

Anne Cecil, Elizabeth & Oxford

A Study of Relations between these three, with the Duke of Alençon added ; based mainly upon internal evidence, drawn from (Chapman's?) *A Lover's Complaint*; Lord Oxford's (and others) *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowers*; Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, and *Muiopotmos*; and from various Shakesperean Plays & Poems

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“LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST” (i. i.)

BIRON. What is the end of study? let me know.

KING. Why, *that to know, which else we should not know.*

BIRON. Things hid and barr'd, you mean, from common sense?

KING. Ay, that is study's god-like recompence.

BIRON. Come on, then; I will swear to study so,

To know the thing I am forbid to know. . .

Or, having sworn too hard a keeping oath,

Study to break it, and not break my troth.

If study's gain be thus, and this be so,

Study knows that which yet it doth not know.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I wish particularly to thank my friend, Captain B. M. Ward, for the valuable assistance he has given me in writing this book. It is impossible to acknowledge, in detail, every point upon which I have sought his counsel and advice ; and I can only say that these have been most generously given, upon every occasion—and they have not been few—upon which he has been within hail. Few men living have sounder or more comprehensive knowledge than has the author of *The Life of the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, concerning Elizabethan history and literature. In a forthcoming book upon Shakespeare's Sonnets, it is my hope that we shall formally collaborate.

I have also to thank warmly the Rev. F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, D.D., of Tolleshunt Knight's Rectory, Essex, for kindly putting me upon the track of Sir Scudamour and Amoret, as representing Lord Oxford and Anne Cecil, in books iii. and iv. of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, thus enabling me to write Chapter IX. of this book. Dr. Hitchcock's hint is one of which I cannot easily exaggerate the value.

I am indebted also to Mr. Gerald Phillips for first identifying, for me, Lord Oxford with *Mitrophorus* (Chapter VIII.).

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In a brief foreword to my last book, *The Plays of Shakespeare and Chapman in Relation to French History*, published in June 1933, I wrote that, "in the historical interpretation of Shakespeare's plays, the vexed question of authorship—deeply important though it be—becomes almost secondary, after this larger one. At what events, and at what contemporary personages, are the plays of 'Shakespeare' actually aimed?" I can, perhaps, best introduce the present book, by developing, a little, that statement.

With every year that passes, I incline to give less attention to the question of authorship as such, and more to the matter of historical interpretation. This, for the following reasons.

Concerning the authorship of a passage in any particular play, we can rarely be quite certain; because modern research has shown that Shakespeare's plays, generally, were revised and added to, in some instances more than once, either for the purpose of arousing interest, by the insertion of up-to-date topicalities and allusions, or for the inclusion of revealing cipher-scenes, of which the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, or the Antigonus-with-the-Bear scene, in iii. iii. of *A Winter's Tale*, may be cited as fair examples. That the seventeenth Earl of Oxford wrote the greater part of some twenty or more of the plays published in the First

Folio, is a thesis now winning ever wider acceptance the world over ; and of scholars qualified to form an opinion, only a few among them—and these the more elderly academic commentators—would, I suppose, be prepared to assert to-day, that William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon had a principal hand in preparing all the Folio plays. Conventional orthodoxy throughout the English-speaking world is being abandoned, fast and everywhere ; and I assert, without fear of honest contradiction, that many, though not all, scholars who still profess the Stratfordian faith do so no longer by conviction, but rather in fear of the consequences that must follow upon its repudiation. Nor may we too lightly blame them, since not every man possesses the courage or resolution necessary to blast, deliberately, a promising scholastic or university career, by renouncing traditional beliefs that have become, in countless minds, almost a national religion. This is a major reason why the work of the Oxfordian group had, necessarily, in general, to be done by amateurs, with no prospect of probable professional or academic loss, in position or in status, to counterbalance a certain intellectual and spiritual gain.

"Shakespeare's" plays, then, are, by ever-increasing consent, the work of one master-mind—that of Lord Oxford—in combination with others, some of whom were friendly disposed towards him, while certain cliques, especially the "rival poet," Chapman-Jonson group, were, in part, hostile ; and contrived to insert matter disparaging to Oxford into such manuscripts, his own included, as came into their possession—a notable example being *Venus and Adonis*, to which I shall return later on. The authorship of each Shakespearean work, whether play or poem, can be determined,

if at all, only by most careful examination ; with inferences following, drawn from style and topical allusion, particularly in relation to the date, or dates, of writing, that those allusions suggest. After the production, by Admiral Holland,¹ of forty-six points of evidence connecting *Hamlet* with the year 1583, and eighteen connecting *Love's Labour's Lost* with the year 1578, it is, surely, idle to deny that a strong case has been made out for dating accordingly the first draft of those two plays. The insertion of up-to-date topical allusions into a redrafted and revised stage-play or review, is, it will be conceded, a rational procedure, whereas twenty-year-old topicalities, as in the case of *Hamlet* above mentioned, proclaim, it would seem, a twenty-year-old draft.

But—granted the vital importance of these questions of date, equally with secret allusions, in determining authorship, as a first preliminary to adequate comprehension of the plays—the thesis which I seek chiefly to develop in this book is the great importance of the Shakespearean plays and poems, read together with other contemporary literature, as providing us, by internal interpretation, with clues which enable readers, for the first time since Elizabethan days, to find, in the complex relations between the Queen, Lord Oxford, and his Countess, Anne Cecil, the final solution of that Shakespearean mystery, towards which, step by step and stage by stage, the investigations of our Oxfordian group have been systematically and inexorably leading. During the autumn of 1931, when my *Life-Story of Edward de Vere as William Shakespeare* was already in the press, I inserted therein an appendix, to the effect that "if we could fully understand them, Oxford's personal

¹ *Shakespeare, Oxford, and Elizabethan Times* (1933).

relations with Queen Elizabeth would provide the clue to a complete comprehension of his life"; though I failed to foresee, at that time, the outstanding importance and enthralling interest of the discoveries which were awaiting us.

Little by little, it began to dawn upon me that Lord Oxford and Elizabeth, considered as lover and mistress, solved, in conjunction with Anne Cecil, almost every remaining difficulty with which we were confronted; and that, whether one took up *Venus and Adonis*, the Sonnets, or *A Lover's Complaint* first published with them; or whether one turned to such early Shakespearean writings as *The Comedy of Errors*, the opening scenes of *Troilus and Cressida*, of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, of *All's Well*, or of *Hamlet*—they all proved to be, in the main, concerned with the complex relations between the three above-named individuals, whose destinies Fate, to their common unhappiness, though to the world's everlasting felicity, had thus pregnantly interwoven; and it was, naturally, with somewhat of a thrill that the identity of the Dark Lady of the Sonnets, as Lord Oxford's Queen and mistress, and mother of his son, the Fair Youth of the Sonnets, gradually revealed themselves to me. Corroborative evidence, of a most conclusive kind, was, moreover, promptly forthcoming; because this discovery enabled me, quite soon, to identify Rosalind and Celia in *As You Like It*, and Hermia and Helena in *The Dream*, as the Queen and Lady Oxford, who are also Helen and Cressida in the *Troilus* satire. Lord Oxford, consequently, stood revealed as Lysander-cum-Demetrius, the desirable one over whom the two Athenian ladies quarrel; while the wrangles of Oberon and Titania, for possession of the changeling boy,

dramatized a veridical conflict between the pair, for guardianship of, and control over, their son.¹

Again, the existence of the son once posited, the assumptions can be made—and they are most natural, in the circumstances—that he became a choir boy of St. Paul's Cathedral (the Paul's Boys), and acted, in consequence, at court, under Lord Oxford's theatrical manager, John Lyly, and later, upon the dissolution of the Paul's Boys in 1590, became a member of the Strange - Chamberlain's company—"Shakespeare's" company, as it is often called—probably at the age of sixteen. As a boy actor, he played in Chapman's plays, as the Sonnets show, and when a member of the adult company he played at the Globe in "Shakespeare's" plays, as, once more the Sonnets tell us. Thus we can now, at last, account satisfactorily for the hitherto inexplicable inferences, drawn by myself and others from various contemporary plays and poems, that the Chapman group had been acquiring possession of, and had been tampering in hostile fashion with, Lord Oxford's manuscripts, in the hope of "killing the dog," which is Jonson's own phrase for scotching his rival's dramatic work.² If those manuscripts went to Chapman by way of the son—whom the actors, it seems, were debauching and over whom they were asserting a most pernicious influence—ⁿ number of Sonnets, incomprehensible until now, become daylight clear; and since the boy would, quite probably, be known, in the theatre, by his father's pen-name of "Will," or "Will Shakespeare," and would be, moreover, a well-educated lad, we can now adduce

¹ I had long wondered why the historic identities of the characters in *As You Like It* and *The Dream* had remained obscure to me, while those in other plays had been easily recognizable.

² *Every Man Out*, v. i.

plausible reasons why tradition, confusedly jumbling up the fair young actor with William Shaksper of Stratford-upon-Avon, has made, of the last-named, a writer, a stage-player, and a shareholder at the Globe Theatre, although we have been able to discover nowhere any satisfactory evidence, either internal or external, to show that Shaksper was, in fact, either writer, genuine professional actor, or anything else excepting, for brief periods, a law-student in London, and, subsequently, a dishonest provincial dealer in malt and corn—always and everywhere a social clown, as confirmed by “Shakespeare” himself, as well as by Ben Jonson, Marston, and Hall, in their various satirical plays and poems of the late fifteen-nineties and early sixteen hundreds.¹ Further, if the parentage that I suggest for the fair youth be once granted, we are able, at last, to account logically for the rigid suppression of Lord Oxford’s name as the veridical “William Shakespeare”; the obvious reason being, that Shakespeare’s son, but for the bar sinister of illegitimacy, would have been heir to the crown of England. Moreover, the unprecedented grant of £1000 a year to Lord Oxford becomes far more intelligible in the light of this knowledge than upon Captain Ward’s original—and, in the then state of our investigations, very plausible—assumption, that this annuity was the Earl’s official payment, as court playwright and propagandist. Lord Oxford was certainly both of these; but he was more also, unless our line of argument is altogether mistaken.

Of first-rate importance, in elucidating these relations between Oxford, Elizabeth, and Anne Cecil, is the strong corroboration afforded by Spenser’s poems, 1 Hall’s *Saints*, 1597; Marston’s *Satires*, 1598; Jonson’s *Every Man Out*, 1599.

The Faerie Queene, and *Muipolmos*, especially Books three and four of the first named, the inner meaning of which had completely escaped me, until the Rev. Montgomery Hitchcock most kindly suggested to me, that Scudamour and Amoret stood for Lord Oxford and his Countess. This seemed to provide a most promising clue; and, following it up, I perceived immediately that Spenser—though he dared not, under his own name, treat very openly of matters so intimate in the life-stories of these highest in the land—was, nevertheless, fully conversant with and deeply interested in the whole business, since he returns to it again and again. Further, seeing that I have been repeatedly derided for arguing that Lord Oxford often dramatized himself and others, more than once in the same play, it was encouraging to me to discover that Spenser, born within a year or two of the Earl, and, apparently, upon terms of close friendship with him, brought Elizabeth five times, at least, into his great poem—as Britomart, Belphebe, Mercilla, and the rest; while Lord Oxford appeared as Timias in Book three, and as Scudamour in Book four. Both poets, moreover, employed a closely analogous topical-symbolical method, and can now be read together, in the revealing light of these interpretations. I have further shown in the following pages, that Spenser wrote many a stanza with the text of *A You Like It*, and of other Shakesperean plays, quite obviously in his mind, besides several of Lord Oxford’s own poems; thus affording powerful corroboration of our thesis, that the plays were in existence at a time long prior to the dates set down for them by the orthodox commentators. I regard the interpretations of Spenser contained in Chapters VII.-IX. (inclusive) of this book as of primary importance to the complete “Oxford” case.

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ANNE CECIL, ELIZABETH, AND OXFORD

CHAPTER I

OXFORD, ELIZABETH, AND ANNE

Relations between these three, understood, will solve the "Shakespeare" mystery. Many veiled contemporary allusions thereto—Lord Oxford's popularity at court during the 'seventies—Anne Cecil wins him for her husband—Lady Burghley's jealousy of Queen Elizabeth—Early hints of *Festus* and *Cymbeline*—Burghley as Pandarus—The queen of *Timon*—Anne Cecil and Sir John Andros—Cousins Russell and Oxford as Falstaff and Dorset—Oxford's journey abroad in 1575—Birth of a daughter in his absence—Elizabeth's jealousy therat—Lord Henry Howard as villain of the piece—*All's Well* dramatizes authentic history on this date—*Measure for Measure*—Oxford's deep-seated suspicion of the Cecils—Complex relationships—Elizabeth makes love to her ward—Anne probably born to them in 1574.

Little by little, for several years past, my readings and meditations among "Shakespeare," and his contemporary poets and playwrights, have confirmed a conviction that the mystery which, despite all our patient researches, still shrouds the enigmatical life of Lord Oxford can only be solved by the closest scrutiny that accepted fact and legitimate inference may permit of the complex relations between England's Queen, Elizabeth, her Lord Great Chamberlain, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford, and his Countess, Anne Cecil, daughter of Lord Burghley.

Concerning the presence in contemporary literature of a stream of veiled allusions to these three, con-

sidered together, there existed a strong probability, since the cunning skill of Elizabethan writers, in at once concealing and revealing interesting facts and identities beneath an innocent-looking, yet usually penetrable disguise ; and the corresponding cleverness of readers—and presumably of the élite among theatrical audiences also—at penetrating such disguises, and perceiving accordingly the inner purport of the text, made the game, though hazardous, an alluring and sometimes a profitable one, to the parties concerned. Even the dangers of these pursuits—dangers which, certainly, were not small—heightened enjoyment to daring minds, in an age when great risks were willingly run, and “safety first” was a slogan much less honoured than now.

Upon a topic so appealing to frail humanity as the illicit amours of England’s virgin queen, it seemed reasonable to suppose that there must exist veiled temporary allusions, by persons in a position to know a part, at least, of the truth—a supposition acquired through and strengthened by ten years of specialized study, backed by enthusiastic help. Moreover, I had long been satisfied that to a parallel case, closely connected with Elizabeth and de Vere, namely, the secret authorship of “Shakespeare,” contemporary references abounded, especially in the works of “Shakespeare’s” two most prominent rivals, Ben Jonson and George Chapman.

Further, our labours had made it abundantly clear that, in the matter of relationship with his queen, de Vere himself, in his enigmatic, fantastical way, had been astonishingly, if still darkly, explicit.

For years past, then, with such thoughts and inferences as these jostling one another ceaselessly in my

mind, a conviction had strengthened within me that a long close study of Elizabeth and Oxford, analogous in method to our investigations into the authorship of Shakespearean drama, might produce satisfactory, if not wholly conclusive, results. I decided, therefore, to make, and to publish, a brief preliminary study of the subject, undeterred either by its difficulty and delicacy, or by the foreknowledge that I should expose myself, in certain quarters, to a charge of literary sensationalism or of deliberate exploitation of salaciousness.

That Lord Oxford was among the most attractive queen at court, during the fifteen-sixties and 'seventies, is a statement not open to dispute. Coming to her as Earl in 1563, and placed in charge of William Cecil, and intelligent boy, studious beyond his years, and yet the best dancer, and one of the best riders, at tilt and joust, in all the court of Whitehall, must very soon have won his way deep into the affections of a queen so susceptible as was Elizabeth to the talents and waywardness and whims of “her Turk”—as the queen would sometimes call him—must often have exasperated a woman who would expect, from a man so much younger than herself, both the obedience of a son and the duty of a subject.

During the summer of 1571, after the triumphant performance, by the Earl, of “his challenge at tilt, tourney, and barriers far above the expectation of the world,” as George Delves wrote in his letter to the Earl of Rutland, “there is no man of life and agility in every respect in the court but the Earl of Oxford”;

and when, during the summer, there was heard among the marriageable maidens of Whitehall "great weeping, wailing, and sorrowful cheer," because the betrothal of that same young nobleman, to Lord Burghley's daughter, Anne Cecil, had shattered many secret hopes of a now vanished "golden day," it is certain, as we shall see, that Gloriana felt, mingling with quasi-maternal joy over the happiness of her ward, secret pangs of envy and of regret, none the less keen because already, in diplomatic circles, there was talk afoot concerning her own marriage with the Duke of Anjou, afterwards Henry III. of France, or, alternatively, with his younger brother, François d'Alençon. That the facts stood thus our sequel should conclusively show.

Happiness, I wrote ; yet small happiness will accrue to either party from this marriage—a union which, if we are to believe the father-in-law, was an outcome of Lord Oxford's own "purposed determination," and was never even sought, or hoped for, by Burghley himself. Such is the minister's assertion ; but if my readers will accept what I hold to be the inescapable interpretation of *Troilus and Cressida*, wherein Pandarus and Troilus stand for Burghley and Oxford, the match was actually, if secretly, forwarded by Burghley himself, with a view to his daughter's social advancement, and that of her father as Elizabeth's chief Minister of State ; though I willingly admit that, whether the first tentative advances came from the Earl, or from Cecil, young de Vere was already deeply in love with the bride-to-be.¹

Not for long, however, was the sky to remain cloudless ; for, if we are to believe Burghley's agent, ¹ See, *post*, my interpretations of the Scudamour and Amoret episodes of *The Faerie Queene*.

John Lee, writing from Antwerp on March 18, 1572, the Earl, furious with Burghley for not having exerted influence enough to save his cousin, the Earl of Norfolk's life, "hath, as they say here, put away from him the memory of his wife."¹ That wrath with the minister over right, or failure, successfully to exploit the queen's prerogative upon Norfolk's behalf, may well have been among the first causes of the triangular and, at last, quadrangular feud between son-in-law, father-in-law, wife, and queen. I would not gainsay ; but it seems certain that de Vere was already following the surest, and, indeed, in conditions then prevailing, the only certain road to advancement and success, namely, that of his royal mistress's personal favour, and that Elizabeth was meeting her ward more than half-way. On October 9, 1571, Dyer had written to Lord Oxford's future rival at court, Christopher Hatton, to suggest the hating of my lord of Crm (Oxon) in the Queen's understanding for affection's sake," and blaming him, Oxford, openly for "seeking the queen's favour"—words which suggest that the Earl, at this time, already stood high, and would willingly stand yet higher, in the good graces of his sovereign lady. Thus, in swift process of time, it came to pass ; for on May 11 of the next year, 1573, Gilbert Talbot wrote to 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 valianthood than any other. I think Sussex doth back him all that he can. If it were not for his fickle head he would pass any of them shortly. My Lady Burghley hath unwisely declared herself, as it were, jealous, which is come to the Queen's ear whereat she hath been

not a little offended with her, but now she is reconciled again. At all these love matters my Lord Treasurer winketh, and will not meddle in any way.

This passage bears significance upon every line ; since the queen's delight in the person, graces, and gifts of her young ward, Lady Burghley's unconcealed jealousy, and Elizabeth's strong offence therat, are incidents fully confirmed, not only by the Shakespearean

play bearing most powerfully upon this period, namely, *Troilus and Cressida*, but also by interpretations, to be made in later chapters, of Lord Oxford's verses in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, and also in Edmund Spenser's and other contemporary poems. That de Vere was, later on, to become one of the queen's suitors, is openly stated by the Catholic historian, Lingard : " Dudley (*i.e.* Leicester), though the most favoured, was not considered as her (the Queen's) only lover ; among his rivals were numbered Hatton and Raleigh, and Oxford and Blount, and Simier and Anjou." Of these, Hatton, Simier, and Anjou (Alençon) will soon be coming into our story.

When, in my *Life-Story of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare*, I interpreted *Troilus and Cressida* as being, in its opening acts, a dramatization of love-matters between Lord Oxford and Anne, with Burghley in the part of Pandarus, I did not realize that Helen, almost certainly, represents Queen Elizabeth ; for which reason I missed the important implications, namely, commendation of the young and beardless Troilus, from Helen's "golden tongue" (*i. ii.*), mentioned by Cressida, and the remark, by Pandarus, that Troilus's "smiling becomes him better than any man in all Phrygia." That these are dramatizations of actual history seems

probable, just as—I have no doubt—is the subsequent dialogue between Pandarus and Cressida.

PAND.

... but to prove to you that Helen loves Troilus—

CRES. Troilus will stand to the proof, if you'll prove it so.

PAND. Troilus ! why, he esteems her no more than I esteem an addle egg . . . I cannot choose but laugh, to think how she tickled his chin ; indeed, she has a marvellous white hand, I must needs confess—

all of which goes, I think, to show that, although Anne might not admit the impeachment, the queen already loved her fascinating young ward, whose beardless chin she would playfully tickle ; and I may add that this whiteness of Elizabeth's hand finds pretty corroboration from Oxford himself, when, as Feste, he informs Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, that his lady (Olivia-Elizabeth) " has a white hand."¹

There is more history, I suspect, in the merriment that Pandarus subsequently recalls over that single white hair spied by the queen among the "three or four" with which the years had yet blessed Troilus-Oxford's chin ;² just as there is topical truth also in Cressida's comment—

"An't had been a green hair, I should have laughed too—

seeing that green and white, the two colours mentioned, are those of the Tudor livery ! Troilus's

"pretty answer," at which, according to Pandarus, ¹ See, *post*, *A Lover's Complaint*, 33. The author makes the man (Oxford) speak of the woman's (Elizabeth's) "phraselless hand whose white weighs downe the airy scale of praise."

² Cf. *ibid.* 14, where Elizabeth is made to say of Oxford : "Smal shew of man was yet upon his chinne, His phenix downe began but to appear."

"there was such laughing and Helen so blushed," also, as I suppose, records a Shakesperean jest, among the many that set Elizabeth's court in a roar : though, so far as *Cressida-Anne* is concerned—and Pandarus-Burghley as well, for that matter—the days were already within hail when Helen's love for Troilus would provide no matter at all for mirth, but much for sorrow, to herself and also to the wild young poet-dramatist, whose natural bent, nevertheless, was to turn "the worst to laughter." To such a situation we shall come, with a study of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flores*, and of Spenser's poem, *Miopomos*. Meanwhile, we will take up again this complicated story, in the year 1574.

That summer brought about another temporary breach between Oxford and his Queen, over the petulant dash to Flanders, which the Earl himself, as Bertram, seems to have dramatized in *All's Well that Ends Well*, wherein it is openly suggested that he did so, in part, as a means of temporary escape from a wife—Helena in the play—whom, willingly, he will neither wed nor bed :¹ but the queen, though angered awhile by his deed, and by the rumour of treason that it aroused,² was swift to pardon the truant ; and it is noteworthy, concerning this incident, that although, in *All's Well*, no hint is discernible of anything more than quasi-maternal affection upon the Countess Rousillon's (Elizabeth's?) part towards Bertram, this play, nevertheless, if I have rightly interpreted it, strongly emphasizes the reluctance with which Lord Oxford, at this

time, maintained intimate conjugal relations with Anne Cecil, his countess. The pages of *All's Well* teem with such expressions from Bertram :

A poor physician's daughter my wife ! Disdain rather corrupt me ever. (n. iii.)

I'll send her to my house,

Aquaint my mother with my hate to her,
And wherefore I am fled . . . to those Italian fields

Where noble fellows strike. (n. iv.)

I have wedded her, not bedded her ; and sworn to make
the "not" eternal. (n. ii.)

Bearing such lines in mind, and with a forward eye upon chapters to come, is it not a necessary supposition that these scenes from *All's Well*, in common with those already analysed in *Troilus*, and many others in "Shakespeare," correctly dramatize history ; and that strong desire to escape from an unwanted wife shaped, among other factors, the young Earl's irresistible urge towards those Italian (*i.e.* Flemish) fields where noble fellows strike ?¹

One year later—this time with full permission wrung from a reluctant Queen—his opportunity will free, for some sixteen months, that youthful longing to see the world ; meanwhile a part of August and September are passed, not with his countess, but in progress with his Queen. A short while before his return, the deserted and disconsolate Anne wrote as follows, to Lord Chamberlain Sussex :

I heartily beseech your good Lordship to show me your favour in your order to the ushers for my lodging ; that in consideration that there is but two chambers, it would

¹ Remembering, however, that Elizabeth in *Troilus* is Helen ; and with an eye upon the intimate relations between the queen and Oxford, at this time, that the sequel will make plain, it may well have been from Helen, as well as from Helena, that Lord Oxford fled in 1574.

² Seduction of any member of the British Royal Family is still, by English law, an act of high treason.

¹ Oxford's tour through France and Italy followed in 1575-76.

please you to increase it with a third chamber next unto it. . . . I shall think myself greatly bound to you for it, for the more commodious my lodging is the willinger I hope my Lord my husband will be to come thither, thereby the oftener to attend Her Majesty.

Unquestionably the cold and reluctant husband is hinted at here.

At last, however, the long-sought licence, to absent himself upon foreign travel, arrived, and the eager young Earl, after due leave-taking at the court, reached Paris about mid-January 1575, and, presumably at the Louvre Palace, was duly presented to King Henry III. and his queen, thus making a first personal acquaintance with the royal and princely Houses of Valois and Lorraine, and with the leading members of that inscrutable, and deeply treacherous, Guise-Medici group, who are to figure so largely in the Shakesperean plays—the individual most important to our immediate purpose being Henry's brother, Francois d'Alençon, heir-apparent to the French throne, who, it seems, is in some sort destined to become Oxford's successor, if not actually his rival, in the close affections of England's queen.

While he was yet in Paris, there came news from Lord Oxford's father-in-law, that the Lady Anne, his countess, was pregnant ; to which the Earl replied, though, perhaps, with doubtful sincerity, in view of the sequel, that Burghley's letters had made him a glad man, and that he thanked God for the prospect of becoming a father. On September 24 following, Oxford received letters from England announcing that a daughter had been born to him, on July 2, and—though with his mind evidently less bent upon wife, baby, and home than upon securing licence for further travel—he thanks his

father-in-law for “your good news of my wife's delivery.” Thus curtly, and without jubilation, does he greet the birth of Lady Elizabeth Vere, future wife of the Earl of Derby.

