; the meaning would thus be obscured and the plays could live.

He calls upon God to forgive him for coming by "the crown" as he had—that is, for becoming the Queen's lover and thus the Fair Youth's father, as well as for being the "King of Shadows," and so degrading his noble name—and he prays that his son may inherit as much true honor as he is able to bequeath him with the only name he has to give, "Shakespeare."

His faith was betrayed. After his death Authority stepped in. Robert Cecil would have borne a potent part in the action. Nineteen years later a substitute—a dummy with a similar name—was formally proclaimed "William Shakespeare." By then Cecil was dead, but he would have had a hand, with Ben Jonson, in the project, which we know had been initiated long before, because the gull had endeavored in the beginning to pass himself off as Southampton.

Kent had been speaking for the Earl of Oxford when he said:

*My boon I make it that you know me not
Till time and I think meet.*

They denied him this boon.

* * * * *

Fourteen months after Southampton's release from the Tower, Lord Oxford died, at Hackney, on June 24, 1604, and was buried in the Church of St. Augustine. Among the Harleian Manuscripts there is an epitaph written by an anonymous contemporary:

*Edward de Vere, only son of John, born the 12th day of April, 1550,
Earl of Oxenford, High Chamberlain, Lord Bolebec, Sandforth, and
Badlesmere, Steward of the Forest of Essex, and of the Privy Council to
the King's Majesty that now is. Of whom I will only speak what all
men's voices confirm: he was a man in mind and body absolutely accom-
plished with honourable endowments.*

When the Countess of Oxford died, in 1612, she was found to have stipulated in her will her desire

¹⁴ Ward, p. 348. (It is as if this anonymous writer implied, So much at least can be safely said without infringing upon the imposed secrecy.) See note 12.

to be buried in the Church of Hackney, within the County of Middlesex, as near unto the body of my late dear and noble lord and husband as may be; only I will that there be in the said Church erected for us a tomb fitting our degree.¹⁵

However, a dozen years ago a manuscript book (Vincent 445) was discovered in the Herald's College, written by Perceval Golding, youngest son of Arthur Golding, Lord Oxford's uncle, which states that the Earl of Oxford had been buried in Westminster. His body must therefore have been removed after Lady Oxford's death. The title-page reads:

The Armes, Honours, Matches and Issues of the Ancient and Illustrious family of Veer.

Described in the honourable progeny of the Earles of Oxenford and other branches thereof from the first Original to the present tyme.

Together with a genealogicall Deduction of this noble family from the blood of twelve Iorreine Princes, viz., three Emperours three Kings three Dukes and three Earles conveyed through the principall houses of Christendome. Gathered out of the History, Records and Other Monuments of Antiquity.

On page 51, the following (previously quoted) paragraph appears:

EDWARD DE VEER, only sonne of John, borne ye Twelveth day of Aprill A° 1550, Earle of Oxenforde, high Chamberlayne, Lord Bolebec, Sandford and Badlesmere, Steward of ye fforest in Essex, and of ye privity Council to the Kings Maie that now is: Of whom I will only speake what all mens voices Confirm: he was a man in mind and body absolutely accomplished with honourable endowments: he died at his house in Hackney in the moneth of June Anno 1604 and lieth buried att Westminster.¹⁶

There is a passage in Goethe's great work, *Iphigenie*, which expresses an opinion seemingly borne out in the case of this noble Earl, whose ancestry comprises "wolfish earls," as well as kings, scholars, and royal favorites:

For a house does not suddenly produce a demigod or a monster; only a line of evil or good men finally produces the horror, the joy, of the world.

In Gervase Markham's *Honour in his Perfection*—in part a detailed eulogy of the de Vere family—the following passage describes Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford:

... this nobleman breakes off his Gyves; and both in Italie, France, and other Nations, did more honour to this Kingdome then all that have

travelled since he tooke his journey to heaven. It were infinite to speake of his infinite expence, the infinite numbers of his attendants, or the infinite house he kept to feede all people . . . that he was upright and honest in all his dealings the few debts left behind him to clog his survivors were safe pledges . . . the almes he gave (which at this day would not only feede the poore, but the great man's family also) and the bounty which Religion and Learning daily tooke from him, are Trumpets so loud, that all eares know them; so that I conclude, and say of him, as the ever memorable Queene Elizabeth said of Sir Charles Blount . . . that he was Honestus, Pietas, and Magnanimus.¹⁷

No long-belated tribute can make amends to the noble genius, at once the most resplendent and most truly loyal subject his country could ever boast. But at least we can pay all homage, now that the truth is known, to his "wounded name." We can, as he bade his cousin Horatio do, *tell his story*.

As a further epitaph, his own characteristically symbolic words from the Epilogue of *King Henry the Fifth* seem eminently appropriate, since they point up his essential, his persistent, his heartfelt theme:

Small time, but in that small most greatly liv'd
This Star of England. Fortune made his sword,
By which the world's best garden he achiev'd,
And of it left his son imperial lord.

VERO NIHIL VERIUS

¹⁵ Op. cit.; p. 347; cit. P.C.C. Capell.

¹⁶ Phyllis Carrington: *News-Letter*, The Sh. Fellowship, Am. Branch, June 1913. The author states that the MS. was discovered by Mr. Percy Allen. Golding evidently copied the last paragraph from the contemporary notice.