Meanwhile—returning now to England—on March 7, 1575, the very day that saw Lord Oxford in person, and his lady by courtesy, receiving royal congratulations in Paris, Queen Elizabeth had granted audience, at Richmond, to her physician, Dr. Richard Masters, who wrote, that same evening, to Lord Burghley, the following strangely significant letter :

After my duty it may please your Lordship to understand that having Her Majesty this Monday morning in the chamber at the gallery end next to the Green sitting alone, I said, “ Seeing it hath pleased your Majesty oftentimes to enquire tenderly after my Lady of Oxford's health, it is now fallen out so (God be thanked) that she is with child evidently ; and albeit it were but an indifferent thing for Her Majesty to hear of, yet it was more than indifferent for your Lordship to signify the same unto her ! ” Herewithal she arose, or rather sprang up from the cushion, and said these words : “ Indeed, it is a matter that concerneth my Lord's joy chiefly ; yet I protest to God that next to them that have interest in it there is nobody that can be more joyous of it than I am.” Then I went forth and told her that your Lordship had a privy likelihood of it upon your coming from the Court after Shrovetide, but you concealed it. . . .

Her Majesty asked me how the young lady did bear the matter. I answered that she kept it secret four or five days from all persons and that her face was much fallen and thin with little colour : and that when she was comforted and counselled to be gladsome and so rejoice, she would cry, “ Alas, alas, how should I rejoice seeing he that should rejoice with me is not here ; and to say truth (I) stand in

doubt whether he pass upon me and it or not"; and before moaning her case would lament that after so long sickness of body she should enter a new grief and sorrow of mind. At this Her Majesty showed great compassion as your Lordship shall hear hereafter. And repeated my Lord of Oxford's answer to me, which he made openly in the presence chamber of Her Majesty, viz. that if she were with child it was not his. I answered that it was the common answer of lusty courtiers every where, so to say. . . . Then she asking and being answered of me (who) was in the next chamber, she calleth my Lord of Leicester and telleth him all. . . . And here an end was made, taking advantage of my last words, that she would be with you for concealing it so long from her. And severally she showed herself unfeignedly to rejoice, and in great offence with my Lord of Oxford, repeating the same to my Lord of Leicester after he came to her. Thus much rather to show my goodwill than otherwise desiring your Lordship, that there may a note be taken from the day of the first quickening, for thereof somewhat may be known noteworthy.

Concerning the precise meaning, and correct interpretation, of this remarkable document, dogmatism, in the present state of our knowledge, would be rash; but remembering what we saw, upon an earlier occasion, concerning Lady Burghley's apparent jealousy of Oxford's friendly relations with his queen, and of Elizabeth's evident affection for her ward, I suggest that the news which brought Elizabeth so suddenly from her cushion to her feet, and drew from her a "protest to God" of her joyousness at hearing it, was, perhaps, at bottom, less pleasing to her than she would have the world believe—by which I would insinuate, as I shall assert later on, that the relations between Oxford and his queen were already, by March 1575, of a sexually intimate kind, that an illicit liaison had developed

between the pair, and that the queen's impulsive leap from the cushion was the act of a woman stung by the prick of acute jealousy.

As for poor Anne, it is obvious that, with things as they were—whatever exactly the position might be—prospective motherhood brought small joy to her, who stood in doubt whether her husband "pass upon me and it (the child) or not," whereupon, according to Masters, the queen repeated words alleged to have been used by de Vere in Her Majesty's presence, that, "if she, Anne, were with child, it was not his." Masters's very endeavour to smooth over a delicate situation—"It is the common answer of lusty courtiers everywhere to say" wholly fails to screen the disclaiming husband from Elizabeth's wrath; and I can form no other conclusion than that, as later chapters of this book will I hope make clear, a deep-seated jealousy, both of King and Queen, was behind the queen's behaviours. This much, at least, of comprehensibility seems further to emerge—that the prospective mother was miserably in doubt whether her absent husband would welcome or recognise the child, and that the queen was more personally, and even passionately, interested in this birth than the circumstances, on the face of them, seemed to warrant; while the physician's request that a note be taken from the day of the first quickening, "proves that he foresaw important questions of legitimacy and parentage as likely soon to arise. Suspicion and interest are evidently abroad; and on January 3, 1576, we find Burghley himself making a note in writing:

He (Oxford) confessed to my Lord Howard that he lay not with his wife but at Hampton Court, and that then the

child could not be his, because the child was born in July, which was not the space of twelve months.

The reasoning here is beyond me ; but the note is interesting, as bringing into the story a principal villain of the piece, Lord Henry Howard, whom I have long regarded as having been the principal instigator of the slanderous rumours at court against Anne.

Altogether a complicated business ! so much so, that were letters, documents, and other open contemporary allusions to the matter our only source of guidance through the mazes of Oxford's relations with women, the solution could be little more than guessed at. Fortunately, however, we have the Shakesperean plays, which, as I tried to show in my *Life-Story of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare*, illuminate history, when correctly interpreted, as much as history illuminates them ; and it is, I think, indisputable that we are here deep in the atmosphere of, and can turn profitably to, a whole group of plays set in this period, including *Troilus and Cressida*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Hamlet*, and especially *All's Well that Ends Well*, with *Measure for Measure* lending valuable assistance.

That the Countess, Bertram, and Helena, in *All's Well*, are, topically considered, Elizabeth, Oxford, and Anne Cecil, will be generally agreed, and it should be borne in mind that the relations between the Countess and Bertram, as later between Queen Gertrude and Hamlet, are wholly maternal and filial, without a hint of that quite different relationship, which several Elizabethan plays and poems, Shakesperean and other, will seem to indicate later on. *All's Well*, however, dramatizes, in the main, events of 1574 and 1575,

preceding Oxford's return from France in 1576, though there are indisputable references also to events in Flanders in 1579 and 1585 ; but it is a part of my case that, whatever attractions may have been developing up to 1574, they were not dramatized in this play. People are concerned, clashes in no way with authentic history, since even the incident of the substitution, in Bertram's bed, of one woman for another, is duly recorded by Wright !

He (Oxford) forsook his lady's bed, but the father of Lady Anne by stratagem contrived that her husband should unknowingly sleep with her believing her to be another woman, and she bare him a son in consequence.

Lady Anne's father, Burghley, is, I think, the old man, Lafeu, in *All's Well* ; and the Lord Treasurer seems to be present at the back of the author's mind, because Corambus, mentioned in the play (iv. iii.) comes very near to Corambis, the name given to Burghley (Raleigh) in the first quarto of *Hamlet*,¹ a tragedy which, at point after point, connects with the comedy of Rousillon. Concerning Anne Cecil and Bertram, however, history and the play use almost similar words, as follows. Bertram-Oxford, who has just been referred to in the comedy, as having " gone to serve the Duke of Florence," was actually in Florence during his Italian tour of 1575-76.

¹ Lafeu in it. i., entering with Helena (*i.e.* with his daughter, Anne), repeats his thoughts, " Nay, come your ways," in Burghley's usual tautological manner, and then says, " I am Cressid's uncle, That dare leave two together " (Bertram's uncle being Pandarus, whom I have shown to be again Burghley). In my *Life-Story of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare*, pp. 100-112.

"All's Well," III. ii.

MASTER'S LETTER TO
BURGHLEY.

HELENA (*reading to the Countess*) :

a letter from Bertram :

Here's my passport . . . "show
me a child begotten of thy body,
that I am father to, then call me
husband!" . . . This is a
dreadful sentence!

Readers will note that the "Countess," and the queen, are, respectively, present in the play and in the historic scene ; nor should it be forgotten that the plot of *Measure for Measure*, also a morality drama—and connected more intimately, it seems, than any other with events from 1576-82, in their relation to Oxford's life-history—provides an exactly parallel incident, discussed by Mariana (Anne) herself, in terms similar to those used by Helena in *All's Well*.

MARI. Who thinks he knows that he (Angelo) ne'er knew
my body,

But knows he thinks that he knows Isabel's.

These plays, quite certainly, are "the things wherein we'll catch the consciences" of all concerned, since the players in them "cannot keep counsel," but will tell, if not all, yet enough most vividly to illuminate our case. Not without good reason did Hamlet describe the work of the players as a "brief abstract and chronicle of the time."

Lord Oxford, while abroad, expressed, as we have seen, a conventional measure of delight, first at the prospect and then at the fact of paternity, despite the disclaimers which, if Masters's letter to Burghley, and my own interpretation of *All's Well* are to be believed,

he had been careful to make in advance ; but it seems that certain news which had reached the Earl, mean-
while, from England, had caused him so to alter his
tune that, upon arrival home, he refused to see either
his wife or Burghley, and went straight to the queen,
thereby initiating a breach with Anne which continued
for about five years, from 1576 until the close of 1581,
or a little later, a period confirmed by Angelo's words
concerning Mariana-Anne, in *Measure for Measure*,

Since which time of *five years*
I never spake with her, saw her, nor heard from her,
Upon my faith and honour.

What, then, were Oxford's reasons for the breach ?
They were many ; and two of the most important are
supplied by Angelo himself, in the speech above quoted
from—first that Anne's "promised proportion," which
I take to mean either the provision to be made for
her by Burghley, or the status and consideration ac-
corded to her at court, as a great Earl's Countess, were
less than he had been promised, or had a right to expect ;
the second, and more powerful, that "her reputation
was disvalued in levity"—a phrase which I interpret
as meaning that Oxford's pride would not permit his
presence to be accorded to a lady who was being laughed
at, along with himself, in court, as a party to the un-
savoury and ridiculous episode recorded by Wright,
which rumour evidently attributed to the machinations
of her father. There was, however, I feel certain,
yet another and sinister influence at work, in the young
Earl's inflammable and imaginative mind—I mean that
of de Vere's friend, mentioned in Burghley's note above
quoted, Lord Henry Howard, probably the individual

directly aimed at in the Lord Treasurer's piteous appeal to the queen of April 23, implying that the trouble with his son-in-law was largely due to "the wickednesse of others from whom the groundwork proceedeth." Lord Howard, or his friend, Charles Arundel, or more probably both of them, I take to provide the historic original, or originals, of Lucio in *Measure for Measure*, original, or disreputable, though always entertaining that cynically—*“much darkened in malice”*—“bids him ‘speak according to the trick’” (v. i.), or—in plainer words, make irresponsible mischief, in every possible way that an ingenuous slanderer can devise, for the working off of old grudges, and the amusement of himself and his fellow-courtiers.¹

There can be advanced, however, subtler reasons yet, than those already given, why the young Earl should tire of a wife whom, for a while, he had genuinely loved and admired: one of them a reason that has induced many a husband, before “Shakespeare” and since, to repent heartily of premature matrimony—I mean dislike of his wife’s parents. There exists evidence to show that, in addition to the little matter of Anne’s “promised proportion,” Lord Oxford was, at this time, annoyed by his father-in-law’s slowness in raising money, and failure to obtain a renewal of the Earl’s licence to travel; as also, I suspect, by a grief broadly hinted at in *Hamlet*—I mean the old man’s trick of setting spies upon his son-in-law, whether by Anne’s (Ophelia’s) own personal agency or by another’s. The Earl had grown weary of the Burghleys. The unstable, irritable nature of this young genius resented, even to rejection, the prospect

¹ See, *post*, pp. 216-20, my interpretation of Pandell and Blandamour as Howard and Arundel in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, Book iv.

of return to those irksome restraints of married cohabitation from which a term of travel had brought him temporary release. “I mean not,” he wrote to Burghley, “to weary my life any more with such troubles and molestions as I have endured; nor will I, to please your Lordship only, discontent myself.”—Selfish! I humblye the reader; and what can this writer retort, except to remind him that, some twenty years later, about the mid-fifteen-nineties, “Shakespeare” himself, wrote in sonnet I, XII, the following confession:

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—

and that Ben Jonson, in 1600, will write a satire, *Father’s Revels, or The Fountain of Self-Love*, in which he first and foremost among those self-lovers is, unquestionably, Amorphus the Deformed, whom I have shown elsewhere, and beyond all possible doubt, to be no other than Lord Oxford himself.

The Earl mistrusted the Cecils; and so also—in either case without strong reason—did his contemporary fellow-poet, Edmund Spenser, as I shall later bring abundant evidence to show; but we should be wholly wrong, nevertheless, to conclude that de Vere was by nature suspicious. On the contrary, all the evidence, I think, including that of Spenser and Jonson, goes to show that Lord Oxford, in his youth, was, to a hazardous extent, trustful, ingenuous, and “free from all trifling,” in a notoriously treacherous age; though it must never be forgotten that we are dealing, at the same time, with a mind far more than normally in-

telligent, impressionable, fanciful, and imaginative—a mind which, when once its suspicions were cunningly aroused, could magnify, by brooding over them, “ trifles light as air,” into damning “ proofs of holy writ,” with correspondingly passionate resentments and violent actions and reactions to follow. Hamlet’s own character is portrayed exactly thus; and I feel positively certain that, just as in Sonnet LXII. he confesses and condemns his “ self-love,” so also, in *Othello*, this extraordinary man has dramatized, in part, himself and his lady (Desdemona) as the unsuspecting victims of an Iago historically represented, like Lucio in *Measure for Measure*, by Howard, or Arundel, or by both these. While all these doubts, mistrusts, bewilderments, are surging wildly through the young poet’s distracted mind, there must now be added, by a stern fate’s decree, yet another, and potent, cause of mental unrest, namely, the promptings of that sin by which first fell the angels—ambition, and the urge, natural to every active mind, to cancel doubt by action.

Lord Oxford—legendarily descended from Charlemagne, and actually, it seems, from the Counts of Flanders, who were European kings, in all but name—habitually, I think, regarded himself, at least during the pride of early manhood, as of quasi-royal rank. Alike in England, France, and Italy—in common with his immediate ancestors—he had walked with kings and princes, as with his equals. For years past, at his own English court, he had been the spoiled “ Turk,” and darling, of a queen whom royal suitors “ from the four corners of the earth ” had been, and still were, assiduously courting; and of these suitors de Vere, at Paris, had made personal acquaintance with two—namely, the reigning King Henry III., and his brother, Francis of

Alençon, neither of whom, in the matter of ancient lineage, could be considered his superiors, nor, in terms of charm, beauty, and brains, anything save his admitted inferior. Here, then, was young “ Shakespeare ”-to-be, in this budding April of his nascent genius, married into a family which, as regards its elders, at least—after long waiting, he could not like, and owning, for wife, a lady who, though intelligent, amiable, submissive, and—for all he seriously knew—chaste and virtuous in a Hellenic court—came of a relatively plebeian stock, and like Ophelia before Polonius, was too subservient and feeble to count for much in, or to cope with, the complex situation that was arising.

At this point—for the motives of our story are strangely varied—another and formidable personality intrudes itself prominently into this already complicated situation. The queen, consciously or unconsciously swayed by her principal Minister, had, it may be, genuinely approved, at first, the marriage between her high-born Lord Chamberlain and her relatively parvenu Kield of Honour; and—just as the Countess does in *Othello*, v. iii.—may have said to her: “ Yes, Helen, you might be my daughter-in-law ”; or, as Queen Gertrude, in *Hamlet*, murmurs over the body of Ophelia—who is again Anne Cecil—“ Thou shouldst have been my Hamlet’s wife.” Such was the ideal, with Majesty blessing the lovers, before withdrawal back to her affairs of State; yet no such happy solution was destined to come about, because, while the young Earl is attaining manhood, the royal mistress herself falls to the fascinations of her ward, and, as readers already know, grows mortally jealous of a younger and prettier rival. Elizabeth, in fact, begins to coquet with de Vere, and to make towards him—who receives them, at

first, with careless nonchalance, if not with open reluctance—some such advances as are lyrically portrayed in *Venus and Adonis*, wherein the mature goddess and immature boy are, assuredly, the queen and her young playmate. That, by the early fifteen-seventies, Gloriana had become bitterly jealous of that boy, the earlier pages of this chapter have already shown, while a later one will make perfectly clear the methods deliberately adopted by the queen to keep apart and to alienate the young pair. Oxford, meanwhile, is meditating upon these matters, turns them over in his teeming mind, and sets his creative fancies at play with them. Supposing I go, indeed, whether her white finger beckons ! What then ? Developing passions, nascent ambition, in a nature that still, though mistakenly, believes itself fitted for a life of action—all seem to point one way ; and what better plan presents itself, now that the Earl is at ever-increasing odds with his wife and her parents, than to accept what is offered by the world's greatest sovereign ?

A bold solution, says some one ? I grant you ; but it is the only solution that the Shakesperean, and other, plays and poems will bear out ; and it is to these that we must now turn for more light upon the love-affair which seems to have developed between Oxford and his queen, approximately, if my arguments are sound, during the early fifteen-seventies, and which culminated, probably during 1574, in the birth to Lord Oxford and Elizabeth of a son, who, but for the bar sinister of illegitimacy, would have become king of England, and, it may be, the founder of a new line of kings, to the exclusion of the Stuart dynasty. He will become the black changeling boy of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the "purple flower" of *Venus and Adonis* and of *The*

Dream, and the Fair Youth of the Sonnets. As Lord Oxford's son and an actor at the Globe Theatre, he will also become, in part, "Will Shakespeare," traditionally jumbled in popular and professional minds with Will Shakesper of Stratford-upon-Avon.

CHAPTER II

"A HUNDRETH SUNDRIE FLOWRES"

A herald volume of Elizabethan lyricism—By various writers—Hatton as "Fortunatus Infoelix"—His love-affair with the Queen—Oxford published the book, and is part author, as "Meritum petere, grave"—Links with *Cardanus Comfort*—With *Twelfth Night*, and with Hatton as Malvolio—With Alengon, and the proposed royal marriage—Hatton as "Master F. I.", the queen's lover—Elizabeth as Mistress Elinor—Solomon-Hercules-Sampson, and links with *Learey Laboury Lost*—"Meritum petere, grave" (Oxford) dares not praise his Countess, for fear of the queen's jealousy—Elizabeth's "pupil" has become her lover—Her "forward will"—Links with *As You Like It*—Anne Cecil as Juliet—Oxford's affection for her—Alienated by slander and by Elizabeth's jealousy—Oxford and Anne as Troilus and Cressida—Anne wounded by "false suspect"—Anne as Mariana in *Measure for Measure*—Links with Oxford's "Echo" song.

"A HUNDRETH SUNDRIE FLOWRES," as Captain B. M. Ward has told us, in his valuable edition of these poems,

is a herald volume of that great outburst of lyric poetry in Elizabethan England, initiated in 1557 by Tottell's *Miscellany*—which contained the poems of Lord Oxford's uncle, the Earl of Surrey—and culminating, during the queen's closing years, in *England's Helicon*, and Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody*.

Sidney Lee, writing in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, supposed *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* to be a volume of verse by George Gascoigne; but Captain Ward has conclusively shown the work to be a collection, by different poets, including Gascoigne, writing under various "posies," or "devices," of which the most significant, to us, is "Ever and Never." Another important contributor was "Master F. I.," otherwise

"Fortunatus Infoelix," who is, quite certainly, Sir Christopher Hatton, to which pair of writers must be added, last, though not least, the individual whose posy, "Meritum Petere, Grave," appears on the title-page, just where the author's name is ordinarily to be looked for: and "Meritum Petere, Grave," as Captain

Ward convincingly argues, can be none other than the seventeenth Earl of Oxford, the first Editor of, and also

a contributor to, *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, into one of the poems of which, under the title "Shield of Love," in the later edition, the Earl's name, "Edward de Vere," is very skilfully keyed. That Lord Oxford, in 1573, should interest himself in the publication of such a book need occasion no surprise, when we remember that he had published, during the same year, at his own expense, and against the wishes of its author, his friend, Thomas Bedingfield's translation of *Cardanus Comfort*, a book of popular philosophy upon which, some ten years later, the Earl was to draw many philosophical tags for *Hamlet*.

Now Christopher Hatton, "Master F. I.," the Malvolio of *Twelfth Night* to be, and already, during the early 'seventies, Oxford's rival for the affections of Queen Elizabeth, into whose good graces both men, while possessing other gifts and attractions, in some sort "danced themselves," had been writing to Elizabeth, just as Malvolio indites to Olivia, amatory speeches of a most extravagant kind.

Madam, I find the greatest lack that ever poor wretch sustained. No death, no, not hell, no fear of death shall ever win of me my consent so far to wrong myself again as to be absent from you one day. . . . Would God I were with you but for one hour. . . . Bear with me, my most dear

sweet lady. . . . Love me, for I love you . . . your bondman everlasting tied,

CH. HATTON.¹

Hatton, however, had been temporarily absent from the court, invalidated, in fact, at Spa, at the time of this publication of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, in the pages of which certain amatory affairs of his own are made very free with indeed, under title, "The Adventures of Master F. I.," whom all at court knew to be Hatton.

Now there is, in this book, a certain "H. W." with a friend "G. T." and by a letter from "H. W." to "G. T."—who, as we have seen, is the Editor of the book—we know that "H. W." is its publisher. Now Captain Ward (page xxx) suggests that "G. T." the Editor of the book, is identical with "Meritum Petere, Grave," whose name appears in a position usually given to the author, and who is certainly Lord Oxford himself. I agree; and suggest, further, that the unnamed "printer" and "H. W." the publisher, are also Lord Oxford—or, in other words, that his were the mind and hand behind the whole business, and that he, therefore, was part author, in addition to being editor and publisher.

Following upon a summary of its contents, the book opens with an unsigned letter from the printer to the reader, which, both in matter and manner, recalls Lord Oxford's letter to Bedingfield, prefacing his edition of *Cardanus Comfort*, a book that, as already mentioned, appeared during this same year, 1573. Both documents are concerned with the question of

¹ The intimacies and veiled indecencies of Hatton's letter to the queen show him, in my judgment, quite certainly, to have been her lover.

willingness to publish, both call attention to the "commoditie," or profit, that intelligent readers may legitimately extract from perusal of the work which it is proposed to print; and both use, in a similarly metaphorical way, the scent of a flower, as representing the sweet fragrance of that volume. Thus Oxford to Bedingfield :

What doth avail the rose unless another took pleasure in the smell?

Thus the Printer to the Reader :

You shall not be constrained to smell of the flowres therein conteined all at once. . . . But you may take any one flowre by itselfe, and if that smell not so pleasantly as you wold wish, I doubt not yet but you may find some other which may suppie the defects thereof.

To the letter that follows, from "H. W." to the Reader, concerning a discourse of the adventures passed by "Master F. I.," similar comments apply; for when "H. W." tells us of

one that thought better to *please a number* by common commoditie then to feede the humour of any private person by needelesse singularitie—

who, that is familiar with the Bedingfield letter, will fail to recall Oxford's phrase :

" Better I thought it were to *displease one* than to displease many."

Further—as my readers will better perceive when we have scented the Flowers a little more nearly—there is

perceptible in the following phrases—openly concerned with the love-affairs of “Master F. I.,” who is Hatton-Malvolio—a passage which, in my judgment, foretells the Malvolio love-episodes of *Twelfth Night*:

“ In which poeticall posie are set forth manie trifling fancies, humoral passions, and strange effects of a lover. And therin (although the wiser sort would turn over the leafe as a thing altogether fruitlesse) yet I myselfe . . . sit and smile at the fond devices of such as have enchayned themselves in the golden fetters of fantasie, and having bewrayed themselves to the whole world, do yet conjecture yt they walke unseen in a net.”

Could the story and fashioning of *Twelfth Night*, with its “poetical posie,” its “trifling fantasies,” its “humoral passions” (burlesqued later by Ben Jonson, in *Every Man Out of His Humour*), its letter-plot, and “strauge effects of a lover (Malvolio) enchayned . . . in the golden fetters of fantasie,” and so “bewrayed to the whole world,” though “conjecturing that he walks unseen,” while actually being spied upon by Fabian and the rest—could that exquisitely told tale, I ask, be more accurately epitomized than it is here, in this epistolary introduction to the adventures in love of Master Fortunatus Infoelix (Christopher Hatton), whose letter, containing the marrow of the *Twelfth Night* plot, is signed with that same posy anglicized into “The Fortunate Unhappy”? As further proof of connection with Lord Oxford’s letter to Bedingfield, we have H. W.’s words :

I may then boast to have gained a bushell of *good will*, in exchange for one pynt of peevish choler—

which are yet another paraphrase of Lord Oxford’s reiterated plea for “the pardon of mine own rashness,” because it were better, surely, “to displease one than to displease many,” and more pardonable still to annoy a certain individual, Hatton himself, for the ultimate delight of the millions who have rejoiced, and of the countless numbers that will yet rejoice, over the “humoral passions” of *Twelfth Night*.

Not much less meaningful is the next printed letter “concerning this worke,” from “G. T.” to “his very friend H. W.”—the word “very,” as here used, being comparable with the word-play employed, one year later, in 1574, by Gilbert Talbot, when he wrote to his mother, the Countess of Shrewsbury, concerning the young Earl of Oxford, of that ancient and “very family of the Veres”; and in the text itself we find reference by “G. T.”—who, however, seems to be, not Gilbert Talbot, but Oxford himself—to H. W.’s “esteeme” for “some Pamphlets,” which may well be some of Lord Oxford’s early court-plays; since I have shown, conclusively, as I hope, in an earlier book, that the words “letter,” and “pamphlet,” are frequently used in Shakespearean plays, including *Two Gentlemen* and *Twelfth Night*, and also in the plays of Chapman, as symbols for the Shakespearean comedies—the most striking instance of all, for our immediate purpose, being the passage in *Busy D’Ambois*, 1. i., which—in my *Plays of Shakespeare and Chapman in Relation to French History*, written some months before I understood the inner meaning of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*—I interpreted as a discussion between Bussy (Oxford) and Maffé (Hatton) concerning the “thousand crowns,” or, in other words, the £1000 a year, which Lord Oxford was drawing from the secret service fund, as a

reward for writing a "pamphlet," otherwise the play *Twelfth Night*, at which that portion of Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* is obviously aimed. Maffé-Hatton's question, put to Bussy-Oxford, is :

If for no pamphlet,
May I not know what other merit in you
Makes his compunction willing to relieve you?

When I am asked, as I have been asked, many times, by my Stratfordian critics, what evidence I can bring to show that Lord Oxford's unprecedently large annuity was granted to him in part, as a reward for writing the plays, I refer them to this passage, wherein, as I interpret it, Hatton himself most pertinently asks Oxford : "If the queen did not give it to you for writing the plays, for what other reason did she give it?"¹ But let us continue with "G. T.'s" letter to his "very friend, H. W.":

For who doubteth but that Poets in their most feyned fables and imaginacions, have metaphorically set forth unto us the right rewardes of vertues, and the due punishments for vices? Marie indeede I may not compare Pamphlets unto Poems.

Those words, in relation to the Shakespearian plays, are worth bearing in mind; for it was as true in the year 1573—four years before the first public theatre was built—that pamphlets, or plays, were not yet comparable with poems in propagandist effectiveness,

¹ Another potent reason—that Lord Oxford was father to Elizabeth's son—though, as I believe, a fact well known to Chapman, was, like the authorship of the plays, "a secret to be locked between teeth and lips" (Lucio, in *Measure for Measure*).

or in public influence, as it is also true that the poets of the, as yet, undeveloped Elizabethan drama would, in their plays, "metaphorically set forth unto us (their public audiences) the right rewardes of vertues and the due punishment for vices." Few Elizabethan students, I suppose, will to-day challenge an assertion that such plays as Shakespeare's *Henry IV*. and others too, including *King John*, were written and produced with precisely such a national and patriotic purpose.

"G. T.'s" letter closes thus :

"So fare you well, from my Chamber this *tenth* of August, 1572."

Three days earlier, on August 7, a letter of Intelligence had been written by an unknown hand to the Duke of Alva, Governor of the Netherlands, containing the words :

On the 27th ultimo a young French gentleman named M. de la Môle arrived from the French court with letters from the king.

La Môle, the first historic representative of Shakespeare's Viola, had come to woo Queen Elizabeth (Olivia) upon his master's, the Duke of Alençon's, or Orsino's behalf, but was frustrated by the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, on August 24, the news of which, when it reached England, brought the negotiations to an immediate end—an event dramatically recorded, in *Twelfth Night*, by Olivia's entry with her ladies in black, and by the reference to her brother's (Protestant's)

dead love which she would keep
Fresh and lasting in her sad remembrance.

"G. T.'s" letter is signed, "Yours or not his owne. G. T.," which I read as a hint that "H. W." and his very friend are really the same person, though I must here remind my readers that, in *Willbie His Avis* (1594), these same initials, "H. W."—often interpreted as meaning Henry Wriothesley (Southampton)—are those of W. S.'s familiar friend in that book—a pair which I identify as being, in the first version of the poem, those two "Gentlemen of Verona," Lord Oxford and the Duke of Alençon.

Seeing, then, that Alençon's chosen friend and nuncio, La Mole, was in London when the above letter was written, it is possible that the French prince and English nobleman, who, as I have shown, are to become Proteus and Valentine in *Two Gentlemen*, were secretly corresponding at this time, in which case Alençon—who, certainly, in his character of Orsino, would disapprove of Master F. I.'s (Hatton's) flirtations with Olivia-Elizabeth—may possibly be the original of "H. W."—a thesis which would be still more supportable could it be shown that F. I.'s mistress, of these letters, was none other than Queen Elizabeth herself.

Concerning the lady who provides the amatory adventures of "Master F. I., " "G. T." tells us, in his next letter,

The said F. I. chaunced once in the north partes of this realme to fall in company of a very fayre gentlewoman whose name was Mistress Elinor.

To this lady "F. I." wrote an epistle containing the following phrases :

I finde always a *readie repulse* in mine own forwardnesse . . . such is the extremitie of my passions, the which

Now this extract, with its reference to Hatton's "readie repulse in mine own forwardnesse," and to "this tell-tale paper," all suggests the story of Malvolio, as developed in *Twelfth Night*, including the "tell-tale" forged letter of Maria; and my readers who have had the patience to trace out with me the strong, though secret, links connecting all this Hatton-Oxford business with the comedy of Illyria, and with its character, alike in date, theme, and incident—will, I suppose, hardly deny that, in this section of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, we have almost a record of the events providing the Malvolio episode, in a play which, upon its French side, dramatizes, unquestionably, the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and Alençon.

If I am right, it follows, almost certainly, that Mistress Elinor, the fair dame of the north, is—in common with that fair lady of the west, Avisa—none other than Elizabeth herself. Admittedly the connecting links are less close than in the case of Avisa, but that is just what we should expect; for if it was still dangerous to publish such matters in 1594, it was doubly so to do it in 1573; and, probably, there was no individual at court, saving only the Queen's "allowed fool," her Lord Great Chamberlain, who would have dared to essay such a venture. Fortunately, he did dare; and his next letter, over the initials "G. T." provides an open hint concerning Elinor's identity with the Queen, when we read :

She (Mistress Elinor) took occasion one day at his request to daunce with him, the which doinge, shee bashfully

I could never have bene content to committe unto this tell-tale paper, ware it not that I am destitute of all other helpe.

began to declare unto him, that she had read over the writings, which he delivered unto her.

It was in a "daunce," remember, that Hatton first made a way into his royal mistress's favour.

Now if, at this point, any non-sympathetic reader be disposed to deny that we are here deep in the atmosphere of the early Shakesperian comedies, let him read these verses composed by Master "F. I." (Hatton), as "G. T." (Oxford) tells us, immediately after the above-recorded dance with his Elinor.

Fayre Bersabe the bright once bathing in a Well,
With deawe bedimnd King Davids eyes that ruled Israell.
And *Salomon* him selfe, the source of sapience,
Against the force of such assaultes could make but small
defence.

To it the stoutest yeeld, and strongest feele like woo,
Bold *Hercules* and *Sampson* both, did prove it to be so.

Here are three famous names of ancient history—*Solomon*, *Hercules*, and *Samson*—all of them, in some degree, brought low by love; and if the reader will pass on to page 80 of Captain B. Ward's edition of *The Flores*, he will find there a poem of another, and also "absent," lover, "Meritum petere, grave," wherein the same three heroes, again with *Solomon* at their head, are written of in an identical manner, as the helpless victims of woman—this "absent lover," let me add, cunningly proceeding, thereafter, to cipher into his next poem, "L'Escu d'Amour," his real name, which remained hidden until 1926, when Captain Ward's skill cunningly deciphered from it the secret signature, "Edward de Vere." Thus the poem concludes :

So that to end my tale as I began,
I see the good, the wise, the stoute, the bolde.

The strongest champion and the learnedst man,
Have been and be, by lust of love controd.

Which when I thinke, I hold me well content,
To live in love, and never to repent.

(MERRITUM PETERE, GRAVE.)

Admiral Hubert Holland, it was, who first linked for me these lines with a Shakesperian play—not, as might have been expected, with *Twelfth Night*, but with one of its companion comedies, a play very near in substance to *Twelfth Night*, since both touch upon the Alençon marriage—I mean *Love's Labour's Lost*, which, as I showed in an earlier book, formed with *Love's Labour's Won*, or *All's Well*, the pair of French-set comedies that were presented in January 1579, before the court at Richmond, in the presence, no doubt, of Alençon's second nuncio, Jehan de Simier, sitting on the right hand of Elizabeth herself.

Armando closes the first act of *Love's Labour's Lost* with the following monologue concerning Jaquenetta, who stands, like Audrey in *As You Like It*, for the plays :

And how can that be true love which is falsely attempted? Love is a familiar; Love is a devil; there is no evil angel but Love. Yet was *Samson* so tempted, and he had an excellent strength; yet was *Solomon* so seduced, and he had a very good wit. Cupid's butt-shaft is too hard for *Hercules'* club; and therefore too much odds for a Spaniard's rapier. The first and second cause will not serve my turn; the passado he respects not: the duello he regards not: his disgrace is to be called boy, but his glory is to subdue men. Adieu, Valour! rust, rapier! be still, drum! for your manager is in love; yea, he loveth. Assist me some extemporal god

of rhyme, for I am sure I shall turn sonnet. Devise, wit; write, pen; for I am for whole volumes in folio.

Surely it is no mere chance that here, in a comedy which gives us, as I shall argue later in this book, Elizabeth and Oxford, as Rosaline and Biron, we have Armado, in a monologue concerning Jaquenetta, introducing again the three love-stricken worthies of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*. I have already expressed an opinion—formed long before I understood these allusions in *The Flowres*—that in the first version of *Love's Labour's Lost*, which I assign to 1578, Armado, the man ready “for whole volumes in Folio,” is, in part, Oxford himself, and that Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* is Hatton, at the opening of that comedy, and Oxford at its close. If I am right, the use of this three-heroes-in-love theme by F. I. (Hatton) and by “Meritum petere, grave” (Oxford) in the “Flower” poem, seems to suggest that Armado also, in the same revision of *Love's Labour's Lost*, may be a composite of the two rival courtiers, Vice-Chamberlain and Lord Great Chamberlain, respectively—Christopher Hatton and Edward de Vere.¹ It is also worth noting that the words, “Cupid's butt-shaft is too hard for Hercules' club,”² seem to aim at the failure, as against Oxford, of Alençon's love-suit with Elizabeth—Hercules being his second Christian name, while Cupid, as we shall see, was the Love-god painted upon the shield of Oxford (Scudamour).

Now let us turn to those “Devices of Sundrie

Gentlemen,” which, in the middle part of *The Flowres*, follow upon “The Adventures of Master F. I.” and, passing over “Spreta tamen vivunt,” “Fato non Fortuno,” and “Ferenda Natura”—the last two of which Captain Ward identifies as George and Elizabeth Gascoigne—let us accept the following invitation from the Editor of the volume, who, if I have rightly argued, is Lord Oxford himself :

Now I must desire you with patience to hearken unto the works of another writer, who though he may not compare with the rest passed, yet such things as he wrote upon sundrie occasions, I will rehearse, beginning with this prayse of a Countesse.

When you have read the poem that follows, remembering that it was written before the summer of 1573, by a young Earl, who had been married on December 19, 1571, the naming of the Countess therein praised is no difficult task; for who should she be, if not Lord Oxford's own Countess, Anne Cecil?

Desire of Fame would force my feeble skill,
To prayse a countesse by hir dew desert.
But dread of blame holds back my forward will,
And quencht the coales which kindled in my heart.
Thus am I plongd twene dread and deepe desire,
To paye the dew which dutie doth require.

And when I call the mighty Gods in ayd,
To further forth some fine invention,
My bashefull spirits be full ill afrayd
To purchase payne by my presumption.
Such malice reignes (sometimes) in heavenly myndes,
To punish him that praiseth as he fynds.

¹ Mrs. Clark in her study of *The Satirical Comedy “Love's Labour's Lost”*, has shown that Armado is Don John of Austria in the first version of the play, 1578.

² Probably a reference to the Oxford-Elizabeth affair.

For *Pallas* first whose filed flowing skill,
Should guyde my pen some pleasant words to write,
With angry mood hath fram'd a foward will,
To dashe devise as oft as I endite.
For why? if once my Ladies gifts were knownen,
Pallas should loose the prayses of hir own.

And bloudy *Mars* by chaunge of his delight

Hath made *Jove*'s daughter now myne enemie,
In whose conceit my Countesse shines so bright,
That *Venus* pynes for burning jelousie.
She may go home to *Vulcane* now agayne.
For *Mars* is sworne to be my Ladies swayne.

Of hir bright beames Dan *Phæbus*¹ stands in dread,

And shames to shine within our *Horizon*.

Dame *Cynthia* holds in her hornèd head,

For feare to loose by like comparison.

Lo thus shee lives, and laughes them all to skorne.

Countesse on earth, in heaven a Goddesse borne.

And I sometimes hir seruaunt, now hir friend,

Whom heaven and earth for hir (thus) hate and blame.

Have yit presumed in friendly wise to spend,

This ragged verse in honor of hir name.

A simple gift, compared by the skill.

Yit what may seeme so deare as such good will.

(MERITUM PETERE, GRAVE.)

These verses, at last, after years of stumbling hypothesis and of verities dimly seen, will bring us, I firmly believe, to the real truth concerning Oxford's ill-fated marriage with Lord Burghley's daughter.

¹ Oxford, at court, seems frequently to have been called "Phæbus," of which "Oberon" is another form. Pheebe, in *As You Like It*, is Elizabeth; the pair being Sun and Moon.

Upon the first three words of the opening stanza, our vital interest is riveted by the future "Shakespeare's" plain statement, that already, with the opening of his twenty-third year, "Desire of fame," by which he means literary fame, was "forcing his (as yet) feeble skill" to praise worthily, in verse, the young Countess. Intensely significant, accordingly, becomes the "but" that follows.

But dread of blame holds back my forward will—

wherefore the hapless young Earl, torn

twene dread and deepe desire

To pay the dew which dutie doth require—

the duty of loyal service to his queen—is plunged into a dilemma the effects of which will react momentously upon his own life, and upon the plays of "Shakespeare," that reflect it; for his royal mistress's good pleasure will be crossed, should he—as he would willingly do—praise his own lawfully wedded wife. "If," we hear him murmuring, if only I dared to "purchase Payne by my presumption." How dare he? when the dreaded individual, possessor, as the Earl tells us, of a "heavenly mind," in which, nevertheless, earthly malice "sometimes reigns," is none other than Gloriana herself, who, quite evidently, in this year 1573, was claiming from her royal ward, even to the exclusion of his own newly wedded wife, something like a monopoly of that affection which, as we know, had already engendered, between the Earl and his parents-in-law, a bitterness that the execution of de Vere's cousin, the Duke of Norfolk, and certain sinister reports from "back friends," had further helped to enkindle. That the queen's attentions

to Oxford were arousing jealousy in the Burghley family, was evidently, by the spring of 1572, an open secret at court ; for, as I have reminded readers, in another section of this book, it was on May 11 that Gilbert Talbot wrote to his father, the Earl of Shrewsbury, the now famous letter concerning the queen's delight in young Oxford.

Jove's daughter, Pallas, or Minerva, as the Earl tells us in his third stanza above quoted, was she whose "filed flowing skill" had first guided his pen, "some pleasant words to write" ; from which I gather that it was Elizabeth herself, a woman of wide culture, and a genuine lover of the arts, who first encouraged her royal ward to try his prentice hand at literature—this interpretation confirming another, which, long before I could read the inner meaning of *The Flowres*, I had put upon Speed's remark to Valentine-Oxford, in *Two Gentlemen*, n. i., concerning Silvia-Elizabeth :

My master sues to her ; and she hath taught her suitor,
He being her pupil, to become her tutor.

That passage, it may be remembered, follows hard upon another in the same scene, wherein we are told, with unmistakable meaning, that Silvia has already, by Valentine's agency, suffered a "passing deformity," or motherhood, "ever since you loved her," or, in plainer English, since the queen was secretly loved by Edward de Vere. All these implications and interpretations, moreover, match accurately with remarks made in the first chapter of this book, aent the open jealousy displayed by the queen, when, some two years after the publication of *The Flowres*, she first heard that a daughter had been born to Anne Cecil. *Two Gentlemen*, let me remind you, is by no means the only play

which throws light upon these court mysteries ; for, in addition to *Troilus and Cressida*—to which I have already called attention—we can now comprehend more easily the furious jealousy of Rosaline-Elizabeth, so bitterly scoffed at by Romeo-Oxford, at the opening of the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* :

Arise, fair sun (Juliet), and kill the envious moon
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou her maid art far more fair than she—

the Moon here being Rosaline-Elizabeth—the "moon-goddess," as she was so often called—whose most frantic jealousies were invariably aroused by the amatory adventures of her Maids of Honour.¹

His royal mistress, Pallas, continues the Earl—

With angry mood hath framed a *froward will*,
To dashe devise as oft as I endite—

meaning that no sooner would the youth put pen to paper,

To prayse a Countesse (Anne) by hir dew desert—
than the queen's "angry mood" and "froward will" are promptly brought to his prevention—words which recall, at once, the scene in *As You Like It*, wherein Oxford-Jaques banished, at the queen's behest, from court to country, versifies there, in the forest (n. v.), concerning one who has turned ass :

Leaving his wealth and ease, A *stubborn will* to please
Ducdame, ducdame, ducdame.

¹ See *post*, Chapter VI.

Years ago now, when writing, in 1929, *The Case for Edward de Vere as Shakespeare*—long before I had examined *The Flowres*—I saw that Jaques-Oxford's departure from court, in 1589, seemed to have been caused by the “stubborn will” of “Duccame,” or Queen Elizabeth and her Council, whose “Greek invocation”—the spells of Pallas and Venus, by which names also the queen was known—could “summon fools” (courtiers) into, or could expel them from, Gloriana’s royal court.

Why, asks Oxford, should my device be dashed?—Because, if once “my Ladie’s (his wife’s) gifts were known,” and the merits of fair young Anne fitly poetized by himself,

Pallas should lose the praises of her own;

or, in plainer words, the royal mistress, in that event, will no longer be receiving those welcome love-poems from her brilliant and favourite young ward. De Vere’s neglect of his queen, for his wife,

Hath made Jove’s daughter now mine enemie
In whose conceit my Countesse shines so bright,
That Venus pynes for burning jelousie.

The Love-goddess, another daughter of Jove, is here, by way of thin disguise, substituted for Pallas—the name Venus, as Elizabethans well knew—and as some modern students of *Venus and Adonis* are beginning to perceive—being just another name for Queen Elizabeth. War is waged, henceforth, between these two women, at mortal strife for dominion over their man; and “Mars is . . . my lady’s swayne.”

Equally interesting is the fifth and penultimate stanza beginning—

Of hir bright beames Dan *Phœbus* stands in dread—
since this verse repeats exactly the motive we have already cited for *Romeo and Juliet*, wherein Anne is pictured as the rising sun, whose brightness so dims the moon that

Dame Cynthia holds in her horned head—

Cynthia being yet another name for the English queen, as, for example, in Ben Jonson’s satire, *Cynthia’s Revels*. Meanwhile that sweet and simple girl, Lady Oxford, enjoys a brief triumph, to be followed by a long sorrow, precisely as does Ophelia in *Hamlet*:

Lo thus shee lives, and laughes them all to skorne ;
Countesse on earth, in heaven a Goddessse borne.

“Goddesse borne” she might be, dangerously usurping her royal mistress’s monopoly of the Olympian rôle; but ten times more courage, strength, cunning, and endurance than ever Anne Cecil was endowed with were needed by any, or all, who would outface with scorn the hellish malignities of Gloriana and her court; even though the girl were backed by “Shakespeare’s” nonage pen.

In his second poem, the lover-Earl, still writing as “Merittum petere, grave,” “declareth his affection, together with the cause thereof,” or causes, which, he tells us, are

thy sundry gifts of grace
Full fraught with maners mask in happy quiet mind—

a description, by Oxford, of his Countess conforming, in each detail, with Anne's revelation of herself, in the letters that have come down to us. Edward de Vere, I think—more especially in those early years, when the extravagant turbulence of his own fancies were a perpetual torment to him—was naturally drawn towards, and enviously admired those, who, like his wife, Anne Cecil, and his cousin, Horatio de Vere—the Horatio of *Hamlet*—possessed that, to him, unattainable felicity, the quiet mind.

This poem, concluding with a pledge of the writer's heart to his "deare Dame," and again bearing the Latin posy, by way of signature, is followed by "another and shorter discourse to the same effect," chiefly interesting for its first four lines :

If ever man yit found the Bath of perfect blisse,
Than swim I now amid the Sea where nought but pleasure is.
I love and am beloved (without vaunt be it told)
Of one more fayre than shee of *Greece* for whom proud
Troy was sold.

The reference to swimming "amid the sea," suggests that the verse was written at Lord Oxford's country house, Wivenhoe, near the mouth of the Colne, whence several of de Vere's letters are addressed at this time, and where he may have enjoyed a brief honeymoon of unbroken pleasure.

In the second of the three poems, from which, as yet, we have quoted, the versifier had bid his lady "banish dark disdayn"; and in the fourth poem the lover, now "disdaynfully rejected" contrary to former promise—since even the gentle Anne has become restive under provocation—"thus complayneth" against his fate :

The deadly droppes of darke disdayne,
Which dayly fall on my desarte,
The lingering suite long spent in vayne,
Whereof I feele no fruit but smart.
Enforce me now theis words to write.
Not all for love, but more for spite.

The susceptible Earl, rent by conflicting ambitions of lover, courtier, and poet, and torn by the bitterly hostile claims of countess and queen, both so alluring, after their kinds, begins now to versify for spite, as well as for love; and the fifth stanza, reading as follows, points clearly towards the play that, in due time, will dramatize a mood which, turning the worst to laughter, will let him "clappe my hands" at grief of heart.

If *Gresseide*'s name were not so knownen,
And written wyde on every wall.
If brute of pryd were not so blowen
Upon *Angelica* withal.
For hault disdain thou mightst be she,
Or *Gresyde* for inconstancie.

Such is the fruit that groweth always
Upon the root of rype disdyn.
Such kindly wages *Cupide* payes,
Where constant harts cannot remayne.
I hope to see thee in such bands,
When I may laugh and clappe my hands.

But yet for thee I must protest,
That sure the fault is none of thine,
Thou art as true as is the best,
That ever came of *Cressede*'s lyne.
For constant yet was never none,
But in unconstancie alone.

(MERITUM PETERE, GRAVE.)

Just as we have seen page after page of these *Flowres*, by their connection with Hatton-Malvolio, and in other ways, leading up to, and foretelling unmistakably, the comedy of *Twelfth Night*, so the whole situation between Oxford and Anne, as developed in the verses that we have been examining, leads up to a comedy in which—though with intensest bitterness in his heart—he “laughs and claps his hands” over the whole miserable business, dramatizing, with an agonized wrath, the falsity of his Cressida, concerning which, nevertheless, he was often doubtful; but reserving for her father, Lord Burghley—as Pandarus, the pander of this ill-starred marriage—a passionate resentment and a withering scorn, even though the young Earl’s native simplicity of soul,

Most generous . . . remiss,
and free from all contriving—
as King Claudius describes Hamlet-Oxford—will blind him, in part, to those secret and treacherous duplicities of his father-in-law against him, which—as an examination of *Muioporns* will reveal—were abundantly clear to Edmund Spenser. For

Suspicion of friend nor fear of foe had he at all . . . but was secure . . . regardless of his government. (*Muiopoms*)

In chapter iv. of my *Life-Story of De Vere as Shakespeare* (pp. 95-113), I showed, at length, that Troilus and Cressida are Oxford and Anne; and, further, that just as, some eleven years later, in *Hamlet*, he would satirize his father-in-law, Burghley (Pondus), as Polonius,

and burlesque, with consummate skill, the foxy old politician’s tautological style, clearly shown by his letters; so also here, in *Troilus and Cressida*, Pandarus utters speeches that are, in style, indistinguishable from those of Polonius. Every point, almost, in the early Troilus scenes of the play fits in accurately with this interpretation, first suggested to me by Captain B. M. Ward—the characters, the circumstances, the stream of Vere puns, the reference to Troilus as a man born in April, all dovetail themselves with authentic history, including also the dates; since Pandarus’s words—

He (Troilus) never saw three-and-twenty—

suggest that the prince was twenty-two when the play was drafted, Oxford having, in fact, reached twenty-two and a half years of age on October 12, 1572, which would be about nine months before *The Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* was published in the summer of 1573. In the same chapter of my *Life-Story*, I showed that the Leontes-Hermione scenes of *A Winter’s Tale*—in common with the Hero-Claudio episodes of a later comedy, *Much Ado*—also dramatize Anne as Hermione, with Oxford as the jealous Leontes, compelled, at last, like Claudio, to admit that he has, though unwittingly, slandered his lady. *The Flowres*, then, lead up to *Troilus and Cressida*, as surely as they foretell *Twelfth Night*.

Lord Oxford, be it observed, as early even as 1572, or the spring of 1573, is already dramatist enough, at heart, to make Anne herself retort against the wrongs of “false suspect,” in a poem so important to our case that I must print it here in full.

*A lady, being wronged by false suspect
and also wounded by the durance
of hir husband, doth thus
bewray hir grief.*

Give me my Lute in bed now as I lye,
And lock the doores of mine unluckie bower.
So shall my voyce in mournefull verse descrie,
The secret smarte which causeth me to lower.
Resound you walles *an Echo to my mone*,
And thou cold bed wherin I lye alone.
Beare wittesse yet what rest thy Lady takes,
When other sleepe which may enjoy their makes.

In prime of youth when *Cupid* kindled fire,
And warmd my wil with flames of fervent love :
To further forth the fruite of my desire,
My freends devised this meane for my behove,
They made a match according to my mind,
And cast a snare my fansie for to bind,
Short tale to make the deed was almost doon,
Before I knew which way the worke begone.

And with this lot I did myself content,
I lent a lyking to my parents choyse.

With hand and hart I gave my free consent,
And hung in hope for ever to rejoice.
I liv'd and low'd long time in greater joy,
Then she which held *Kyng Priam's* sonne of Troy,
But three lewd lots have chang'd my heaven to hell,
And those be these, give eare and mark them well.

First slander he, which always beareth hate,
To happy harts in heavenly state that byde.
Gan play his part to stirre up some debate,
Wherby suspect into my choyse myght glyde.

And by his meanes the slime of false suspect,
Did (as I feare) my dearest friend infect.
Thus by these twayn long was I plunged in pain,
Yet in good hope my hart did still remaine.

But now (aye me) the greatest grief of all,
(Sound loud my Lute, and tell it out my tongue)
The hardest hap that ever might befall,
The onely cause wherefore this song is sung,
Is this alas : my love, my Lord, my Roy,
My chosen pheare, my gemme, and all my joye,
Is kept perforce out of my dayly sight,
Wherby I lacke the stay of my delight.

In loftie walles, in strong and stately towers,
With troubled mind in solitary sorte,
My lovely Lord doth spend his dayes and howers,
A weary life devoyde of all dispert.
And I poore soule must lie here all alone,
To tyre my trueth, and wound my will with mone.
Such is my hap to shake my blooming time,
With wynter's blastes before it passed the prime.

Now have you heard the summe of all my grief,
Wherof to tell my hart (oh) rends in twayne.
Good ladies yet lend you me some relief,
And beare a parte to ease me of my payne.
My sortes are such, that wayng well my trueth,
They might provoke the craggy rocks to rueth,
And move these walles with teares for to lament,
The lothsome life wherin my youth is spent.

But thou my Lute, be still now, take thy rest,
Repose thy bones upon this bed of downe.
Thou hast discharged some burden from my brest,
Wherfore take thou my place, here lies thee downe.

And let me walke to tyre my restlesse minde,
Until I may entreate some curteous wynd.
To blow these words unto my noble make,
That he may see I sorrowe for his sake.

(MERITUM PETERE, GRAVE.)

This poem, in which the lady laments her woes, is of the first import to our theme, not merely because, as we shall see, it reveals to us the three primary causes of Anne's sorrow, but because it links up also with Mariana in the moated grange, of *Measure for Measure*, with the story of *Troilus and Cressida*, and with the well-known "Echo" song, admittedly written by Lord Oxford himself, and probably composed at about this time.

Now the first stanza of the suspect lady's complaint, as she lies immured in her "unluckie bower," opens with a request to an attendant to "give me my lute in bed," so that she may sing, "in mournefull verse," the story of her "secrete smart." Similarly, the opening scene of the fourth act of *Measure for Measure* introduces—for the first time, in both poem and play—the lady Mariana, not precisely in an "unluckie bower," but in a moated grange, which Tennyson has wrought into a permanent symbol of misfortune's lonely home. Mariana in the play, like the lady of the poem, has a companion; and although she does not herself sing her woes "in mournefull verse," the boy does so for her, in a lyric as lovely as any that even "Shakespeare" ever wrote. We have here, then, a herald of Mariana, while *Troilus and Cressida* is openly foretold in the couplet,

I liv'd and lov'd long time in greater joy,
Then she which held Kyng *Priam*'s sonne of *Troy*—

"Troilus, I need hardly add, being the son of Priam here mentioned.

As for Oxford's "Echo" song, it is recalled again and again, from the first verse onwards, with its motive of "mournefull verse" sung by a lady who lies alone, directly comparable with the Earl's own opening line—

Sitting *alone* upon my thought in *melancholy* mood—
and with her line—

Resound you walles an *Echo* to my mone—

paralleled in the "Echo" song by the couplet :

From sighs and *shedding amber tears* into sweet song she
brake,

When thus *the echo answered* her to every word she spake,

and also by the closing four lines :

And I, that knew this lady well,
Said, Lord how great a miracle,
To hear how *Echo told the truth*,
As *true as Phœbus oracle*.

The truth, moreover, that Echo tells, is here a punning truth, carrying the name that burdens the lady's own heart, and inspires her mournful song—the name that first "bred in me this *fever—Vere*"; the name, as we have seen, likewise hinted at in the forsaken Countess's verse in *The Floures*, "King Priam's son of Troy," who is Troilus, who is also de Vere.

CHAPTER III

"A HUNDRETH SUNDRIE FLOWRES" (*continued*)

Three "lewd lots" destroyed Anne's joy—They were "slander," "false suspect," and forced seclusion in some moated grange—Queen Elizabeth's jealousy the basic cause of the trouble—Link with Rosaline (Elizabeth) in *Romeo and Juliet*—Oxford and George Gascoigne—More verses on the queen's jealousy, and desire for revenge—Malvolio-Hatton in *Twelfth Night* becomes Malvolio-Oxford—Interpretation of the "wretched ragged man," scene of *As You Like It*, iv. iii.—Oliver-Orlando is Oxford, and the "gilded snake" is Elizabeth—So also is the "lioness"—Light thrown by these passages on *Troilus and Cressida* and *Twelfth Night*—Some of these poems perhaps written at Wivenhoe—Hatton and Oxford as victims of love—The *Ever or Never* signature and puns—Gascoigne's "De Profundis" poem—He may have accompanied Oxford to London in 1562—Links with Sonnets XXXIII. and XXXIV., hinting at the birth of Oxford and Elizabeth's son—*Shakespeare's* son, if legitimate, would have been King of England!

No less eloquent of the connection between the two sets of verses signed, respectively, "Meritum petere, grave," and "The Earle of Oxforde," are the parallel passages that follow.

My sortes are such, that waving well my truth,
They *might provoke the craggy rocks to ruelth*,
And move these walles with teates for to lament,
The lothsome life wherin my youth is spent.

(MAXIMUM PETERE, GRAVE.)

Three times with her soft hand full hard on her left side
she knocks.
And sigh'd so sore as *might have mov'd some pity in the rocks*.

(THE EARLE OF OXFORDE.)

The frequent references by "Meritum," hereabouts, to the sea, together with the words, "in sight of sea," at the opening of the "Echo" song, and the double

mention of rocks, gives me the firm impression that both poems are connected with Wivenhoe, Lord Oxford's house, near the mouth of the Colne, which may be Marian's moated grange.

Anne's poem, as I interpret it, contains, however, more important matter yet; for if my readers will turn again to those verses, from the second to the fifth inclusive, they will discover there what exactly were the three "lewd lots," or strokes of ill-fortune, which turned the Countess's heaven of joy in her beloved young husband into a "hel," wherein her spirit was to burn through many wretched years.

The lady, through her lord's pen, as I think, here tells us, quite plainly, that when first her friends, meaning, no doubt, her parents, arranged for her this match with Lord Oxford, she fell in with their views; and little realizing what a snare was thereby laid, "her fansie for to bind," she "lent a lyking to my parents choyse," and, with hand and heart, "gave my free consent."

For a while, all went well; and there shone before her eyes a future radiant with hope, while the happy bride

liv'd and lov'd long time in greater joy,
Then she which held kyng *Priam's* sonne of *Tragy*—

this allusion to herself as Cressida, happily married to her Troilus, again foretelling the early version of the Shakesperean play examined in my *Life-Story of Edward de Vere*.

The first of these three "lewd lots" is Slander,¹ Spenser in *Faerie Queene*, iv., introduces the "foul hag," Slander, as torturer of the same group of persons, Belpheobe (Elizabeth), Amoret (Anne), and Scudamour (Oxford).

who, bearing implacable hatred towards "happy harts in heavenly state," too soon

Gan play his part to stirre up some debate,

so as to infect her dearest friend and husband with "the slime of *false suspect*," which is the second of the "lewd lots." These two causes are cruel; and they cut to the quick; but the third and direst grief—

The only cause wherefore this song is sung—

is that Anne's adored husband, her Love, her Lord, her Roy, her gem, and her joy

Is kept perforse out of my dayly sight,

and left to brood

With *troubled mind* in *solitary sorte*—

a line which paraphrases almost the opening line of Oxford's "Echo" song,

Sitting alone upon my thought in *melancholy mood*.

Pent in prison he is, within "loftie walls" and "strong and stately towers," where his lady may by no means have access to him, but, "poore soul, must lie here all alone," a Mariana languishing in some moated Suffolk grange at Wivenhoe, Lavenham, or elsewhere. Such was the third, and most cruel, of the "lewd lots"; and the earlier quoted verses, in praise of Oxford's Countess, leave us in no doubt at all concerning the identity of the person responsible for that cruel act. If Oxford be here setting down the truth—and surely these artless lines bear the stamp of veracity—the guilty individual, whose

egotistical spleens come between him and his young wife, can be none other than Queen Elizabeth herself, that Olympian Pallas-Venus-Cynthia, who had long been wont to "dash" young Oxford's penned "devise" in commendation of Anne Cecil's gifts and graces, lest

Pallas should lose the prayses of hir own;

and who, pining "for burning jelousie," and diminished in the "bright beams" of the young girl's rising beauty, "holds in," like Cynthia the moon,

her horned head

For feare to loose by like comparison.

We have already traced, in these writings of Lord Oxford's nonage, the outlines of a satirical comedy, *Troilus and Cressida*, and of a terrific domestic tragedy, *Othello*; and here, in addition, we link directly up with a world-famous scene in the loveliest of all lyrical tragedies, *Romeo and Juliet*, wherein Romeo (Oxford) speaks towards the balcony-window whereat Juliet (Anne) is standing :

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,

Who is already sick and pale with grief,

That thou her maid are far more fair than she.

Here in the play, as also in the poem, his young wife, the rising sun, is compared with the moon envying the golden charms of her supplanter. Elizabeth, it is true, does not appear, as a character, in *Romeo and Juliet*; but, though not once brought upon the stage, she is, as I have already shown, frequently, and with un-

mistakable significance, mentioned in the play, as Rosaline, Romeo's discarded mistress—lines which form, therefore, an extremely important link in our chain of evidence connecting Oxford and his queen.¹ In the poem's penultimate stanza, the line concerning the provocation of even "the craggy rocks to rueth," provides another unmistakable parallel with Oxford's "Echo" song, written also to Anne Vavasour, or to Anne Cecil—in short, to Juliet—wherein we read how the stricken lady

sigh'd so sore as might have mov'd some pity in the rocks.

The next poem in the series by "Meritum petere, grave"—"a booteless comparison betweene two letters"—need not detain us long, though the first and last stanzas are worth quotation.

Of all the letters in the christs-crosse rowe,
I fear (my sweete) thou louest B. the best,
And though there be good letters many mo,
As A.O.G.N.C.S. and the rest,
Yet such a liking bearest thou to B.
That fewe or none thou thinkest like it to be.

Thus have I played a little with thy B.

Wherof the brand is thine, and mine the blame.

The wight which wounds *thy wounding will* is he,

And I the man that seeke to salve thy name.

The which to thinke, doth make me sigh sometime,
Though thus I strive to jest it out in rhyme.

(*MERITUM PETERE, GRAVE.*)

The first-quoted stanza contains an obvious anagram for Gascon, otherwise George Gascoigne; and Captain

¹ For a study of the two Rosalines, see *post*, Chapter VI.

Ward holds that these rhymes, smacking strongly of the schoolroom, with their references to vowels and consonants, and to the criss-cross row, may, perhaps, be a very early production of the precocious young Oxford, written about September 1562, when Gascoigne and de Vere seem to have ridden to London together, about the time that the elder man was writing the "Complaint of Phylomene." The last verse—

Thus have I played a little with thy B.—

with its reference to "wandering will" and to the "jesting out" in rhyme of matters that may as easily evoke a sigh, is already suggestive of Lord Oxford's future pseudonym, William or Willy, and of a style of versifying that will be brought to perfection in the Sonnets, and also in the printed versions of *Love's Labour's Lost*.

There follows a poem, the most interesting points of which provide another of the many, and significant, references, in *The Flowres*, to *Troilus and Cressida*, while the mention of thoughts of love as "a pinching pain" is interesting, as being used again by the "Earle of Oxforde" in his poem, "Revenge of Wrong":

Patience perforce is such a *pinching pain*.

Passing over some unimportant verses, and ignoring a "pretie thing," by way of riddle, that I cannot solve, we come upon more lines crammed with meaning, and written to

a gentlewoman who blamed him for writing his friendly advise in verse unto another lover of hers.

The poem reads as follows :

The cruell hate which boyles within thy burning brest,
And seekes to shape a sharpe revenge, on them that love
thee best.
May warne thy faythfull friendes, in case of jeoperdie,
How they shall put their harmlesse hands, betwene ye
barck and tree.
And I among the rest, which wrote this weary song,
Must needs alledge in my defence, that thou hast done
me wrong.
For if, in simple verse, I chaunced to touch thy name,
And toucht the same without reproch, was I therfore to
blame?
And if (of great good will) I gave my best advise,
Then thus to blame without cause why, me thinkes thou
art not wise.
Amongst old written tales, this one I beare in mind :
A simple soule, much like myselfe, did once a serpent find
Which (almost dead for colde) lay moyling in the mire,
When he for pittie toke it up and brought it to the fyre.
No sooner was the Snake cured of his grief,
But straight she sought to hurt the man that lent hir such
relief.¹

Such serpent seemeth thou, such simple soule am I,
That for the weight of my good will, am bland without
cause why.

But as it best beseemes, the harmlesse gentle hart,
Rather to take an open wrong, than for to playne his part.
I must and will endure thy spite without repent,
The blame is myne, the tryumph thine, and I am well
content.

The first line of this effusion gave me, as I believe, clues to the gentlewoman's identity ; and before reading half-way through the poem, I was satisfied that we had

¹ Cf. also Raleigh's letter.

here, in effect, a thinly disguised paraphrase of the verses written in "praye of a Countesse" (Lady Oxford), with which "Meritum" opened his series of contributions to *The Flowres*, their burden being, that her husband dared not write commendatory songs to his young wife, because he feared the "angry mood," the "froward will," and the "burning jealousy" of a certain daughter of the gods named Pallas, Venus, or Cynthia, otherwise Queen Elizabeth herself. We saw, further, that Gloriana's "froward will," therein mentioned, matched the "stubborn will" attributed by Jacques-Oxford to Duccame-Elizabeth, in *As You Like It*, ii. v.

These verses, that we must now examine, are written, however, not to the Earl's Countess, but to his Queen, the very "gentlewoman who blamed him" for daring to praise any other, save his own sovereign lady, and concerning whom he uses expressions such as "blame," "cruell hate," seeking "a sharpe revenge," and so forth—words which parallel almost exactly, both in thought and phrase, the poem to his Countess, Lady Anne. Interesting also, and most significant, are the links here with two Shakesperian comedies, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*, the last of which will still be fresh in the reader's mind.

We have seen that "Master F. I." or "Fortunatus Infoelix" of *The Flowres*, is Christopher Hatton, and that Hatton is substantially, though no more than in part, the Malvolio of *Twelfth Night*; but I have shown also, in my earlier books, that, towards the end of *Twelfth Night*, from the letter-scene onwards, Malvolio becomes less Hatton than Oxford himself, caged and silenced, or, in plainer words, exiled from court, and compelled to work under a pseudonym, in obedience to that same "stubborn will" of his queen ; this change

of identity, in the comedy of Illyria, being accomplished, no doubt, during some late revision of the text, perhaps for purposes of the Folio edition, by a hand that was probably not Lord Oxford's. It is therefore, perhaps, no coincidence that Oxford writes in this volume, where-with Hatton is so closely connected :

I . . . which wrote this weary song

Must needs alledge in my defense, that *thou hast done me wrong*—

and that, many years later, he, or some other, revising his play, *Twelfth Night*, wrote into Malvolio's self-defence the words :

Madam, you have done me wrong,

Notorious wrong—

the "thou" and "you" both standing for Elizabeth disguised, in the first instance as a "gentlewoman," and, in the second, as the Countess Olivia.

Equally meaningful is the tale told in the middle of this poem concerning the "simple soule much like myselfe," who "did once a frozen serpent find," which, when he had warmed it back to animation, sought, straightway, to injure her benefactor. Here another striking analogy with *As You Like It* comes to sight, as the reader may discover, if he will turn to, and consider awhile, the meaning of the following passage, wherein Oliver, in the Forest of Arden, tells a story to Rosalind and Celia (iv. iii.):

Oliv. When last the young Orlando parted from you
He left a promise to return again
Within an hour, and pacing through the forest,

Chewing the food of sweet and bitter fancy,
Lo, what beſel ! he threw his eye aside,
And mark what object did present itſelf.
Under an oak, whose boughs were moss'd with

age

And high top bald with dry antiquity,
A wretched ragged man, o'ergrown with hair,
Lay sleeping on his back : about his neck
A green and gilded snake had wreathed itſelf,
Who with her head nimble in threats approach'd
The opening of his mouth ; but ſuddenly,
Seeing Orlando, it unlinke'd itſelf,
And with indented glides did ſlip away
Into a bush : under which bush's shade
A lioness, with udders all drawn dry,
Lay couching, head on ground, with catlike watch,
When that the ſleeping man ſhould stir ; for 'tis
The royal diſpoſition of that beast

To prey on nothing that doth ſeem as dead.
This ſeen, Orlando did approach the man

And found it was his brother, his elder brother.
O, I have heard him ſpeak of that ſame brother ;

And he did render him the moſt unnatural
That lived amonſt men.

Oliv. And well he might do ſo,
For well I know he was unnatural.

The interpretation of this character ſeems clear enough ; but, although I have already attempted it elsewhere, the lines muſt be unravelled again here, with this preamble added, that young Orlando,

pacing through the forest,
Chewing the food of sweet and bitter fancy,
ſtrongly recalls the "sweet-and-bitter-fool" motive of

King Lear, I. iv.—again aimed directly at Oxford—wherein the couplet,

The one in motley here,
The other found out there,

links up, not only with the Fool and his royal master, but also with that bitter fool, or sour philosopher, Jaques, and the sweet fool, or merry jester, Touchstone, a pair in Arden, who, historically viewed, become dramatizations of two facets of Lord Oxford's complex character.

The oak, whose mossy boughs are “bald with dry antiquity,” I take to symbolize old England, while the “wretched ragged man o'ergrown with hair,” lying asleep beneath that oak (Elizabeth)—an individual who turns out to be Oliver himself, Orlando's “elder brother”—is, as I read the riddle, the unregenerate Oxford of those early days, so bitterly accused, by Howard and Arundel, of a hundred unnatural offences. The “sleeping” motive, as in many other similar instances, hints at the extinction of the true author's identity beneath a pseudonym, just as do Jaques-Oxford's words, spoken earlier in the play, relating to Duccame (Elizabeth)—“I'll go sleep if I can”—and the description of the tatterdemalion, “o'ergrown with hair,”¹ bears the same meaning as does the parallel symbolic, and punning, word-play used by Launce in *Two Gentlemen*, III. i. :

There's not a hair on's head but 'tis a Valentine (Oxford). . . . The hair that covers the wit is more than the wit—

¹ See *post*, pp. 225-29, where we shall find Spenser, in *Pearl Queen*, iv., using the same “hairy-man” device concerning Scudamour (Oxford)—almost certainly with *As You Like It* in mind.

the solution here being that, although the wit of the plays must count for something—since it is de Vere's “wit of chE. Verel that stretches from an inch narrow to an ell broad”—the Hair, or Hare, that *covers* the wit—or in other words, the author himself, and all that he and his plays stand for—are more important than the mere verbal dexterities with which these dramas abound, and within which their contriver's identity is, at once, concealed and revealed.¹ Green and white, being remembered, are the colours of the Tudor livery, so that the “green and gilded snake,” who, “nimble in threats,” had wreathed her coils of green and gold about the hairy wretch's mouth, seems to stand again for the Tudor queen, whose threatening authority has compelled Oxford to an unwilling silence.²

Now Oliver, as we have seen, is the “elder brother” of Orlando, or, in plain English, the unregenerate, “unnatural” young de Vere, of the *Measure for Measure* and *Romeo and Juliet* days (*circa* 1581), who develops into the reformed and regenerate Orlando, the mature Oxford of *As You Like It* days—a comedy written, probably, in 1589, and developed from an earlier draft. By an analogous change of metaphor, the snake-queen becomes, at this point, the lioness, now an aged creature, “with udders all drawn dry”—Elizabeth was fifty-six years old in 1589—yet resolutely as ever determined to make heavy trouble, should the sleeping man stir, or, in simpler phrase, come to life, as the genuine “Shakespeare.” The words,

¹ Launce has just come on as a huntsman hallooing the hare—*i.e.* hunting the lost identity of Valentine-Oxford as “Shakespeare.”

² Possibly the reference may be, as the late Professor Greenlaw held, to the Alencon marriage, against which the gnat, Spenser, warns the Shepherd (Leicester) in “Virgil's Gnat.”

for 'tis

The royal disposition of that beast
To prey on nothing that doth seem as dead—

means, of course, that Gloriana will be content to let her erstwhile lover alone, and will continue to pay him his £1000 a year, provided always that he remain "asleep." It is worth while, at this point, to recall, that Oxford's words, spoken a little further on in the same scene :

I do not shame

To tell you what I was, since my conversion
So sweetly tastes, being the thing I am—

seems to contain Oxford's admission of lapses in his early youth, and of joyful relief in repentance and reform.

Returning now to that poem among *The Flowres*, the Earl, in the matter of his young countess, as against his queen, blames, not himself, but the jealousy of the serpent :

Such serpent seemeth thou, such simple soule am I,
That for the weight of my good will, am blamed without
cause why.¹

I need hardly emphasize the paramount importance which, if I interpret them rightly, these poems by "Meritum petere, grave" take, in leading up to, and throwing vivid light upon, not only such Shakesperean plays as *Troilus and Cressida*, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*, but also upon the intimate and hitherto unsuspected relations between Elizabeth, Oxford, and Anne Cecil.

The verses entitled "An uncurteous farewell to an unconstant dame," which, following, reiterate the *Troilus and Cressida* motive, show that, probably under the influence of the Howard-Arundel group, secretly encouraged by the Queen, de Vere was absorbing doubts concerning his wife's fidelity, which his swift fancy much too readily assimilated. In the succeeding poem he bewails the misfortunes and sorrows into which "the chase of company," by way of distraction, has drawn him, followed by the discovery—made by how many men and maidens, before and since?—that

Dame pleasure's plaster prov'd a corosive;

and that the bitter fruit of mirth was "mone." Some palliative, of a sort, de Vere had found among those "lewd companions" against whom, though in vain, his father-in-law, Burghley, used to tirade; but, too late, the youth had turned that way his hopeful steps :

The byrdes were flowen, before I found the nest,
The steede was stollen, before I shut the gate,
The cates consumed, before I smelt the feast,

"Striving to sail"—bewilderingly these metaphors multiply—the mariner has only "stuck on sand," and, "deeming to live," he is "yet drowned" in those deep desires, the wistful agony of which he will express elsewhere, in other simple verses, such as these :

Doth company displease?
It doth in many one.

"Tis better to be vile than vile esteem'd,
When not to be receives reproach of being.

Will ever age or death
Bring thee unto decay?
No, no, Desire both lives and dies
A thousand times a day.

Then, Fond Desire, farewell;
Thou art no mate for me;
I should be loath, methinks, to dwell
With such a one as thee.

(EARL OF OXFENFORDE.)

Need I remind my readers how exquisitely the bitter-sweet, or sweet bitterness, of such moods is lyricized in the poetry of Troilus and Romeo, and lashed in the gall of Pandarus, Burghley; or that millions have felt what Frank Harris, though ignorant of the poet's identity with Lord Oxford, wrote, concerning "Shakespeare," that "Desire in especial has inspired him with phrases most magically expressive."

Further references, hereabouts, to sand and sea, suggest, once more, that these "Flowre" poems may have been written at Wivenhoe, within sound of the waters. Was it to Wivenhoe that the queen had exiled, for separation of husband from wife, either Anne herself —Mariana in the moated grange—or banished Romeo, royally forbidden the white wonder of his Juliet's hand? Young Oxford, nevertheless, having always, behind the poet, something in him of the philosopher, determines, in his next set of verses, patiently to endure his woe, and "to make vertue of necessite," since he can "record within his musing mind" the noble names of many others, who, before him, have thus been driven down the cumbered paths of love. There follows a list of these, including the trio, Solomon, Samson, and Hercules, whose names have already been mentioned

in the first poem of *The Flowres*, written by Master F. I. (Christopher Hatton), the same three heroes of antiquity whom we saw named by Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. ii., among the victims of that "evil angel," all-conquering Love. Very remarkable is this connection of the names of Hatton and Oxford with those three ancients, and with the three comedic characters, Armado, Malvolio, and Feste.

The following couplet, to be found near the conclusion of the poem,

Yes, God he knows, for verse nor *pleasant rymes*,
Can constant keep, *the key* of *Cresside's crimes*—

together with this from the poem following :

In farre more heat, than trusty *Troylus* fund,
When craftie Cressyde dwelt with *Diomed*—

points again to *The Flowres* as providing, in pleasant rhymes, the key to that bitterly satirical love-comedy of *Troilus and Cressida*; nor, in this connection, must the fact be overlooked, that the verses here drawn upon —the last that are signed with Oxford's posy, "Meritum petere, grave," are those wherein "the absent lover (in ciphers) deciphering his name," reveals both name and identity as those of "Edward de Vere."

The poems that follow are introduced by the Editor, "G. T," with the following remarkable words :

I will now deliver unto you so many more of Master Gascoigne's poems as have come to my hands, who hath never beene dayntie of his doings, and therefore I conceale not his name: but his word or posie he hath often changed, and therefore I will deliver his verses with such sundrie posies as I received them.

The peculiar significance, to us, of these words, is that Master Gascoigne, this poet of many posies or signatures,

whose name is not concealed, because he "hath never been dayntie of his doings," signs the set of poems that follow, with the words "Ever or never," which, as careful readers of my earlier books well know, are frequently used in Elizabethan literature, as clues to the identity of Oxford with "Shakespeare," as, for example, in the phrase, "A *never* writer to an *ever* reader," in the preface to the 1609 Quarto of *Troilus and Cressida*; and also in the works of Chapman, particularly *The Revenge of Bussy*, ii. i., which pictures de Vere (Shakespeare) setting down his sonnets upon royal parchment—

Never so blest as when he writ and read
The ape-loved issue of his brain, and *never*
But joying in himself admiring *ever* (E. Ver.).

Willbie His Ayvia, a poem of 1594, packed with Oxford-Shakesperian matter, provides the same signature, "Ever and Never," at the close of that book. Numerous are the "ever-and-never" puns scattered throughout Elizabethan literature; and generally, it seems, aiming at de Vere, though the words appear to have been originally a posy of George Gascoigne's, and—if I read rightly—the rhymes that follow are one of those "Lullabyes" with which he, and others, soothed awhile into "sleep" the identities of those at whom their writings are secretly aimed.

With Lullabye now take your leave,
With Lullabye you're dreames deceyve,
And when you rise with waking eye,
Remember *Gascoigne's* Lullabye.

(EVER OR NEVER.)

Compare this with the *sleeping* Oliver (Oxford) in the Forest of Arden, with the Lullaby of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ii. pronounced by Oberon, the Fairy King, who is again Oxford, as he squeezes the flower upon Titania's eyelids :

What thou seest when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true love take—

not forgetting that Titania is Elizabeth herself, almost openly referred to as "throned in the west," in the preceding scene of the play; and that "the little *western* flower," upon which Cupid's (Oxford's) bolt had fallen, and with the juice of which Oberon anoints his lady's eyes, symbolizes that "little changeling boy," who is the subject of their quarrel, and who, as I shall argue in these pages, is none other than the beautiful youth of the Sonnets, Elizabeth's son by Lord Oxford, born, probably, about 1574, one year after the publication of *The Flowres*. Strange that, in this so mysterious book, *The Flowres*, within whose pages Oxford, Hatton, and Gascoigne are thus enigmatically intermingled, we find theme after theme thus projecting us forward into the Shakesperian plays and sonnets! In Gascoigne's "De Profundis," which follows upon page III of *The Flowres*, we have, as Captain Ward long ago pointed out, another almost certain, and very striking, link with the Sonnets. Thus Oxford, as Editor of the collection, introduces Gascoigne's "De Profundis."

These good Morowe and good nyght, together with his Passion, his Libell of divorce, his Lullabye, his Recantation, his De Profundis, and his farewell, have verie sweete notes adapted unto them: the which I would you should also

¹ This quarto—one of the first to be published after Oxford's death in 1604—is the first published with a preface, and shows that a new style of editorship has begun.

enjoy as well as my selfe. For I knowe you will delight to heare them. As also other verie good notes whyche I have for dyvers other Ditties of other men's devyse whiche I have before rehersed.

GASCOIGNE'S "DE PROFUNDIS."

The occasion of the wrighting hereof (as I have herde Master Gascoigne say) was this, riding alone betwene Chelmsforde and London, his minde mused uppon the dayes past, and therewithall he gan accuse his owne conscience of muche time misspent, when a great shoure of rayne did overtake him, and hee beeing unprepared for the same, as in a jerken without a cloake, the wether being very faire and unlikely to have changed so: he began to accuse himselfe of his carelessness, and therewpon in his good disposition compiled first this sonet, and afterwards, the translated Psalm of "De Profundis," as here followeth:

The Skies gan growle, o'recast with mistie cloudes,
When (as I rode alone by London way,
Clokeless, unclad) thus did I sing and say.
Behold, quoth I, bright *Titan* how he shroudes
His hed abacke, and yelds the raine his reach,
Till in his wrath, Dan Jove have soust the soile,
And washt me wretch which in his travaille toile,
But holla (here) doth rudenesse me apeach,
Since *Jove* is Lord and king of nightie power,
Which can commande the sunne to shew his face,
And (when him list) to give the raine his place.
Why do I not my wery muses frame
(Although I be well soused in this shoure),
To wrighte some verse in honor of his name?

Now in his Introduction to *The Flores*, Captain Ward has very cleverly linked up this caught-in-the-storm

"A HUNDRETH SUNDRIE FLOWRES" 71
motive with both Oxford and Gascoigne as follows. We know that, after the death of his father, the sixteenth Earl, in 1562, young de Vere, then twelve years old, rode up to London, to meet his fate and to fulfil his destiny there; and in a dedication to the "Complaynt of Philomene," written in April 1575, Gascoigne says that

twelve or thirteen years past I had begun an elegy, or sorrowful song, called "The Complaynt of Philomene," the which I began to devise riding by the highway between Chelmsford and London; and being overtaken with a sudden dash of rain, I changed my copy, and struck over into the "De Profundis."

Now, twelve and a half years from April 1575, the year in which the "Complaynt" was written, gives September 1562; and it was precisely on September 3, 1562, that "came riding out of Essex from the funeral of the Earl of Oxford his father, the young Earl of Oxford, with seven-score horse all in black," Ward, therefore, seems to be on safe ground when he posits the probability, that Gascoigne had young Oxford with him for company upon that ride—an incident which, if historically true, explains why they both wrote similar graphic accounts of their wetting in a sudden storm; and also why Gascoigne's translation of "De Profundis," a funeral dirge, is connected with the burial of the Earl of Oxford, which had taken place upon August 31. Gascoigne's cousin by marriage, Thomas Bacon, let me add, who owned property in the Hedingham district of Suffolk, was a tenant of the principal landowner of that part of England, namely, the Earl of Oxford himself.

The links with "Shakespeare," however, are not

ended yet ; for who can read Sonnets XXXIII. and XXXIV., and not perceive therein arresting references to the events of which I have here been writing, including the birth of Elizabeth's son :

Full many a glorious morning have I seen,
Flatter the mountaine-tops with soveraine eye,
Kissing with golden face the meddowes green ;
Guiding pale streames with heavenly alcumy.
Anon permit the basest cloudes to ride,
With ougly rack on his celestial face,
And from the for-lorne world his visage hide
Stealing unseene to west with this disgrace.
Even so *my Sunne*¹ *one early morne did shine*,
With all triumphant splendor on my brow,
But out alack, he was but one houre mine,
The region cloude hath mask'd him from me
now.

Y et him for this my love no whit disdaineth,
Suns of the world may staine, when heaven's sun
staineth.

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,
And make me travaile forth without my cloake,
To let bace cloudes ore-take me in my way,
Hiding thy brau'ry in their rotten smoke,
Tis not enough that through the cloude thou breake,
To dry the raine on my storme-beaten face,
For no man well of such a salve can speake,
That heales the wound, and cures not the disgrace.
Nor can thy shame give phisicke to my griefe,
Though thou repent, yet have I still the losse,

My own conviction is, that when, many years later, Oxford wrote these sonnets, he had in mind, not only that glorious morning, full, at once, of sorrow and of hope, for a father lost and an earldom found—the clouded sunshine of that memorable day—but, playing, as Elizabethans were wont lovingly to play, upon the sound and sense of words, and punning daringly upon “ sun ” and “ son,” he reminds the royal mother of that love-child of theirs who has already been a subject of these pages, and who, as “ Shakespeare's ” son, by England's queen :

one early morn did shine
With all triumphant splendour on my brow.
But out, alack, he was but one hour mine,
The region¹ cloud hath mask'd him from me now.

Remembering the repeated use, at that time, of the names of heavenly orbs, and heavenly deities, to represent the queen, and the apparent connection of the word “ west ” with the site of England's throne, both in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and in *Willbie His Avisa*, I think it most probable that the line—

Stealing unseen to *west* with this disgrace—
and the line—

Suns (sons) of the world may stain when heavens sun
staineth—

Th' offender's sorrow lends but weake relief
To him that beares the strong offence's crosse.

Ah but those teares are pearle which thy love sheeds
And they are ritch, and ransome all ill-deeds.

¹ The play upon “ Sun ” and “ Son ” was a common Elizabethan pun used, *e.g.*, by Oxford's secretary, Lylly, in *Erphues and his England*, also by Chapman, etc. ; and in *Henry IV.* by Falstaff. Also in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

¹ *i.e.* regina, the queen.

also refer to the brief, triumphant disgrace and splendour of this fatherhood, whose "strong offence" inevitably must carry with it "the strong offence's cross." If I am right, therefore, "Shakespeare's" son was King of England, but for the bar sinister of illegitimacy.

CHAPTER IV

VENUS, ADONIS, AND "THE DREAM"

"Venus" an accepted court name for the queen—Stanza 152 of *Venus and Adonis* exactly describes Elizabeth's character—Venus and Adonis are Elizabeth and Oxford in the late 'sixties—The poem, originally by Oxford, has been added to by the Chapman group, who inserted the "Boar" verses—Dedication to Southampton probably a piece of insolence—*Venus* certainly the work of more than one hand—Discussion of Forrest's *Original "Venus and Adonis"*—Links with "Echo" motive of *Romeo and Juliet*—The "purple flower" and "king" motives—Connection with Sidney and Lady Pembroke—"Will," and the death-motive—Links with the Shakespeare Sonnets, and with de Vere's poems—The "purple flower" is simply the Queen's love-child by Oxford—Connection with *Midsummer Night's Dream*—Bottom, at first Alençon, becomes William of Stratford.

THIS "first heir" of "Shakespeare's" invention provides many and complex problems, in the matters of authorship and interpretation alike; but I have no hesitation in saying that, whatever solutions one may bring to it, the poem dramatizes, once more, the amatory relations between Elizabeth and Lord Oxford, who are Venus and Adonis, with the Boar—impossible though it may appear, at first sight—standing also for Oxford, as this chapter, I hope, will make clear.

That Venus was one of the goddess names which, in common with Diana and others, were frequently bestowed upon the queen, is indisputable, as witness, for example, G. L. Craik's *Romance of the Peerage*, wherein the following letter appears, dated October 7, 1589:

"a nickname for every one that is partaker in the matter, whereof the said Mr. Richard (Douglas) hath a long scroll as an alphabet of ciphers to understand them by. I can tell

few of their names, but the *Queen's Majesty is Venus*, and the Earl (of Essex) the *Weary Knight* as I remember, but always that he is exceeding weary, accounting it a thrall that he lives in now, and wishes the change."

The poem, *Venus and Adonis*, contains, moreover, in stanza 152, a description of Venus, which describes, with accuracy, Elizabeth's character and temperament, as recorded by her contemporaries :

A thousand spleens bear her a thousand ways ;
She treads the path that she untredds again ;
Her more than haste is mated with delays,
Like the proceedings of a drunken brain,
Full of respects, yet not at all respecting :
In hand with all things, nought at all effecting.

But—my readers will be saying—since the two most prominent figures in this poem are an eager goddess and a reluctant boy, how can they be Elizabeth and Oxford, who, in 1593, were respectively sixty and forty-three years of age ? To which my answer is, that when the writer of the dedication to Southampton—who, for reasons that will appear, I do not believe to have been Oxford himself—described the poem as the "first heir" of "Shakespeare's" invention, he meant literally what he said, namely, that these verses, though subsequently tampered with, as we shall see, are actually what they purport to be, an early poem of Lord Oxford's, written during the late 'sixties, or early 'seventies, when Oxford had not yet reached, or had not long reached, his twentieth year ; and the queen, as we have seen, and shall see, had certainly been making love to him.

Mr. Gerald Phillips, in his book, *The Tragic Story of William Shakespeare*, argues that *Venus and Adonis*,

though published under the mask of Oxford's pseudonym, "William Shakespeare," was actually written, and sent to the press, by Oxford's enemies, a proposition which, however, I can only accept in part ; my own explanation of circumstances, admittedly mysterious, being, that Lord Oxford's early manuscript, or a copy of it—perhaps by the agency of the boy of the Sonnets, whom I take to be Oxford's son by Queen Elizabeth—came into possession of the anti-Shakesperean group, to which Chapman and Jonson belonged, who were trying to poison Puntarvolo-Oxford's "dog," as it is phrased in *Every Man Out of His Humour*, or, in other words, to injure Oxford, by tampering with the Shakespearean poems and plays.

These individuals were not, in my judgment, the original writers of *Venus and Adonis* ; but I agree with Mr. Phillips that they worked upon the manuscript, adding to Lord Oxford's poem, before publication, a number of stanzas, the most important of which are those introducing the boar, who is simply Oxford himself, under one of the names by which he was known at court. The same person, or persons, afterwards prefaced the poem with an insolent letter to Southampton, in which "William Shakespeare" is made to say that he does not know "how I shall offend" the Earl, but that, should this "first heir of his invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather." I have already shown that "Deformed" was another of Oxford's nicknames ; and the use of it inclines me to think that the Howard-Arundel group may have been behind Chapman, and others, in this business.

Lord Southampton, it will be remembered, was linked with Oxford, at this time, over a pending engagement to his daughter, Elizabeth de Vere ; and I should

not be surprised to know, if it could be known, that the publication of *Venus and Adonis* was a cause of the rupture of that alliance, and of the consequent forfeiture, by Southampton, of no less a sum than £5000 to Lady Elizabeth's grandfather, Lord Burghley. Southampton, moreover, as all the world knows, was a close friend of Lord Essex; for which reason I am disposed to agree with Captain Ward, that the mysterious author, or authors, of *Venus and Adonis*, in the form in which it was published, were presumably of the anti-Essex faction. Very possibly the individual behind the business was the Countess of Pembroke, a lady who, judging by her attack upon Nashe, through Gabriel Harvey, was inclined to salaciousness, and to the use, upon occasion, of a fish-wife's tongue. During 1593 raged the Harvey-Nashe quarrel, which was simply a continuation of the earlier Oxford-Sidney tennis-court quarrel of 1579; Harvey and Nashe being mere secret agents for the real antagonists, Lady Pembroke and Lord Oxford, who were not reconciled until 1596.

Captain Ward's explanation of this difficult business differs somewhat from mine, in that he concludes, from Marston and Hall, that Lord Bacon must have been the author of *Venus and Adonis* in the form in which it has come down to us. I do not agree, but I do think it possible that Lord Bacon, though not the author of the poem, may well have had a hand in the mysterious business of its publication. Captain Ward's explanation of the matter is as follows :

Throughout the fifteen-nineties there was a long-drawn-out struggle for power between the two rival court parties—the Essexians, led by the Earl of Essex, and the Cecilians, led by Sir Robert Cecil. Bacon had attached himself to the Essex party, and Oxford was

Sir Robert Cecil's brother-in-law. It is possible, therefore, that *Venus and Adonis*, with its cynical dedication to the Earl of Southampton,¹ may be accounted for in the following way :

In 1590 Lord Burghley, who was looking after Oxford's three daughters, arranged a marriage between the eldest, Elizabeth de Vere, then aged fifteen, and the Earl of Southampton, then aged seventeen. Southampton, at this time, had conceived a great admiration, amounting to hero-worship, for the Earl of Essex;² and in the following year (1591) he donned his armour and joined Essex in the Normandy campaign. It is obvious, of course, that both the Essexians and the Cecilians would be striving to attract this young and rising nobleman into their respective camps. There is no doubt where Southampton's personal inclination lay. The glamour of war, and the Earl of Essex's great fame as a warrior, made an irresistible appeal to the youthful Earl. But the Essexians saw that if he were married to Sir Robert Cecil's niece, he would, almost certainly, be drawn into the ranks of the Cecil party. I suggest, therefore, that Bacon conceived the plan of writing an allegorical poem, derogatory to Lord Oxford, and dedicating it to Southampton. This dedication, as Mr. Phillips has shown, is purely ironical. It starts : "I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your Lordship," which simply means : "I know perfectly well I shall offend you, but I intend to show you the sort of family you are proposing to marry into." The allegory in the poem is quite

¹ Cf. Phillips, *cit.*, p. 18.

² Neither Captain Ward nor Mrs. Stopes, at the Record Office, could discover any evidence of relations, intimate or other, between Southampton and "Shakespeare."

obvious. The youthful Adonis, pursued by the elderly Venus, is the story of how Queen Elizabeth forced the young Earl of Oxford to make love to her in the 'seventies. The other side of Oxford's character, after he had reached maturity, is personified by the Boar, a grim and savage beast, whose actions recall unmistakably the scandals and slanders of the quarrel with Howard and Arundel in the early 'eighties.¹ Why should these ten or twelve-year-old scandals have been resuscitated? Simply, I suggest, in order to warn Southampton of the sort of man he would have for a father-in-law if he married Elizabeth de Vere.

The sequel is interesting. *Venus and Adonis* was published in 1593; and in 1594 Father Henry Garnett wrote in a letter: "The Earl of Southampton, refusing the Lady Vere, payeth £5000 of present money."² It seems reasonable to connect these two events, as cause and effect. *Venus and Adonis*, therefore, is simply a piece of political propaganda, probably written by Bacon, with the object of preventing the Earl of Southampton from joining the ranks of the Cecilians.

My suggestion that Bacon was the author of *Venus and Adonis* raises an interesting corroborative point. The Baconian theory of Shakespeare authorship is only supported by two pieces of external evidence. These have been ably dealt with by Sir George Greenwood in

two Essays contributed to E. W. Smithson's *Baconian Essays*. They are:

I. That Hall and Marston (c. 1597-98) seem to suggest quite plainly that a certain "Mediocra Firma"—which was Bacon's motto—was the author of *Venus and Adonis*.

2. That the scribblings on the cover of the Northumberland Manuscript (c. 1597), which is known to have belonged to Bacon, show not only the names "Francis Bacon" and "William Shakespeare" written many times, but also a couplet from "Lucrece."

These two pieces of external evidence are important, and they help to bear out the hypothesis that I have advanced, namely, that Bacon wrote *Venus and Adonis* in order to break off the engagement between Southampton and Elizabeth de Vere.¹

My present interpretation of *Venus and Adonis* as the work of more than one man is, of course, no new idea of my own, for Mr. H. T. S. Forrest, in his book, *The Original "Venus and Adonis"* (1930), pointed out that the poem, by common consent, was much more ordinary and much closer to the accepted conventions of Elizabethan verse, than, for example, were the plays; and he revealed clearly the existence of passages of "self-echo," and "self-parody," and noted others, in

¹ It has been suggested that Oxford cannot be Adonis and the Boar. But any one familiar with Elizabethan allegorical methods—cf. Spenser—will be aware that this duplication of characters was very common. In the *Faerie Queene*, for instance, Sidney sometimes appears as Prince Arthur and sometimes as Sir Calidore; Elizabeth the Queen appears as Britomart, and Elizabeth the Woman as Belpheobe. It is not in the least surprising, therefore, to find the youthful Oxford and the mature Oxford portrayed as Adonis and the Boar respectively.

² Cf. C. C. Stopes, *The Third Earl of Southampton*, p. 86.

which Venus is made to speak in an unnatural or self-contradictory manner. The conventionality of the verses, and their crude immaturity of style, together with the remarkably large number of expressions and turns of thought that are found both in Oxford's poems and in "Shakespeare's" plays, all, as I read them, go to show that *Venus* was an early poem by de Vere; while the instances of "dramatic incongruity" and "duplication," which Mr. Forrest has so shrewdly noticed, lead me to accept, unreservedly, his theory of a revision by another poet, or poets, thus set out in the author's own words:

Shakespeare having composed at some date previous to 1592 a straightforward narrative poem based on a blend of the two stories of Venus and Adonis and Salamis and Hermaphroditus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (or, perhaps, of Golding's English translation thereof), submitted it in that year to the judgment of a patron or literary friend.

With all this, excepting the last clause, I substantially agree; and it is remarkable, in this connection, that a

charge of feminism, or hermaphroditism—to stretch the matter a little—was one frequently made by Chapman against Oxford, although I hold, of course, that Oxford's reason for silent acquiescence in the piratical publication of his poem was not, as Mr. Forrest holds, fear of offending his friend or patron; but the impossibility of effective objections being raised, without revealing the identity of "Shakespeare," and breaking the oath of secrecy, which Lord Oxford had certainly taken, concerning the authorship of the plays, and which his fathering of a son, by Elizabeth, even more imperatively imposed upon him. The full poem, as published in 1593, comprises 199 stanzas, of which Mr. Forrest, for reasons above stated, rejects seventy-

two; nor can there be any doubt that the resultant poem is much more natural and recognizable as "Shakespeare's" than can possibly be said of the original unexpurgated work. Mr. Forrest astutely points out that, in the stanzas marked by himself as "interpolated," there exists roughly a three-to-one larger proportion of echoes from Shakesperean plays, and from *Hero and Leander*, than are to be found in the original stanzas. Mr. Forrest hints broadly at Marlowe as being the interpolator; and he may be right; but in view of the fact that *Hero and Leander* was completed by Chapman, and that Chapman, as my readers are already aware, was more intimately linked up than any other Elizabethan writer with literary warfare against "Shakespeare," I regarded him as by far the strongest candidate for the position of interpolator, long before my interpretation of "A Lover's Complaint," to be found in Chapter X. of this book, had, if correct, strongly supported Chapman's complicity in the publication of Shakesperean poems.

Now my earlier readings of *Venus and Adonis* had borne in upon me the conviction that Adonis and the Boar were both Oxford; though I could provide no logical reason for the apparent fact, pointed out to me by Mr. Phillips, that in these verses Oxford, the Boar, attacked Oxford—an inference which seemed to be, upon the face of it, absurd. Naturally, therefore, when I knew that Mr. Forrest had rejected a number of stanzas as spurious, I was prepared to make his retention, or elimination, of those "boar-verses" a crucial test of my own theory; since I was convinced that in them was to be found the key to the whole mysterious business. Now the most enigmatic "boar"-stanzas are 167, 168—which refer to the animal as a severe,

pitiless, slanderous, and bloody beast, the “ invisible commander ” of wrongs—and 185–187, which describe the death of Adonis by the boar’s tusk. It was interesting, therefore, to find Mr. Forrest corroborating me, by excluding from the genuine *Venus and Adonis* stanzas 155–162, 164–171, and 178–187, which include all the “ boar ”-sonnets above referred to ! Stanzas 178–187 run thus :

Upon his hurt she looks so steadfastly,
That her sight dazzling makes the wound seem three ;
And then she reprebends her mangling eye,
That makes more gashes where no breach should be.
His face seems twain, each several limb is doubled ;
For oft the eye mistakes, the brain being troubled.

My tongue cannot express my grief for one,
And yet, quoth she, “ Behold, two Adons dead !
My sighs are blown away, my salt tears gone,
Mine eyes are turn’d to fire, my heart to lead.
Heavy heart’s lead, melt at mine eyes’ red fire !
So shall I die by drops of hot desire.

“ Alas, poor world, what treasure hast thou lost !
What face remains alive that’s worth the viewing ?
Whose tongue is music now ? what canst thou boast
Of things long since, or any thing ensuing ?
The flowers are sweet, their colours fresh and trim ;
But *true-sweet* beauty lived and died with him.

“ Bonnet nor veil henceforth no creature wear !
Nor sun nor wind will ever strive to kiss you.
Having no fair to lose, you need not fear ;
The sun doth scorn you, and the wind doth hiss you.
But when Adonis^{lived}, sun and sharp air
Lurk’d like two thieves, to rob him of his fair.

“ And therefore would be put his bonnet on,
Under whose brim the gaudy sun would peep ;
The wind would blow it off, and, being gone,
Play with his locks : then would Adonis weep ;
And straight, in pity of his tender years,
They both would strive who first should dry his tears.

“ To see his face the lion walk’d along
Behind some hedge, because he would not fear him ;
To recreate himself when he hath sung,
The tiger would be tame and gently hear him :
If he had spoke, the wolf would leave his prey,
And never fright the silly lamb that day.

“ When he beheld his shadow in the brook,
The fishes spread on it their golden gills ;
When he was by, the birds such pleasure took,
That none would sing, some other in their bills
Would bring him mulberries and ripe-red cherries ;
He fed them with his sight, they him with berries.

“ But this foul, grim, and *urchin-snouted boar*,
Whose downward eye still looketh for a grave,
Ne’er saw the beauteous livery that he wore ;
Witness the entertainment that he gave.
If he did see his face, why then I know
He thought to kiss him, and hath killed him so.

“ Tis true, tis true ; thus was Adonis slain.
He ran upon the boar with his sharp spear,
Who did not whet his teeth at him again,
But by a kiss thought to persuade him there ;
And nuzzling in his flank, the loving swine
Sheathed unaware the tusk in his soft groin.

"Had I been tooth'd like him, I must confess,
With kissing him I should have kill'd him first ;
But he is dead, and never did he bless
My youth with his ; the more am I accurst."
With this, she falleth in the place she stood,
And stains her face with his congealed blood.

Thus writes Mr. Forrest upon stanzas 182-185 :

The main reason for its rejection is to be found in the four stanzas 182-185, which furnish what is undoubtedly the most glaring instance of dramatic incongruity to be found in the poem. Hitherto, that is throughout the first nine-tenths of the poem, we have seen Adonis as a robust and business-like young sportsman—hunting his own hounds, cursing his runaway nag, and ready to tackle anything that comes along, "blunt boar, rough bear, or lion proud." Now, without the slightest warning, we find him transformed into a character in a fairy-tale—an effeminate creature, who weeps when the wind blows his hat off, and takes his walks abroad surrounded by an admiring crowd of carnivora, while little dicky birds minister to him after the manner of Elijah's ravens. . . . The writer suggests that the *clue to this puzzle is to be found in stanza 186, where Venus ascribes her lover's death to a clumsy demonstration of affection on the part of the boar.* The same conceit is to be found in Tarcagnota's poem . . . and it is suggested that the interpolator admired it so much that he determined to drag it in at all costs ; and that, realizing that the sudden transformation of "that bloody beast, which knows no pity but is still *severe*," of 186, into "the loving swine" of 186 would look a bit abrupt, he invented the beauty-loving lion, the musical tiger, and the impressionable wolf to keep him company.

My own solution, however, is that the interpolator introduced this "loving swine" episode, not because

he greatly admired Tarcagnota's poem, but because he knew perfectly well the underlying meanings of this mysterious story of Elizabeth's court, wherein Oxford was known as the Boar, and wherein the other courtiers had each his animal name, with another royal favourite, Lord Leicester, as the Bear, or the Lion. Have not two lines from stanza 148 told us the same story ?

For now she (Venus) knows it is no gentle chase,
But the blunt boar, rough bear, or lion proud.

No gentle chase indeed, but a stern one, when Leicester and the rest "all strain courtesy which shall cope him (Oxford) first."

The connection, therefore, of *Venus and Adonis* with Lord Oxford's life-story, and with his other early poems, including his "Echo" song, *Romeo and Juliet*, and the Sonnets, seems to me indisputable ; since—to go backward a little in the poem—such phrases from stanzas 139 and 140, as

all the neighbour *caves*, as seeming troubled,
Make verbal repetition of her moan. . . .

And twenty *echoes* twenty times cry so. . . .

She . . . sings extemporally a woeful ditty. . . .

And still the *choir of echoes* answers so—

are just paraphrases of, or are paraphrased by, Juliet's,
Else would I tear the *cave* where *Echo* lies
With repetition of my Romeo's name—

and of Oxford's lines concerning the love-sick woman :

Yet who doth most adore this wight,
Oh hollow *caves* tell *true*. You . . .

And I that knew this lady well
Said, Lord how great a miracle,
To hear how *Echo told the truth*,
As true as *Phœbus* oracle.¹

(THE EARL OF OXFORD.)

Venus herself, at last, "spies the hunted boar," and, terrified, runs this way and that, before she "back retires to rate the boar for murther"; whereupon, in 152, we are given an exact, and highly characteristic, description of the methods habitually adopted by Elizabeth, especially in the crises of her love-affairs:

A thousand spleens bear her a thousand ways;
She treads the path that she untreads again;
Her more than haste is mated with delays,
Like the proceedings of a drunken brain.
Full of respects, yet not at all respecting;
In hand with all things, nought at all effecting.

Shortly after, there follow verses in which the beauty of Adonis is compared, several times, with that of a flower:

What dost thou mean
To stifle beauty . . . his breath and beauty set
Gloss on the rose, smell to the violet.

They bid thee crop a weed, thou pluck'st a flower—
this last being a "purple-flower" motive, which, as the reader will soon discover, links up, in a most striking way, with the basic theme, and with the last sequel, of 1 It will be observed the "cave," "echo," "Vere," and love-sick-lady motives appear, and reappear, in these lines.

this story. No whit less meaningful are the next two stanzas that I shall quote:

O hard-believing love, how strange it seems
Not to believe, and yet too credulous!
Thy weal and woe are both of them extremes;
Despair and hope make thee ridiculous.

The one *doth flatter* thee in *thoughts unlikely*,
In likely thoughts the other kills thee quickly.

Who, that is familiar with the Sonnets, will not hear the echo of the above couplet in the lines:

Thus have I had thee as a *dream doth flatter*,
In sleep a king, but waking no such matter—

the point of both allusions being, that Lord Oxford's dream-thoughts, upon his own bed, or upon Elizabeth's, as a queen's companion, flatter him, "in sleep a king," Strongly the next stanza, 166, confirms; for it runs thus:

Now she unwattles the web that she has wrought:
Adonis lives, and Death is not to blame;
It was not she that call'd him all to nought;
Now she adds honours to his hateful name;
She clepes him *king of graves*, and *grave for kings*,
Imperious supreme of all mortal things.

My own impression is, that all such kindred hints at the real relations between Oxford and his queen, such as "In sleep a king," "grave for kings," and so forth, all aim at Elizabeth's seduction by her ex-ward, or his by her, and link up with the slaying of Adonis by a clumsy "kiss" from the tusked boar, who is de Vere. I can interpret such phrases only as meaning that de Vere's rash, and probably impulsive, act, while, in some sort, it made him and his son—but for the bar sinister—

“kings,” was, in issue, the “death,” or “grave,” of both of them, since it necessitated their banishment from court. Possibly—though I think it improbable—there had been a secret marriage between Oxford and Elizabeth; because Chapman, in *The Revenge of Bussy*, i. i., discussing, through the mouths of Maffé (Hatton), and Bussy (Oxford), the question of Oxford’s annuity of £1000 a year, received from the queen, makes Maffé say :

I cry thee mercy, D’Ambois.
A thousand crowns I bring you from my lord;
If you be thrifty and *play the good husband*, you may make
This a good standing living.

I used to read this literally, as applying to de Vere’s relations with his wife, Anne Cecil, whom the queen was ready to protect, by making continued payment of the annuity contingent upon the Earl’s good behaviour to his countess; but I now think that it aims directly at Oxford’s intimacies with the queen.

Let us now pick up again the threads of *Venus and Adonis*.

Oxford’s patent, as the last-quoted sonnet tells us, “back again is swerving,” or, in the words of the *Venus* poem, the queen, vacillating always, “unweaves the web that she hath wrought.” Adonis is not “dead”; Death is blameless, and the King of Graves is an honourable monarch—at which point, and in most intimate fashion, we link up again with other motives of our story.

It will be remembered that, during 1593, the year in which *Venus* appeared, there raged the Harvey-Nashe quarrel, a development or continuation of the Oxford-Sidney tennis-court quarrel of 1579; and we

further surmised that the individuals behind the Harvey-Nashe business were probably Lord Oxford, and Sidney’s sister, Lady Pembroke. Now re-read the closing couplet of stanza 166 :

She clepes him (*Death*) *king of graves*, and *grave for kings*,
Imperious supreme of all mortal things—

with its harping in intimate connection with the dead Adonis, (Oxford) and the boar Oxford who has slain him—upon Death, upon graves, and kings; and then read these verses by Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, treating of identical matters, and using the same three words, “king,” “dead,” and “grave.”

Were I a *king*, I might command content;
Were I obscure, unknown would be my cares,
And were I *dead*, no thoughts should me torment,
Nor words, nor wrongs, nor love, nor hate, nor
feats;
A doubtful choice of these things which to crave,
A kingdom, or a cottage, or a *grave*.

De Vere, it will be observed, here envisages the prospect of himself as a king reigning over a kingdom; and is it not deeply significant, in this connection, that the rhymed answer which follows, though not written by Lady Pembroke herself, is from the pen of her brother, Lord Oxford’s former antagonist, Philip Sidney? :

Wert thou a *king* yet not command content,
Since empire none thy mind could yet suffice;
Wert thou obscure still cares would thee torment;
But wert thou *dead*, all care and sorrow dies;
An easy choice of these things which to crave,
No kingdom nor a cottage but a *grave*.

A grave, opines Sidney, is the answer ; and only three years before the publication of *Venus*, in 1590, Spenser had written in "Tears of the Muses," a lament that "Our pleasant Willy, ah, is *dead of late*"—this being the same "Willy" who, in Spenser's earlier poem, *The Shepherd's Calendar*, has asked of Perigot :

Wherefore with mine thou dare thy music match ?
... and if in rhymes with me thou dare to strive.

Cuddie, appointed arbiter between them, remarks :

Sike a judge as Cuddie were for a *king*—

"Willie," or Oxford-Shakespeare, being here, once more, "a king," while his pen-name, "Will," as Admiral Holland was the first to point out to me, is simply another name for "well," or "spring," or "Vere"—"well" being often spelt, in ancient days, "will," or "wyll,"

Venus and Adonis continues thus :

No, no, quoth she, sweet Death, I did but jest ;
Yet pardon me, I felt a kind of fear
When as I met the boar, that bloody beast,
Which knows no pity, but is still *severe* ;
Then, gentle shadow—truth I must confess
I rail'd on thee, fearing my love's decease.

Here, then, Venus continues her mysterious word-play concerning Death and the *severe* boar, otherwise Oxford, who shows the boar upon his coat-of-arms ; and she excuses herself for railing on the "gentle shadow-*truth* I must confess"—words which link up intimately with the lines in Sonnet LXVII, aimed, I maintain,

by de Vere, at this same son of his, by Queen Elizabeth :

Why should false painting imitate his cheek,
And steal dead seeing of his living *hue*?
Why should poor *beauty* indirectly seek
Roses of shadow, since his *rose* is true?

wherein "hue," or Hughes, is the son ; "Beauty" is Queen Elizabeth ; "Rose" is the Tudor Rose, "shadow"—a word often used of actors, is again the actor-son ; while "his rose is true" means, simply, that he is the true son, or Vere son, of the Tudor Rose, Elizabeth. The "invisible commander" of the next stanza is, of course, the concealed author of the plays, Lord Oxford, the boar, identified by the punning adjective *severe*, while line after line spoken by Venus hereabouts, paraphrases, almost, words used by de Vere himself, in his poem on "Woman's Changeableness," of which Venus herself, it will be remembered, has been held up as a warning example, in stanza 152.

Venus and Adonis.

Woman's Changeableness.

170. how much *a fool was I*
To be of such a weak and
silly mind.

To play with *fools*, O what a
fool was I.

171. Fie, fie *fond love*, thou art
so full of fear.

If women could be fair and
yet not *fond*
Or if their *love* were firm not
fickle.

172. As *falcons* to the *lure*
away she *flies*.

Unsettled still like *haggards*
wild they range, These
gentle birds that *fly* from
man to man . . . (we)
train them to out *lure*.

Here the accord of style, phrase, and alliteration are most striking ; and the inference that these verses from *Venus and Adonis*—whoever may have written them—aim at Oxford, under title of “boar,” by which Hatton wrote of him to the queen, seems unescapable. Possibly the intention expressed by Adonis in the words,

to-morrow he intends
To hunt the boar, with certain of his friends—

may symbolize some attack by the son upon the father, or some treachery, or failure of allegiance, such as is hinted at more than once in the Sonnets, and has been generally interpreted, by the orthodox, as some ungrateful deed, or dark desertion, committed by the young man against “Shakespeare,” and in favour of the “dark lady.” Small wonder, then, that stanza 190 sings the attendance of sorrow upon love.

Sorrow on love hereafter shall attend.

It shall be waited on with jealousy . . .

Bud and be blasted in a breathing while

It shall be cause of wars and dire events
And set *dissension* between son and sire—

and also, no less surely, between mother and sire, as the play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, will soon show clearly enough. Further, do we not link up here with an earlier stanza of *Venus* (110), wherein we read of

This *sour informer*, this hate-breeding spy,
This canker that eats up Love's tender spring,
This carry-tale, dissentious *jealousy*,

that sometimes, but only sometimes, “brings *true* news” ?—the same “jealousy,” I suppose, that is the suborned informer of Sonnet CXXV. :

Hence thou suborn'd informer, a *true* soul
When most impeach'd stands least in thy control.

Here the immediate topical reference, I think, is almost certainly to the suborned informer Arundel's charges against Lord Oxford, in 1580-81.

It seems, then, perfectly clear, that behind the untimely “deaths,” or absences from court and suppressions of identity, of Lord Oxford and his son—and, at bottom, accounting for both facts—lies this mysterious love-business between England's Lord Great Chamberlain and his queen, as a sequel to which her boy friend of the sixties, young Edward de Vere, and, afterwards, his son and Elizabeth's, her potential boy friend, of the fifteen-eighties and nineties,¹ grown towards manhood, was “slain” (195), or

melted like a vapour from her sight,
And in his blood, that on the ground long spill'd,
A purple flower sprung up, chequered with white,
Resembling well his pale cheeks.

That pale-cheeked, white, and purple flower is again the same love-child ; and it is interesting to note here, how Mr. Looney, without at all perceiving the inner purport of these passages, pointed out, long ago, that the closing stanzas of *Venus and Adonis* picture a mother with her newborn child, also under the simile of a flower.

¹ “Adonis,” it will be remembered, is Oxford himself—when still young—at the beginning of *Venus*, but becomes Oxford's son at the end—Oxford becoming the boar.

Poor flower, quoth she, this was thy father's guise,
Sweet issue of a more sweet-smelling sire. . . .
Thou art the *next of blood* and '*is thy right*'.

Remembering that the boy, but for the bar of illegitimacy, would have been King of England, the last quoted line concerning "the next of blood" and "thy right" puts on a profound significance. Thus runs the closing stanza of this remarkable and most revealing poem :

Thus weary of the world, away she hies,
And yokes her silver doves ; by whose swift aid
Their mistress, mounted, through the empty skies
In her light chariot quickly is conveyed ;
Holding their course to Paphos, where *their queen*
Means to immure herself and not be seen.

Several years ago, and long before this interpretation of the poem had dawned upon me, I realized that Venus, "weary of the world," and borne away, in her chariot, by winged doves to Paphos,

where their queen
Means to immure herself and not

was akin to Titania, and her companion fairies;

that do run
By the triple Hecate's team,
From the presence of the sun,¹
Following darkness like a dream—

but I had not, for an instant, conceived that Oberon and Titania were Oxford and Queen Elizabeth, or that the ¹ The name Oberon means, at bottom, Phœbus, the Sun, a name several times applied to Oxford, just as Phœbe is, in *As You Like It*, to Elizabeth.

goes thus :
Titania, Oberon, and their trains are face to face
in the forest-glade, by moonlight, when the queen,
whom we know to have been bitterly jealous of Lord
Oxford, in his relations with Anne Cecil, accuses her
lord of having stolen away from fairyland, or the English
court—which de Vere actually did in 1574—and in the
shape of Corin, some shepherd, of

Playing on pipes of corn and versing love
To amorous Phillida,

whom I take to be his wife, Anne Cecil, praised by him in many a verse.¹ During the altercation that ensues, Titania again accuses Oberon of the same offence :

These are the forgeries of jealousy
And never since the middle summer's spring
But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport—

¹ The name Oberon means, at bottom, Phœbus, the Sun, a name several times applied to Oxford, just as Phœbe is, in *As You Like It*, to Elizabeth.

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e.g. in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowers*, see *ante*, pp. 37, 38.

words that recall, not only lines with which we are already familiar, in *Venus* and the Sonnets, concerning that informer Jealousy, but that link up also, in a very interesting and significant way, with *Romeo and Juliet*, and with the street-brawling dramatized therein, which I have shown to be that between the rival retainers of the houses of Oxford and Arundel—this last being, probably, so far as personal allusion is concerned, the “suborned informer” against Oxford, of the passage from the sonnet above referred to. The Fairy King protests :

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

meaning, “ All I ask of you, my lady, is that you give my little son to be my page ”; to which Titania replies :

The fairy land buys not the child of me ;
or, in other words, “ Not for England itself would I sell to you, Oxford-Oberon, this baby, whose mother was ‘ a votress of my order,’ otherwise a queen, vowed, like myself, to virginity ”—Titania-Elizabeth being, let me add, by no means the first mother—nor has she been the last—to pretend that her love-child was not her own, but was a foster-child, adopted at the suit of some dear friend, who, being mortal of that boy did die ; And for her sake do I rear up that boy, And for her sake I will not part with him.

Immediately upon Titania’s exit, Oberon, in conference with Puck, promising himself revenge upon Titania, reveals—in words that even Stratfordian professors admit to be aimed at Elizabeth—the identity of the

Fairy Queen as “ a fair vestal throned by the west,” at whom Cupid has truly aimed his bolt.

But I might see *young Cupid’s fiery shaft*
Quench’d in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy free.
Yet mark’d I where the *bolt of Cupid fell* ;¹
It fell upon a little *western flower*,
Before milk-white, now *purple with love’s wound*.

In her officially royal capacity, be it observed, the imperial votaress remains the royal maiden still ; whereas, in her more private and human state, she has known the bolt of Cupid (Oxford), and, as a result, has given to her western world

a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love’s wound,

whom we have identified long since as the flower of *Venus and Adonis*, and as the lovely boy of the Sonnets. The following lines, from Oberon’s next speech, provide another interesting analogy with the closing stanzas of *Venus and Adonis* :

Having once this juice,
I’ll watch Titania *when she is asleep*,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
The next thing then she wak’ing looks upon,
Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,
She shall pursue it with the soul of love.

¹ We shall see, in Chapter IX., that Cupid was the figure painted upon the shield of Scudamour (Escu d’Amour, or Oxford) in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*. Cupid, therefore, is here Oxford.

And ere I take this charm from off her sight,
As I can take it with another herb,
I'll make her render up her page to me.

Observe here that Oberon cites a catalogue of animals, any one of which the spell-bound Titania, when once she has eyed it, will pursue "with the soul of love." Now I have shown elsewhere in these pages,¹ that it was Queen Elizabeth's fantastic habit to nickname her courtiers after animals, insects, or flowers—Oxford himself being, as we have seen, the Boar, and sometimes, probably the Humble Bee, or the Butterfly; so that, of the beasts named here—the Lion, Wolf, Bull, Monkey, and Ape—we can allot the first two as names for Leicester, and the last two—monkey and ape—for Alençon's nuncio, Simier, who frequently called himself the queen's "singe," and also, probably, for Alençon himself, the Ape of Spenser's *Mother Huberd's Tale*, though the latter was generally known as Elizabeth's "frog." Now if the reader, with these beasts in mind, will turn to stanzas 183 and 184 of *Venus and Adonis*, whence, I believe, this speech by Oberon-Oxford was derived—or *vice versa*—he will find Venus-Elizabeth expatiating upon the eagerness of many creatures, feathered, finned, and footed, to minister to the weeping Adonis.

To see his face the *lion* walked along,
Behind some hedge, because he would not fear him;
To recreate himself when he hath sung,
The *tiger* would be tame and gently hear him.
If he had spoke, the *wolf* would leave his prey,
And never fright the silly *lamb* that day.

When he beheld his shadow in the brook,

The *fishes* spread on it their golden gills;

When he was by, the *birds* such pleasure took,

That some would sing, some other in their bills

Would bring him *mulberries* and *ripe red cherries*,
He fed them with his sight, they him with *berries*.

The beasts here mentioned include a lion and a wolf, to which are added a musical tiger and a "silly lamb," possibly Hatton, who was known at court, and writes of himself to the queen, as her "Sheep" or her "Mutton." I further suggest that the closing couplet, in which the birds, like Elijah's ravens, minister to Adonis *in deserto*, recall the ministrations to the enamoured Bottom, by the fairy group in *The Dream*, who

*Feed him with apricocks and *deuberries*,*
*With purple grapes, green figs, and *mulberries**

—berries in general, and mulberries in particular, being the food with which Adonis, in the poem, is fed by the birds, and Bottom, in the play, by the fairies.

Are we then to infer that Adonis and Bottom are the same person? Surely not, or not wholly; for, as I shall show in a moment, there are good reasons for supposing that Oxford, when creating Bottom, had the Stratford actor in mind; and Miss Rickert has made out a strong case for James of Scotland as also a part original of the weaver, in the version of the play that has come down to us. Now, however, that we have detected Lord Oxford, and his son by the queen, as the originals of Oberon and the black changeling boy; and observing how clearly the introduction of the menagerie-theme hints at Simier and Alençon, the ape and the frog, I surmise that, when first the play-scenes

¹ See *post*, pp. 166, 167.

were written, long before there was question of the Stratford man, Bottom and his friends were Alençon and the French courtiers, endeavouring to emulate the English courtiers, by playing a play before the queen. Further, my examination of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in the next chapter, will show, I hope, that Valentine and Proteus who, historically are Oxford and Alençon, when competing with one another for Elizabeth's favours, certainly used court-plays as a method of advancing their claims ; and Alençon, or the Queen, may well have asked Oxford to write a play upon the Valois prince's behalf. We know that, at Long Melford, in 1578, de Vere declined to entertain the Frenchmen by dancing before them, and possibly he declined to be their dramatist also ; but it would be amusing to know certainly, if we could, that "the lamentable comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe," as first conceived, burlesqued some dramatic attempt by the French courtiers in London, *circa* 1580, to boost their master's cause before the English queen. Bottom, in the opening scene of the fourth act, addresses the fairies as "Monsieur," eleven consecutive times, in some twenty lines of the play. The weaver's words (iv. i.) :

Good monsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not ;
I would be loath to have you overflowed with a honey-bag,
signior—

provides, at once, a familiar Vere pun, "overflowed," a hint at the Italian origin of Alençon, whose mother was a Medici, and, I think, an oblique reference to the many Elizabethan courtiers whose lives were made temporarily a burden to them, by being pitilessly satirized in a sweet Shakesperean play, or, in Bottom's phrase, " overflowed with a honey-bag," by Olivia-

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signior—

Her dotage now I do begin to pity ;
For, meeting of her late behind the wood,
Seeking sweet favours of 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.

Did the queen, in actual fact, return, at some time or another, Lord Oxford's son to his care ? The Sonnets, and especially XXXIII., with its characteristic puns upon "sun" and "son," hardly bear out any such inference :

Even so *my sun* one early morn did shine
With all-triumphant splendour on my brow ;

Elizabeth's allowed fool. It must be remembered, in this connection, that Lord Oxford seems to have been the Butterfly, Clarion, of Spenser's *Muiopotmos*, that the Humble Bee is associated with the Ape—Simier, of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and that Spenser, lamenting "our pleasant Willy" as "dead of late," wrote of him as one who could make

Large streams of *honey* and sweet nectar *flow*.

Set the phrase, "streams of honey flow" against "overflowed with a honey-bag," and possible connection becomes apparent. Further on in the same scene (iv. i.), we come upon lines, by Oberon, which again tempt speculation as to the degree of veridical history that they contain—

But out, alack ! *he was but one hour mine,*
The *region cloud*¹ hath masked him from me now.

Here we seem to be told, in plain enough Elizabethan English, that the Earl's son was "but one hour mine"; and in XXXVI. we come upon words which, if addressed to the same individual, must bear the same interpretation, namely, separation of the boy from his father.

Let me confess that we two must be twain,
Although our undivided loves be one—

and then, after admission that there is "in our lives a separable spite," we read,

I may not *evermore* acknowledge thee,
Lest my bewailed guilt should do thee shame.

The subject has not yet been fully investigated, and no decided opinion must be passed; but perhaps the phrase, "but one hour mine," does mean that the queen, for a time, like Titania in *The Dream*, did grant to the father temporary possession of the son: but, whatever the truth may be, I would remind readers that Oberon's words concerning Titania's "dotage" over Bottom, the "fierce vexation" of her "lovedream," and the fairy queen's own exclamation of intense relief :

what visions have I seen !

Methought I was enamoured of an ass—

all find analogy in Elizabeth's astonishingly wanton behaviours with both Simier and Alençon.

¹ Region cloud = Regina cloud, or the queen.

The first scene of the fifth act provides more menageric lines concerning the lion's performance.

THESEUS. A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

DEMETER. The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I saw.

LYSAN¹. This lion is a very fox for his valour.

THESEUS. True; and a goose for his discretion.

DEMETER. Not so, my lord; for his valour cannot carry his discretion; and the fox carries the goose.

THESEUS. His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valour, for the goose carries not the fox.

Here the fox and the goose are, I think, Burghley and Alençon, linked together also by Spenser in *Mother Huberd's Tale*, where they are the fox and the ape. We shall see later that the "goose," in *Love's Labour's Lost*, iii. i. is, almost certainly, Alençon.

A comparison of that very important scene, iii. i., of *Every Man Out of His Humour*, wherein Puntervolo-Oxford mocks Sogliardo (William Shaksper) about his newly acquired coat-of-arms, strongly corroborates a partial identification of Bottom with the Stratford man; and shows that Jonson must have been thoroughly familiar with the text of *The Dream*, although "Shakespeare's" fairy play was not printed until 1600, whereas *Every Man Out* was first acted in 1599. Thus Bottom, in *The Dream*, iii. i. and iv. i.—

Good Master Mustardseed, that same cowardly giant-like *Ox-beef* hath devoured many a gentleman of your house. . . .

good monsieur . . . good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

¹ The four lovers of *The Dream* are: Hermia = Queen Elizabeth; Helena = Anne Cecil; both women competing for possession of Lysander-Demetrius, who is Oxford duplicated for the purposes of the play.

Thus the dialogue in *Every Man Out*, iii. i. :

SOGIARDO (Will Shakspere). Marry, sir, it (his new crest) is

your boar (*i.e.* Puntarvolo-Oxford's boar crest)

without a head rampant.

CARLO. The Herald's wit . . . has deciphered him

well . . . a swine without a head. . . .

PUNTA. Good mounseur Fastidious. . . . Let the word

be, *not without mustard* : your crest is *very*

rare, sir.

CARLO. A frying pan to the crest *hath no fellow*.

The verbal parallels between these two passages, briefly put, run thus :

<i>Midsummer Night's Dream.</i>	<i>Every Man Out.</i>
Mustarddeed.	not without mustard.
Ox-beef.	the Boar (Oxford's crest and nickname).
good mounseur.	good mounseur.
hath no fellow.	hath no fellow.

If any further proof of identity be asked for, Carlo's description of Sogiardo, as "a swine without a head," matches exactly the Lord (Oxford's) comment upon the drunken Sly, in the Induction to *The Shrew* :

O monstrous *beast*, how *like a swine* he lies—

and is directly comparable with Titania's expression of disgust, as she looks down at the sleeping Bottom :

O how mine eyes do loathe his visage now.

Further, are not these lines that follow, in the Induction, pure *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and directly comparable

with Bottom's "I have had a most rare vision," spoken immediately upon his awakening :

HUNTSMAN. It would seem strange unto him when *he waked*.

LORD. Even as a *flattering dream or worthless fancy*.

Thus closely are interwoven the themes and personalities of Elizabethan drama.

together with her trick of alluding to herself in royal metaphor :

CHAPTER V

THOSE GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

Silvia, Valentine, and Proteus are Elizabeth, Oxford, and Alençon—Silvia's line, "Solicit me no more," from a song originally ascribed to Elizabeth—Reference to scented gloves presented by Oxford to Elizabeth—This comedy, it seems, neither performed nor printed before the Folio of 1623—Valentine and Speed talk of Silvia's "passing deformity"—Mary Queen of Scots on "leading Oxford to church"—Corresponding passage in Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*, iii. ii.—Tanyra and D'Ambois are Elizabeth and Oxford—Silvia—Elizabeth woos Valentine—Oxford "by a figure"—Alençon's rivalry with Oxford—"The strong affection she bears to the English Mylor"—Thurio as Bussy D'Ambois—Silvia's picture sent to Alençon—Proteus—Links with Alençon's escape from the Louvre in 1578—Links with *Twelfth Night*—The comedy is a dramatic representation of rivalry between Oxford and Alençon for Elizabeth's favours—Connection with the Howard-Arundel Papers—Oxford's *Book of Babes* and *Book of Prophecies*—The queen throws over Alençon in 1582.

We can now turn to one of the most revealing of all the plays that touch upon this complex matter of the relations between Elizabeth and de Vere—I mean *Two Gentlemen of Verona*; and I anticipate no difficulty in showing that this vivacious little comedy dramatizes Queen Elizabeth as Silvia, with Valentine and Proteus, the two gentlemen of the tale, represented, historically, by Lord Oxford and the French prince, François de Valois, called in this book, Alençon.

Let us take the case of Silvia, and consider a little her claim to stand for England's queen; observing, at the start, that the exalted and hyperbolical manner in which she is spoken of, by all parties concerned, as in the phrase :

Let her be a *principality*
Sovereign to all the creatures on the earth—

VALE. What should I see then ?
SPEED. Your own present folly, and her passing deformity.

the many resemblances of situation and phrase between Silvia of *Two Gentlemen* and Olivia of *Twelfth Night*, both of whom are historically Queen Elizabeth. All these points, read together, seem to determine Silvia's topical identity beyond all possible doubt ; the more certainly so because they dovetail perfectly in with the other stated facts, and drawn conclusions, of this book.

But if the identity of Silvia is unchallengeable, so also, in my judgment, are those of Valentine and Proteus, as Lord Oxford and the Duke of Alençon ; both originals, even in small points of detail, weaving themselves intimately into the play, which I interpret as, in effect, nothing else than a daring dramatization, drafted first by Oxford, and rewritten later by Robert Greene, of Queen Elizabeth's successive love-affairs with the English earl and the French prince. Small wonder, if I am right, that we possess no record of any performance of the play during Elizabethan times, nor of any printed version prior to the Folio of 1623.

Granted, by the reader's grace, that Silvia and Valentine are Elizabeth and de Vere, let me quote this deeply significant passage in II. i. between Valentine and his servant, Speed, with Silvia as their subject :

VALE. How esteem'st thou me ? I account of her beauty.
SPEED. You *never* saw her since she was deform'd.
VALE. How long hath she been deform'd ?
SPEED. Ever since you loved her.

VALE. I have loved her since I saw her ; and still I see her beautiful.
SPEED. If you love her, you cannot see her.

VALE. Why ?
SPEED. Because Love is blind. . . . Oh, that you had mine eyes. . . .

Now "leading to church" can mean nothing else than marriage, and therefore, unless the Scottish Queen is repeating the merest idle rumour, there had been talk of such a marriage in high places, or, alternatively, of relations between Elizabeth and her ward so intimate as to make marriage desirable.

Greene, however—assuming him to be the writer of the incriminating passage—is not the only Elizabethan dramatist who seems, though again in parable, to tell

¹ Unfortunately I have mislaid my note giving the source of this passage, which, nevertheless, I well remember having read. It was first pointed out to me by Captain Ward.

us the same story ; for when reinterpreting, in the light of French history, George Chapman's play, *Bussy D'Ambois*—which I showed to be packed with allusions to Elizabeth, Oxford, Hatton, and others—I came, in iii. ii. upon the following passage, to which I invite the reader's attention. The speakers are Pera, lady-in-waiting to Tamyra, Countess of Montsury ; Monsieur, otherwise Francis of Alençon, and Charlotte, another waiting-woman. The italics are mine.

PERA. To tell you truth, my lord, I have made a strange *discovery*.

MONS. Excellent, Pero, thou revivest me ; may I sink quick to perdition if my tongue *discover* it.

PERA. 'Tis thus, then : this last night, my lord lay forth, and I watching my lady's sitting up, stole up at midnight from my pallet ; and (having before made a hole through the wall and arras to her inmost chamber) I saw D'Ambois and herself reading a letter.

MONS. D'Ambois ?

PERA. Even he, my lord.

MONS. Didst thou not dream, wench ?

PERA. I swear he is the man.

MONS. The devil he is, and *thy lady his dam* ; why, *this was the happiest shot that ever flew !* The just plague of hypocrisy levelled it. Oh, the infinite regions betwixt a woman's tongue and her heart ! is this our goddess of chastity ? I thought I could not be so slighted if she had not her fraught besides, and, therefore, plotted with this her woman, never dreaming of D'Ambois. Dear Pero, *I will advance thee forever* ; but tell me now ; God's precious, it transforms me with admiration ; sweet Pero, whom should she trust with his conveyance ?

Or, all the doors being made sure, how should his conveyance be made ?

PERA. Nay, my lord, that amazes me ; I cannot so much as guess by any study at it.

MONS. Well, let's favour our apprehensions with fore-bearing that a little ; for if my heart were not hooped with adamant, the conceit of this would have burst it. But hark thee (*whispers*).

CHAR. I swear to your grace, all that I can conjecture touching my lady, your niece, is a *strong affection* *she bears to the English Mylor*.

Now before I attempt to interpret this most remarkable dialogue, in a play which, as I have shown in two earlier books, is a long running commentary upon Lord Oxford as "Shakespeare," and upon Shakesperean plays—particularly *Twelfth Night* and *Hamlet*—all concealed beneath a thin veneer of French history, let me inform the reader that Bussy D'Ambois, historically Alençon's right-hand man, First Gentleman of his Chamber, and so forth, and secret lover of the Countess Tamyra, is, in this drama's English allegory, none other than Oxford-Shakespeare ; the Countess Tamyra being, as I think, the Countess Olivia of *Twelfth Night*, who is again Queen Elizabeth herself. Charlotte may perhaps, be aimed, in part, at Mary,¹ Queen of Scots, who, as also in Chapman's play, was a niece of Guise, and, moreover, was cousin to Queen Elizabeth, and author of the "scandal letter," concerning Elizabeth and Oxford, from which I quoted a page or two back.

Here, then, interspersed with the usual succession of Vere puns, we have Pera telling Alençon of a discovery she has made, namely, the sight of Bussy and Tamyra sitting, at midnight, in the lady's bedroom,

¹ It is noteworthy that the name "Tamyra" spells "At Mary."

and reading together a "letter," whereupon we link up, at once, with *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, wherein Thurio, whom I tentatively identified with Bussy, is described as suitor to Silvia-Elizabeth, and wherein, moreover, following immediately upon the "passing deformity" speech quoted above, from *Two Gentlemen*, ii. i., and with the same "ver," "over," and "discover," puns scattered freely about, we get elaborate references to the passing, between Silvia and Valentine, of "letters," which I have shown to represent, almost beyond doubt, the texts of Shakesperian plays, of this same *Twelfth Night* group, one of which, *Two Gentlemen* itself, is, in part, written in a demonstrably French style of phrasing.¹ I further showed—as any reader can see, who cares to examine the scene (ii. i.) for himself—that Silvia-Elizabeth—in Speed's phrase, "wooin" Valentine-Oxford by a figure—"seems to have asked the latter to write a play, ostensibly in favour of some unknown lover's suit—that of Proteus-Alençon, as I suppose—but actually intended, by the lady, to plead Valentine-Oxford's own cause with Elizabeth.

SPEED. My master sues to her; and she hath taught her suitor
He being her pupil, to become her tutor.
O excellent device! was there *ever* heard a better—
That my master, being scribe, to himself should write the letter?

Speed's comment to Valentine is, "She hath made you write to yourself"; and that, I suppose, is precisely what the historic Elizabeth caused to do, for herself, her court dramatist, Edward de Vere.

The analogies with *Two Gentlemen* thus established,

¹ This was first pointed out by Mrs. Clark.

permit a return to Pera's "strange discovery" of Tamara's midnight colloquy with Bussy, concerning whom Pera ejaculates: "I swear he is the man!" followed by Monsieur's speech beginning, "The devil he is!" Those words, to my thinking, can bear only one interpretation, namely, that Bussy's successful attempt upon Tamara's chastity was "the happiest shot that E. Ver flew." Further, that there existed, in historic fact, "infinite regions" of distance between the apotheosis of virginity in which England's queen so frequently and publicly indulged, and her secret thoughts and actions in private life, is an assertion which no student of the Elizabethan age will deny.

Monsieur, therefore, otherwise Alençon—whom Elizabeth was supposed to be recognizing as her suitor—has been "tricked and "sleighted," "never dreaming of D'Ambois," as a court rival and secret lover of the queen;¹ whereupon, in a fashion wholly characteristic of Chapman, when he means to be quite certain that the inner meaning of his allegory shall be understood, he sets Monsieur to whispering with the women; and makes Guisc's niece, Charlotte, come out with the plainest possible hint at the identity of the individual here dramatized as Bussy:

I swear to your Grace, all that I can conjecture touching my lady your niece, is a strong affection she bears to the English Mylor.

That "English Mylor" I take positively to be Lord Oxford, and none other; while the identity of Tamara with Olivia-Elizabeth is further hinted at in the many verbal analogies, hereabouts, with the dialogue of *Twelfth Night*, wherein also Monsieur (Orsino) is the

unsuccessful suitor to the Countess Olivia, who, be it remembered, was "my lady" and "your (Sir Toby's)" niece to Maria in the Illyrian comedy. It should also be borne in mind that another *unsuccessful* suitor to Olivia is Malvolio, who, as we know, was originally Sir Christopher Hatton, closely connected, it would seem, with both Elizabeth and Oxford, by the publication, *A Hundred Sundrie Flores*, examined in preceding chapters of this book. That Malvolio, towards the close of *Twelfth Night*, seems to become, in part at least, Oxford himself, is due, I feel sure, to a revision or revisions of the play in manuscript, before its first publication in the Folio of 1623. Nevertheless, the links between *Bussy D'Ambois* and the comedy of Illyria are secondary in importance to those between *Bussy D'Ambois* and *Two Gentlemen*, although, as the reader, I hope, has perceived, the two plays, when read together, provide a convincing, and fairly complete, elucidation of the highly complex secret relations between Elizabeth, Lord Oxford, and Alençon.

That Proteus stands for Alençon can hardly be disputed, since he is described by Speed, in n. ii., as wreathing his arms, "like a malcontent," the Malcontents being the French party opposed to Catherine de Medici, of which Alençon was the figure-head. Valentine-Oxford, who had met, and, no doubt, had been friendly with, Alençon at the Louvre court in 1575-76, and who, during the late fifteen-seventies, was a notorious imitator of the French and Italians, is described as having learned the same trick of folding his arms. Thurio, whom I take to be Bussy himself, was, it will be remembered, Alençon's right-hand man; while Valentine's remark to Silvia, that Thurio would have come along with him to Milan,

but that his mistress
Did hold his eyes lock'd in her crystal looks—

seems to indicate that Bussy may have been invited by Oxford to accompany him upon his Italian tour of 1576, but was unable to tear himself away from his adored lady, Proteus-Alençon's own sister, Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navare, who had accepted Bussy for her lover, after the execution of her earlier adorer, La Mole, in 1574; and who, though she does not come directly into this play, as she does into *Love's Labour's Lost*, is, nevertheless, as we shall soon see, not far distant from the dramatist's mind. Proteus's line in n. iv., referring to Silvia—

"Tis but her picture I have yet beheld—

is historically accurate, because Alençon, during the late seventies, had seen only Elizabeth's picture; and did not behold the original until 1581. The fact that he has been talking with Silvia, only a few moments earlier in the play, shows how carelessly some of these revisions were done. Proteus's advice to the Duke, that Valentine should be deliberately slandered, may be a record of some such actual attempt, upon Alençon's part, to prejudice his rival's chances with Elizabeth; or the lines may have been suggested by what Lord Henry Howard, in London, was certainly practising against Lord Oxford, at that time. Proteus's further suggestion to Thurio-Bussy, that the lady's desires should be tangled "by wailful sonnets," quite accords with possibility, since—whether you consider him as standing for the poet, Oxford, or for himself—we possess a number of Bussy's love-verses, which if not particularly brilliant, are at least readable. Nor should it be forgotten that—

as Captain Ward and I will argue closely in a forthcoming book—Elizabeth herself is the “Dark Lady,” to whom so many of “Shakespeare’s” sonnets were written.

Again, all the business of the play connected with the escalade of Silvia’s chamber, and her descent by means of a corded ladder, seems to be simply a dramatization of Alençon’s escape from his sister Marguerite’s bedroom-window in the Louvre Palace, by means of a rope ladder, on St. Valentine’s day, 1578. The following snatch of dialogue :

THUR. (*Bussy*). Where shall we meet?
PROT. (*Alençon*). At St. Gregory’s Well—

is again history but thinly disguised, since Bussy did meet Alençon immediately after the escape, not, indeed, at St. Gregory’s, but at Ste. Gèneviève’s well, or wall, in the Abbey of that name.

The close of this mysterious and enigmatic, yet extremely fascinating and tantalizing little play, echoes, at many points, both *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, with Julia, disguised as a boy, and actually calling herself Sebastian, the name of Viola’s twin, and double, in *Twelfth Night*. At Julia’s historic identity, however, and at the precise significance of those obviously imitative closing scenes, it is impossible to do more than guess ; but we may, I think, take it as certain that the closing episodes, such as the slandering of Valentine to Silvia, by Proteus, and the romantic forgiveness of the slanderer by the slandered, with that astonishing dénouement :

And, that my love may appear plain and free,
All that was mine in Silvia I give thee—

words against which the lady utters no word of protest—dramatize loosely what seems to be the historic truth—that, after 1578 Oxford accepted, as a *fait accompli*, the conclusion of his own love affair with the queen, and recognized that the favours or privileges, actual or imaginary, secret or open, that had been “his in Silvia,” would now be transferred to his rival Alençon, before whose envoy, Jean de Simier, during January 1579, as we have seen, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and *Love’s Labour’s Won* were played. In 1581, when Oxford, after the Howard-Arundel charges and counter-charges, had fallen deep into court disfavour, Alençon himself visited Elizabeth in London, and won from her a ring, and a categorical promise of marriage, which, however, the mysterious forces that shape the destinies of nations, mercifully for England’s sake, withheld from fulfilment, despite the efforts of Lord Burghley to bring the business about.

We have seen, then, that *Two Gentlemen of Verona* appears to be, at bottom, nothing else than a fanciful dramatization of the rivalries that existed, during the late fifteen-seventies, between Oxford and Alençon, for first place in Elizabeth’s affection ; and we have glimpsed also—not, it is true, in the full limelight of the comedy, yet dimly recognizable in its background—the figures of Marguerite de Valois, and of her lover, Bussy D’Ambois. We have further seen that the intimacy between Lord Oxford and Elizabeth—as a result of which, if my inferences are correct, a child was born towards the close of the year 1574—was well known to Chapman ; and that, in his play, *Bussy D’Ambois*—wherein Bussy, in the English allegory, stands for Oxford—he introduces a similar incident, with Tamyra representing the English queen, and

the Earl almost openly named as "the English mylor."

Now in an earlier book, *Shakespeare, Chapman, and French History*, I showed—conclusively I think—that, in addition to Alençon, Lord Oxford, during his sojourn in France, had become friendly with the Huguenot party there, including, probably, the individual who—after the murder of Coligny—became its leader, I mean Henry of Navarre, and his Ecuyer, Agrippa D'Aubigné. I further showed, in some detail, that D'Aubigné's epic poem, *Les Tragiques*, begun in 1577, and substantially concluded during the late 'seventies, of which I am writing, must have been well known to Lord Oxford, who seems to have found inspiration in its pages for both *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, and who, indisputably, drew from it many details for scenes in both plays, including the cauldron scene in *Macbeth*; the ingredients of the hell-broth being taken, almost *verbatim*, from the catalogue of charms used by Catherine de Medici for the working of her witchcraft spells. Quite evidently, then, Oxford and D'Aubigné, by communication direct or indirect, were fully informed concerning each other's activities; and I am satisfied that when we read in *Les Tragiques* (Princes) the sympathetic reference to Coligny and his Huguenots :

Meurris, précipité, traîne, mutilé, nud—

followed by this significant couplet :

Je vois, un prince anglais,¹ courageux par excess,
A qui l'amour quitte faict un rude procès—

we have here, simply, a reference, correct in matter of date, to Lord Oxford himself, whose "amour quitté," or, in other words, whose estrangement from Elizabeth, has confronted him with a "rude proces," which I interpret as a "severe test" of his courage and endurance. If I am right, it follows that the "prince anglois" of D'Aubigné and the "English mylor" of George Chapman are aimed alike at de Vere, both dramatists having in mind that period of Oxford's life hinted at in Sonnet CX., wherein de Vere tells us that he has "gone here and there," and has

Made old offences of affections new—

by which I understand him to mean, that the discarding of Queen Elizabeth for some new love, corresponding with the throwing over of Rosaline, who is also Elizabeth, for Juliet—who is, in part, Anne Vavasour—has given old offence to his royal, and fast ageing, mistress.

Further, we possess another valuable source of information, or, if you prefer it, of speculation, in the State Papers recording Lord Oxford's feud with the Roman Catholic Arundel-Howard group, at the close of 1580 and the beginning of 1581, when the Earl, who had become a secret Catholic, upon his return from Italy in 1576, had accused his cousins and erstwhile friends, Lord Henry Howard and Charles Arundel, of practises treasonable to the State. There followed, against Oxford, counter-charges by his opponents, of so serious a nature that—although most of them were never proved, and were palpable exaggerations promulgated by desperate men, at bay, and fighting for their lives—they gravely, and, it would seem, permanently injured Oxford's reputation, and clouded, to some

¹ Observe the close analogy with Chapman's lines, quoted earlier, concerning Tamara's affection for "the English mylor."

extent, the remainder of his henceforth mysterious life ; granted that, by "the grace of God," good issued from the evil, in this wise, that the charges and disgraces, including imprisonment in the Tower, which followed thereupon, begot in the Earl a salutary self-examination, followed by a much-needed mending of his moral outlook, and by the penning, as a result, of two of his best known plays, *Much Ado about Nothing*—the very title of which I read as a jibe at his cousins' charges—and that nobly mysterious, though characteristically fantastic, morality play, *Measure for Measure*, echoes of whose *Marianna* we have heard so clearly, and so pathetically, through the rhymes of " Meritum petere, grave."

But, my readers will be asking : " What has all this to do with your subject, which is the relationship

between that exalted trio, Elizabeth, Oxford, and Alençon "—to which my answer is, that in the unsavoury record of these charges and counter-charges occur references to, and epitomes of several conversations, at supper-parties attended by the then friends, in the course of which are mentioned, with deep underlying significance, the names of England's Queen, and of Alençon as well.

Arundel, for example—writing, it should be remembered, in 1581, three years or so after the intimacies between Elizabeth and Oxford had waned ; and when already, as a result of the charges, de Vere was deep in the queen's disgrace—recalls frequent railings against her, by Oxford, for calling him "a bastard," and affirms also that de Vere railed at Francis Southwell,

for commanding the Queen's singing one night at Hampton Court, protesting by the blood of God that she had the worst voice, and did everything with the worst grace that ever

woman did, and that he was never *non plus* but when he came to speak well of her.

There is to be read in the same papers an allegation, made apparently by Oxford to Arundel, of an offer proffered to the Earl himself, by Monsieur, otherwise Alençon :

that if he should forsake the realm and live in France, Monsieur, with the oath of the King his brother, would better house him, and furnish him with better ability and revenue, than ever he had in England.

Arundel further informs us, that—

I heard Rawlie say that the Earl of Oxford told him that Monsieur would give him 10,000 crowns a year, whenever he list to come to France.

If these statements be generally accepted as being substantially true, or as having been believed, at the time, to be true, and are compared with the close friendship which—if I have identified Valentine and Proteus aright—the comedy, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, unmistakably implies, the circumstances, read together, strongly support the probability of a somewhat close temporary friendship between the Earl and Alençon. Further, in my book, *Shakespeare and Chapman in Relation to French History*, I not only showed that Chapman's tragedy, *Bussy D'Ambois*, was written with a close eye upon the Arundel Papers ; but, when analysing its opening scene, I argued also that Bussy—who, in the English allegory, stands there for Lord Oxford—was offered not 10,000 crowns, but "a thousand crowns," by Maffé, on behalf of that said Prince Monsieur !

We saw, however, when analysing *Two Gentlemen*, that the Valentine-Speed dialogue in II. i., concerning the intimacy between Valentine and Silvia, told of a "passing deformity," or, in other words, maternity, as a result—a delicate conclusion which, though not directly supported, is vaguely hinted at by another passage from the Howard-Arundel State Papers, concerning which J. A. St. John, who had read the Papers in question, wrote as follows in the first volume of his *Life of Sir Walter Raleigh*:

At the period of which we are speaking he (Oxford) possessed two mysterious and dangerous books, one called *The Book of Babies*, the other, *The Book of Prophecie*. In the former the author had probably collected all the rumours then circulated throughout the realm of Elizabeth's offspring by Leicester. The general belief appears to have been that when the queen found herself enceinte, she left London and went on a progress into the country, where secretly, in some remote castle, she gave birth to her child, which was spirited away, and brought up carefully under the eyes of Leicester's friend.¹

St. John, who in common with most of the nineteenth-century writers, seems to have regarded Oxford as a monster of wickedness, adds, upon what authority I do not know, that "merely to have seen" this *Book of Babies*, which the Earl used to exhibit, "was looked upon as a kind of treason," in which connection it is worth remembering that seduction of any member of

our royal family is, to this day, an act of high treason against the State. *The Book of Prophecie*, St. John opines, "seems to have been of subsequent manufacture." Could we discover more concerning these two mysterious books—if, indeed, they really existed—the difficult and delicate task of interpreting Shakespearean drama and poetry would certainly be much facilitated.

The plays of "Shakespeare," Chapman, and others, then, so far as we have examined them, read conjointly with certain contemporary allusions, including those by Agrippa D'Aubigné and Mary, Queen of Scots, clearly indicate, as between Oxford and Alençon, a friendship which even rivalry for the favours of Elizabeth did not bring wholly to an end; they point also, as between Oxford and his queen, to an affection, which whether idealistic and calculated or just passionate and impulsive upon his part, while veering, upon hers, from the quasi-maternal to vindictively jealous—developed, during 1573–74, into a guilty though temporary liaison culminating in the birth to the queen of a child, whose name was, or was not?, duly recorded in Lord Oxford's *Book of Babies*. That liaison—waning already, we may suppose, by 1578—was closed by the reappearance, as the queen's suitor, of Alençon, whose envoys, as we have seen, were in London by January 1579. Not before the close of 1580, however, when the Howard-Arundel scandals were abroad, did the breach between Lord Oxford and his queen become an open one, so to remain, apparently, until June 1583, when the Earl, who, towards the close of 1581, had been reconciled with his wife, Anne Cecil—made his peace with Gloriana, and frequented her court again—an episode probably reflected in the return of Prince Hamlet to Elsinore,

¹ Cf. S. P. Dom. Eliz., vol. 151, art. 44 (Howard-Arundel Papers): "A brief answer to my Lord of Ox, slanderous accusations, . . . *Third article*. "That my Lord Harry (*i.e.* Lord Henry Howard) should be present when I presented a certain book of pictures after the manner of a prophecy; and by interpretation resembled a crowned son to the queen."

and in the royal petition made to him thenceforth to remain,

Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

By that time, Alençon, who had been elected Sovereign of the Low Countries, in February 1582, was definitely thrown over as a possible husband for Elizabeth.

In January 1583—the year which, as I believe, saw the first drafting of *Hamlet*¹—Alençon, incensed by his deservedly vanished popularity in the Netherlands, and burning to retain, at any cost, the power that was slipping from him, committed one of the most heinous crimes in history, the treacherous sacking of Antwerp city, accompanied by a massacre of its inhabitants. This policy of despair by a French Valois prince, who numbered Hercules among his names, finds allusion, I think, in Hamlet's words (v. ii.):

Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.

Remembering that the Shakespearian plays are frequently alluded to within their own texts and in other contemporary drama as "dogs" and "catts," I would freely interpret the above couplet as meaning—

My aforetime friend and rival, Hercules (Alençon) and

his works with him, are doomed to extinction; but my plays (*Hamlet* among them) will be heard of (will mew) and will endure—

a sentiment which, in varying form, the Sonnets repeat many times.

¹ Admiral Holland's recent book, *Shakespeare, Oxford, and Elizabethan Times* (1933), conclusively established 1583 as the date of *Hamlet*, in first draft.

CHAPTER VI

THE DARK ROSALINES

Portia and Antonio, in *The Merchant*, are Elizabeth and Oxford—Portia's suitor, Falconbridge, is Oxford—So also is Falconbridge in *King John*—The old play, *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, throws light on all this—Biron, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, is Oxford—Alençon's connections with that play—Armado, in original version, may be Don John of Austria—In later version he is Oxford, with something of Harvey—Costard and Jaquenetta stand for William Shaksper of Stratford and the plays—Rosaline is Elizabeth, and the mysterious "letters" are Shakespearian plays—Parallels with *Two Gentlemen*—Elizabeth as the "dark lady" of Sonnets, and as Rosaline in *Love's Labour's Lost*—Links with Chapman's *School of Night* poems—And with *Midsummer Night's Dream*—Rosaline—Elizabeth is "wedded to her Will"—Comparisons with the Rosaline—Elizabeth of *Romeo and Juliet*—Discussion of historic relations between Elizabeth and Oxford.

My earlier writings have shown, conclusively as I hope, that many of the Shakespearian plays dramatize again and again, from differing viewpoints, yet with substantial accuracy and concordance, intimate episodes in the life of Edward de Vere ; his relations with Anne Cecil and Burghley alone having provided, in some degree or other, the plots of *Troilus and Cressida*, *All's Well, Measure for Measure*, *Hamlet*, and *A Winter's Tale*, with the queen, and many other of the Earl's friends and enemies, figuring in some of them. These, however, do not exhaust the number ; for other plays exist, in which, if I have rightly interpreted them, the relations between Elizabeth and her Lord Great Chamberlain are treated in much less platonic fashion, among them *The Merchant of Venice* and *King John* ; the first of these, according to Mrs. Clark, with whom I concur, dating from 1578-79—years following immediately

upon those with which we are now to be concerned, 1577-78. Portia, in *The Merchant*, I take to be the queen herself, pursued by suitors from the four corners of the globe, but favouring only Bassanio, who stands for Alençon's nuncio, Simier, or for Alençon himself ; the Valois prince being easily first in the running among Elizabeth's suitors, at the opening of 1579.

In the play as we have it, Oxford does not appear as a personal suitor for Gloriana's hand ; but only as Antonio, the friend of Bassanio, for whom he stakes his fortune ; and who—if Alençon, indeed, be the individual aimed at—will also be Oxford—Valentine's friend, Proteus, in the comedy, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. *The Merchant of Venice*, however, contains a scene (i. ii.) wherein Nerissa, questioning Portia concerning her suitors, asks, "What say you, then, to Falconbridge, the young baron of England ?" ; and is answered by a speech which, though probably a blind—one since it contains statements that are totally untrue of Oxford—concludes, notwithstanding, upon a description which is not only true, but also wholly characteristic of the Earl, at this time, when, just returned from a visit to the three countries specified therein, his Franco-Italianized manner of dress and deportment were a standing joke in London.

How oddly he is suited ! I think he bought his doublet in *Italy*, his round hose in *France*, his bonnet in *Germany*, and his behaviour *every where*.

Now I have shown, in other books, that "Shakespeare" had a trick of repeating, in later plays, the name that he had given to some historic person dramatized in an earlier play—as, for example, when he retains the name, Juliet for Anne Vavasour, whom, in

part, he had first dramatized as the Juliet of *Measure for Measure*. Here, in *The Merchant*, we have almost another case in point; for, as all the world knows, Falconbridge, the young baron of England, reappears prominently in *King John*, where he is described, and speaks, in language that reveals, unmistakably, his identity with Lord Oxford. In 1. i., for instance, Falconbridge uses a characteristic Oxfordian phrase, "And I am I," recalling his words to Burghley, in 1583, "I am that I am"; and then goes on to speak of "your traveller, He and his toothpick"—Oxford's trick of using a toothpick being commented on, it will be remembered, in *All's Well*, wherein the Clown (iii. ii.), speaking of Bertram-Oxford, says, "He (Bertram) will pick his teeth and sing." Again Jonson, when satirizing the Earl, as Amorphus (*Cynthia's Revels*), makes use of words that strongly recall Harvey's attack upon Oxford in 1578, as the "blessed happy Travailer" of *Speculum Tuscanismi*, and that are very near, also, to Portia's description of Falconbridge above quoted :

He that is with him is Amorphus, a *traveller*, one so made out of the mixture of shreds of forms, that himself is truly deform'd. He walks most commonly with a clove or *tooth-pick* in his mouth.

Equally significant is Falconbridge's reference, in the same speech, to the Italian journey, where he is

talking of the Alps and Appenines,
The Pyrenean and the river Po.

Now in *King John*, as we have it, although the characters, quite evidently, as in a majority of Elizabethan historical

dramas, have a contemporary topical significance behind their surface meaning, Falconbridge is not dramatized as a suitor to any woman in the play; but, in the competent, though relatively inferior work, from which *King John* is supposed to have been drawn, namely, *The Troublesome Raigne*—conventionally dated about 1595—which clarified several points that remain obscure in the Shakesperean history—Falconbridge is shown to have been previously *betrothed* to the French princess, Blanche, as witness the following lines from the first part :

Bast. Swounds, Madam, Take an English gentleman;
Slave as I am, I thought to have mooved the
match.
Grandame (Queen Elinor) you made me halfe a
promise once
That Lady Blanche should bring me wealth
enough
And make me heire of store of English land.

Here, then, we have an explanation of Falconbridge's anger at the betrothal of Blanche to the Dauphin, for which the Shakesperean play assigns no cause. But, bearing in mind what seems to be the original date of *King John*—about 1581—and granting that Falconbridge is Oxford, for whom do Blanche and the Dauphin stand? I suggest that they are Queen Elizabeth and Alencon, who, after the collapse of the original negotiations in 1572, reopened them in 1578-79 and became, for a while, officially betrothed in 1581. No quarto of *King John* is known to exist; the play being first printed in the Folio, and containing, as we have seen, only the vaguest hints concerning its contemporary significance; whereas *The Troublesome Raigne*, written

probably about 1589, the date of Oxford's withdrawal from court, dares to hint, a little more openly, at the topicalities of earlier years and suggests an alliance, formerly regarded as possible, between Oxford and Elizabeth ! It is well to remember, in this connection, that, on the word of Lucio, in *Measure for Measure*, the reason for the Duke's (Oxford's) withdrawal, at this time, is "a secret that must be locked between teeth and lips."

Little by little, then, our examination is drawing Elizabeth and Oxford together, as potential man and wife—a coupling which the sequel will enormously strengthen, as we proceed from play to play, and subsequently from poet to poet—the next works to which we must now turn, for evidence, being *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

Now the first mentioned of these two has lately been submitted to close examination by Mrs. Clark¹ and Admiral Holland, both of whom concur in fixing the date of its first drafting at 1578, a year which brings it within the scope of our inquiry. Into the full significance of this brilliant exercise in dramatic euphemism, and the difficult question whether it was, or was not, originally and wholly, written by Oxford-Shakespeare himself, I will not enter now ; but I shall ask the reader graciously to accept my suggestion concurred in by Mrs. Clark, that Biron, in the play, stands for Lord Oxford, and voices the opinion of "Shakespeare" himself.

Now Biron, that merry, madcap lord, sweet and voluble in discourse, and master of "apt and gracious words," is in love with a "gentle lady"—

¹ *The Satirical Comedy, "Love's Labour's Lost"* (1933); and *Shakespeare Oxford, and Elizabethan Times* (1933).

When tongues speak sweetly then they name her name,
And Rosaline they call her—

and Rosaline, we are told, is attendant, with Katharine, upon the Princess of France, otherwise upon Marguerite de Valois, who, in historic fact, is daughter to Catherine (de Medici), and is wife to the King of Navarre in the play, the monarch whose veridical name is not Ferdinand, but Henri de Bourbon, destined to become Henry IV. of France. Navarre and Queen Catherine had actually met in Guyenne, during the autumn of 1578, for the purpose of determining important and complicated matters of business between the husband, and Catherine's daughter, his wife ; nor should it be overlooked that in this same scene (mr. i.) of *Love's Labour's Lost*, wherein Rosaline's name is so musically played upon, there is much subtle word-play between Moth, Costard, and Armado (the last-named being, in part, Oxford) concerning "Salve," "a welcome, and a smell of "good l'envoy ending in the goose"—jest all openly linked, by their speakers, with the "enfranchisement," which I take to mean Frenchifying, of Costard, and with his "marriage to one Frances"—a series of allusions pointing conclusively to one topic, namely the proposed marriage, to Queen Elizabeth, of Princess Marguerite's favourite brother, Francois, or Frances, whose "envoys," Quissé and de Bacqueville, reopening negotiations for that alliance, reached London during the summer of that same year, 1578, when the Queen and court were in progress to Audley End and Cambridge. The most important envoy of them all, Jehan de Simier, followed them to London early in 1579, where, in his honour, as I have shown elsewhere,¹ were played, in Elizabeth's

¹ *Shakespeare and Chapman in Relation to French History*, pp. 86-88.

presence, no doubt, during January 1579, two court comedies, namely, *Love's Labour's Won* (*All's Well*), and this same entertainment that we are here considering, *Love's Labour's Lost*. Quite certainly envoy Simier was made a goose of in this business, and so also was Alençon himself, later on, in 1581. "Dan Cupid," comments Biron, in this same scene, is "liege of all malcontents"—the Malcontents being the popular name of the French court-party, of which, at that time, Prince François was the titular head. François, by the way, under the title of Alençon, is twice mentioned in II. i. of *Love's Labour's Lost*—the first time by, and the second time in connection with, Katherine, curiously described as his "heir," though, in historic fact, she was his mother.

At this point the question arises, who was this Rosaline, attendant, with Queen Catherine de Medici, upon another queen, the Princess of France, Queen of Navarre? The solution is difficult, since "Shakespeare" has been careful to give only the most guarded clues to this lady's identity, which, nevertheless, in the play's English allegory, I shall attempt to reveal as Queen Elizabeth herself, beloved by Lord Oxford, topically dramatized under the name of a famous French soldier, Biron, who was historically a Marshal of France. First, however, let us clear the way, by identifying another prominent character in the comedy, also dubbed a "traveller"—that fantastical child of the Spanish court, Don Adriano de Armado. Now in the form in which *Love's Labour's Lost* has come down to us, after its drastic revision in 1596, Armado, as proved by Mr. Rupert Taylor, is certainly Gabriel Harvey, whereas in the first draft, with which we are here concerned, that Spaniard, "planted in all the world's new fashion" is,

^{as} Mrs. Clark has shown, not Harvey, but, principally, Don John of Austria, whom the words above quoted, and most of the other phrases applied to Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost*, fit with complete accuracy; although certain aspects of him, in character and circumstance as well, can easily be fitted to Lord Oxford. Edward de Vere, nevertheless, whoever may have stood for him in the original, is certainly Biron in our version, granting that clues to his identity are found also in Armado's part.

Should any readers be disposed to boggle at these transpositions of identities, in later versions of the plays, I would remind them that recognizable, up-to-date topicalities were essential to success upon Elizabethan stages; and will recall a precisely similar case, in another court comedy of the same period, namely, *Twelfth Night*, wherein Malvolio, who was certainly Sir Christopher Hatton in the earlier versions of the play, becomes Oxford towards the close of the comedy, as it is known to us. Edmund Spenser, a poet exactly contemporaneous with Oxford, adopts, as we shall see, similar methods in *The Faerie Queene*, which was commenced about 1580.

Let us now turn to the first scene of the fourth act of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and examine, for a moment, the letter which Costard supposes to have been written by "Monsieur Biron to one Lady Rosaline," but who is discovered to have been "mistook"—the epistle being actually from Armado to his beloved, the country wench, Jaquenetta. It runs as follows, the italics being mine :

Boyer (*reads*). By heaven, that thou art fair, is most infallible; true, that thou art *beauteous*; truth

itself, that thou art lovely : More *fairer* than *fair*, *beautiful* than *beauteous*, *truer* than *truth* itself, have commiseration on thy heroical vessel ! The magnanimous and most illustrate king Cophetua set eye upon the pernicious and indubitate beggar Zenelophon ; and he it was that might rightly say, *Veni, vidi, vici* ; which to anatomize in the vulgar—O base and obscure vulgar !—*videlicet*, He came, saw, and *overcame* : he came, one ; saw, two ; *overcame*, three. Who came ? the king. Why did he come ? to see. Why did he see ? to *overcome* ; to whom came he ? to the beggar : what saw he ? the beggar ; who *overcame* he ? the beggar. The conclusion is victory : on whose side ? the king's. The captive is enriched : on whose side ? the beggar's. *The catastrophe* is a *nuptial* : on whose side ? The King's : no, on both in one, or one in both. *I am the king* ; for so stands the comparison : thou the beggar ; for so witnesseth thy lowliness. Shall I command thy love ? I may : shall I enforce thy love ? I could : shall I entreat thy love ? I will. What shalt thou exchange for rags ? robes ; for titles ? titles ; for thyself ? me. Thus, expecting thy reply, I profane my lips on thy foot, my eyes on thy picture, and my heart on thy every part. Thine, in the dearest design of industry.

Don Adriano de Armado.¹

That this letter, in common with the play as a whole, is packed, from end to end, with double mean-

¹ Compare the "beauty," "truth," and "Vere" puns, and the phrase "the catastrophe is a nuptial" with the similar puns in the Shakespearian Sonnets written, as I contend, by de Vere, and aimed mainly at "Beauty" (Elizabeth) and their son, the fair youth.

ing, no reader, I suppose, will venture to deny. I am left only with the exacting task of interpretation. First of all, then, I opine, that, reading the allegory in its most obvious sense, Jaquenetta stands for the plays,¹ which, like Audrey in *As You Like It*, would be married to their concealed author, who is "Touchstone in the Arden comedy, and Armado in this one : the union being compared with the marriage of King Cophetua² to the beggar maid—Armado himself being duplicated as king and maid—"both in one and one in both"—meaning, of course, that he, Armado de Vere, stands for both the plays and their author, precisely as in a companion comedy, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (ii. iii.), Launce says :

I am the dog (*i.e.* the plays) ; no, the dog is himself, and I am the dog. Oh, the dog is me, I am myself.

When, moreover, Jaquenetta, personating the plays, is described as being "truer than truth itself"—words which paraphrase the de Vere motto, *Vero nihil verius*, and are followed by the words "overcome," or "overcame," four times repeated—the presence here of de Vere clue-puns seems to be sufficiently established.

Such inferences are, to my mind, crystal clear ; yet the allegory, as I interpret it, goes deeper than this ; for before Boyet reads the letter, that is supposed to be from Biron to Rosaline, he hints, almost openly, that those names are interchangeable with Jaquenetta and Armado ; while Armado uses, of Jaquenetta, all

¹ Costard is William of Stratford punished for being in illicit relationship with Jaquenetta, just as William in *As You Like It*, v. i., is threatened with punishment if he consorts again with Audrey (the plays).

² Note the King-author motive here.

such superlatives as were conventionally supplied to Gloriana herself, and such as Valentine-Oxford bestows upon Silvia-Elizabeth in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The dramatist, moreover, having, in this passage, applied to her, and thus identified her with, his own motto, "truer than truth," and having laid his "heroical vassalage" at her feet, as at the feet of a queen, proceeds to inform us that the conclusion and catastrophe are victory and a nuptial, in which he is the king—his words :

Shall I command thy love? I may: shall I enforce thy love? I could: shall I entreat thy love? I will—

being directly comparable with those in the forged letter, supposed to be from Olivia-Elizabeth to Malvolio, whom we saw to be, in part, Oxford himself—"I may command where I adore." Again, the princess's comment upon this epistle is worth re-reading, in comparison with that made by Speed, who is Valentine-Oxford's servant, upon another "letter," which also, in my judgment, stands for one of the Shakesperian plays. The twin pair of couplets run thus :

PRINCESS. What plume of feathers is he that indited this letter? What vane? what weathercock?

SPEED. O excellent device! was there ever heard a better!

That my master, being scribe, to himself should write the letter.

Speed, it will be observed, knows that his master, like Armado or Biron, is a writer! I would remind readers that some further implications of Speed's remarks were

considered when we were examining the relations between Elizabeth, Oxford, and Alençon in the light thrown by *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.¹

Throughout this scene (rv. i.) of *Love's Labour's Lost*—and the opening of the fourth act, remember, is only a degree less usual than that of the fifth, for the insertion of cipher scenes—this play of double meanings upon the identities of wooed and woer continues with unflagging zest, until, immediately upon the exit of the princess and her train, Boyet openly asks Rosaline, "Who is the suitor? who is the suitor?" (shooter), and is answered by Rosaline herself, "She that bears the bow," which I take to mean Diana, the chaste huntress, otherwise the moon-goddess, Queen Elizabeth, who will be alluded to by Sir Nathaniel, in the next scene, as "Phœbe . . . Luna . . . the moon." A moment later Rosaline confesses, "I am the shooter," or suitor; ² but when Boyet attempts to extract from her the name of her "deer" or "dear," the dialogue ripples on :

Rosal. Thou canst not hit it, hit it, hit it,
Thou canst not hit it, my good man.

Boyet. An I cannot, cannot, cannot,
An I cannot, another can.

But the name upon which the scene closes is that of Armado-Oxford, and his page!

Now the next scene, iv. ii., after pages more of pedantic word-play, concerning "dainties that are bred in a book"—the "book" being by Armado, who has told us that he is for "whole volumes in

¹ See *ante*, pp. 111, 114.

² The revision of this play was 1596. Cf. *Venus-Elizabeth as Suitor to Adonis-Oxford in "Venus and Adonis,"* published in 1593.

Folio"—we reach the references to Dictynna-Phœbe, as Luna the moon, in which connection it is worth noting that, during 1927, before I had much more than heard of the Oxford theory, I had fully satisfied myself, by the analogies with Olivia-Elizabeth in *Twelfth Night*, that Phœbe, the *black-haired* virgin¹ of *As You Like It*, was intended to be Queen Elizabeth.

There enter Costard² and Jaquenetta, bearing another "letter" written to her by Don Armado, in "very learned verses" and recommending her to "make his book thine eyes," just as Jonson, when introducing the First Shakesperian Folio, recommends the reader to look "not on his picture, but his book"; whereupon follows a reference to Ovidius-Naso, as one well equipped "for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention"—words which may hold a hint at Alençon's notoriously aggressive nose—and to Monsieur Biron, the sender of the letter, as "one of the strange queen's lords." Precisely who may be meant by this "strange queen," or "stranger queen" as she is immediately afterwards called by Holofernes, we cannot precisely determine; but I suggest that the monarch referred to is simply Queen Elizabeth, who, among these French royalties, was certainly a "stranger queen," and who, in actual fact, as we learn in the same speech, had Biron-Oxford in her "desired employment," which, historically, was that of her poet-dramatist, at a secret salary, after 1585, of £1000 a year. Biron, moreover, is evidently a sonneteer,

¹ Cf. Elizabeth as the "dark lady" of the Sonnets.

² I take Costard to stand for William of Stratford, punished for consorting with Jaquenetta (the plays) in the Park, just as William in *As You Like It*, v. i, is threatened with punishment for consorting with Audrey (the plays) in the Forest of Arden.

since he tells us in the next scene (iv. iii.) that Rosaline "hath one o' my sonnets already." That Queen Elizabeth is the "dark lady" of the Sonnets, as well as of *Love's Labour's Lost* (Rosaline) and of *As You Like It* (Rosalind and Phœbe), this volume, and its successor will, I hope, make abundantly clear.

Again and again, hereabouts, the parallels with *Two Gentlemen* are very close, not only in the matter of complicated business over the passing of a "letter" from hand to hand, but also in the evident verbal analogies, such as the "did you *ever* see a better," already quoted, and the King's, "Biron read it *over*," directly comparable with Silvia's request to Valentine-Oxford in ii. i., "For my sake read it *over*." The subsequent tearing, by Biron, of Don Armado's letter, which appears to have been written and signed by Biron himself—we saw that it contained the Vere motto—seems to confirm the surmise that Biron and Armado are, at bottom, the same person—namely, Oxford duplicated, as he is in play after play.

"What," asks the king, "did those rent lines show some love of thine?" and there follows, between Biron and Navarre, a dialogue full of import to the mysteries we are seeking to elucidate :

BIRON. Did they, quoth you? Who sees the *heavenly Rosaline*,

That, like a rude and savage man of Inde,
At the first opening of the gorgeous east,
Bows not his *vassal* head and stricken blind
Kisses the base ground with *obedient* breast?
What peremptory eagle-sighted eye
Dares look upon the *heaven* of her brow,
That is not blinded by her *majesty*?
King. What zeal, what fury hath inspired thee now?

My love, her mistress, is a gracious moon ;
She an attending star, scarce seen a light.

BIRON. My eyes are then no eyes, nor I Biron ;
O, but for my love, day would turn to

night !

Of all complexions the cull'd sovereignty

Do meet, as at a fair, in her fair cheek ;

Fié, painted rhetoric ! O, she needs it not.

To things of sale a seller's praise belongs,
She passes praise ; then praise too short doth

blot.

A wither'd hermit, five-score winters worn,
Might shake off fifty, looking in her eye.

Beauty doth varnish age, as if newborn,

And *gives the crutch the cradle's infancy*.

O, 'tis the sun that maketh all things shine.

KING. By heaven, *thy love is black as ebony*.

BIRON. Is ebony like her ? O wood divine !

A wife of such wood were felicity.

O, who can give an oath ? where is a
book ?

That I may swear *beauty doth beauty lack*,
If that she learn not of her eye to look.

No face is fair that is not full so black.

KING. O paradox ! *Black is the badge of hell*,

The *hue of dungeons and the school of night* ;

And beauty's crest becomes the heavens well.

BIRON. Devils soonest tempt, resembling spirits of

light.

Or, *if in black my lady's brows be deck'd*,
It mourns that *painting and usurping hair*

Should ravish doters with a false aspect ;

And therefore is she *born to make black fair*.

Her favour turns the fashion of the days,

For native blood is counted painting now ;

And therefore *red*, that would avoid dispraise,
Paints itself black to imitate her brow.¹

DUMAI. To look like her are *chimney-sweeper's black*.

LONGA. And since her time are colliers counted bright.

KING. And Ethiopes of their sweet complexion crack.

DUMAI. *Dark needs no candles now*, for dark is light

. . . I never knew man hold vile stuff so dear.

LONGA. Look, here's thy love.

Now we know, moreover, that Biron, when he says, "if in black my lady's brows be deck'd," and,

red, that would avoid dispraise,
Paints itself black to imitate her brow—

is describing accurately Elizabeth's appearance, because Sidney Dark, in his *Life of Elizabeth* (p. 179), quotes a contemporary description of the queen at sixty-five, two years after the revision of this comedy in 1596 :

Her face oblong, fair but wrinkled, her eyes small, yet *black* and pleasant . . . her lips narrow and her teeth *black*.
. . . She wore false hair and that *red*—

lines that are also directly comparable with Biron's speech, as one who has "been love's whip," in iii. i.—

A whitely wanton with a velvet brow,
With *two pitch balls stuck in her face for eyes* ;²
Ay, and, by heaven, *one that will do the deed* :³

¹ This speech suggests to me that Elizabeth's hair, in maturity, may have been actually dark, and that Oxford knew it, though she always wore and was painted in the red *wig*, which "turn the fashion of the days," i.e., made red hair fashionable for women. The word-play between black and red, both here and in the Sonnets, is extremely subtle.

² In the recent exhibition of Elizabeth's portraits at the National Portrait Gallery (1933) the "pitch balls for eyes" were obvious and striking.

³ Observe the significance of the underlined words—if my identification is correct.

Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard.

Well, I will love, sigh, pray, sue, and groan;

Some men must love my lady, and some Joan.

The case seems clear enough, and is strengthened by the last quoted couplet, which is directly comparable with Lord Oxford's own words, in his poem, "Fortune and Love" (1591)—" And Joan herself is she."

No less significant are the King's words, " thy love is *black as ebony*," which connects at once with Spenser's description, in *The Faerie Queene*, iv. 6, of Scudamour-Oxford's fight with Britomart-Elizabeth, a warrior

Known by fame and by *an Hebene spare*.

Again, the King's next lines,

O paradox! Black is the badge of hell,
The hue of dungeons and the school of night;
And beauty's crest becomes the heaven well—

are almost paraphrased in sonnet after sonnet, especially in Sonnet CXXX. :

My mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun ;

Coral is far more red than her lips red :

If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head—

for Biron has compared Rosaline with the sun :

O 'tis the sun that maketh all things shine ;—

and in CXXXI. :

Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place.
In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds.

Further, the King's,

Black is the badge of hell,

is close to Sonnet CXLVII, aimed certainly at Elizabeth as " the dark lady " :

My thoughts . . . are . . . at random from the truth . . .
For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
Who art as *black as hell*, as *dark as night*.

Rosaline, therefore, Biron-Shakespeare's love of *Love's Labour's Lost*, has become the disillusioned Oxford's enemy-mistress of the Sonnets—that same Pandora-Elizabeth of whom Lyly had written in *The Woman in the Moon*, iv. i., which was composed about 1593, and first published in 1595 :

LEARCHUS (*of Pandora*). *Black* be the *ivory* of her tysing face.

Further, again, the King's line,

The *hue* of dungeons and the *school of night*—

and Dumain's

Dark needs *no candles now*, for *dark is light*—

by directly praising the illuminating powers of the penmen of the school of Night, points directly at the literary rivalry, and struggle for preponderant interest with Elizabeth, and with her son, between Shakespeare-Oxford, as protagonist of the School of Day, or Phœbus

Apollo ; and Chapman as leader of the Night School or Men of the Moon (*Cynthia's*), as directly aimed at in Sonnets XX. and XXI. :

A man in hue all “hues” in his controlling. (XX.)

and (XXI.)

my love is as fair
As any mother's child, though not as bright
As those gold candles fix'd in heaven's air.

In both instances the “hue,” or “Hew,” is, I maintain, Queen Elizabeth's son by Lord Oxford, the boy-actor, drafted into a company that is playing in Chapman's plays ; the same youth whose “countenance” Oxford saw—and saw with a pang—“filling up,” upon a stage, “his [i.e. Chapman's] line,” as we learn from Sonnet LXXXVI. : while the “candles” of Dumain's speech are the “braving fires of Heaven,” referred to in Chapman's Envoy (1595) to his “Amorous Zodiac,” which I interpret as nothing else than a lewd and lascivious poem, addressed by Chapman to Queen Elizabeth, in jealous rivalry with Lord Oxford, whom he knows well to have been her mistress. The poem opens :

I never see the sun (Phebus-Oxford) but suddenly
My soul is moved with jealousy and spite of his high bliss.

It is, to my thinking, positively certain that, during these mid-nineties, when Oxford, permanently in retirement, was completely alienated from the queen, Chapman endeavoured—in part through the instrumentality of the boy, who, as we have seen, was playing in Chapman's plays—wholly to supplant and supersede

de Vere in the Queen's favour, and to replace him as her official and salaried court poet. Hence the intensity, upon Chapman's part—though not equally so upon Lord Oxford's—of the literary feud so apparent in the poems and plays of both the two foremost Elizabethan writers.

With these episodes, however, we are not primarily concerned, our more immediate business being with the identity of Rosaline, in these passages wherein the lady is showered by Birion with appellations that describe or imply royalty, and royal divinity, such as “his vassal head,” “the heaven of her brow,” “blinded by her majesty,” and “cull'd sovereignty”; all of which tend to corroborate a purposed identity with Queen Elizabeth, precisely as with Silvia in *Two Gentlemen*; all this in addition to the most significant fact, that Rosaline is admitted to be old, since

Beauty doth varnish age, as if newborn,
And gives the crutch the cradle's infancy.

Elizabeth, be it remembered, suffered chronically from ulcer in the leg during nearly the whole of the fifteen-seventies.¹

There follows another interesting point, which is this—Chapman, we know, was an ardent Catholic, and wrote anti-Shakespearian, anti-Protestant plays from a Roman Catholic, and especially from a Guisean, viewpoint. Now the original of Dumain, who is the chief protagonist of the School of Night in *Love's Labour's Lost*, was himself a bulwark of the French Catholic cause, and was a close relative of the Duke of Guise, chart of her medical record.

¹ Chamberlin, *Private Character of Queen Elizabeth*, p. 99; Sir A. Keith's

who is so often introduced into Chapman's *Busy* plays, and is punningly referred to in his poems, including "The Shadow of Night," wherein he writes :

For she could turn herself to every shape
Of swiftest beasts and at her pleasure scape.
Wealth fawns on fools ; virtues are meat for vices,
Wisdom conforms herself to all Earth's *guises*.
Good gifts are often given to men past good,
And noblesse stoops sometimes beneath his blood.

Here the fool, that stooping and vicious nobleman, is de Vere ; Earth's Guise, to whom Wisdom conforms herself, is the Duke of Guise, and the whole poem teems with references to "that quaint work," namely, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, among these being mention of "a shadow like a pyramis" (Pyramus) which, most significantly, is the very play aimed at in our next quotation from Dumain, thus :

DUMAIN. I never knew man hold vile stuff so dear.
LONGAV. Look, here's thy love.

Compare this with the words spoken in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Titania, who is again Queen Elizabeth, to Oberon, who is again Oxford :

TITAN. My Oberon ! what visions I have seen !
Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.

OBERON. There lies your love—

all spoken in connection with the "changeling child" of the same scene (iv. i.), otherwise the son born to Oxford and Elizabeth, about 1574. Apparently the manuscript of *Love's Labour's Lost* passed into the hands of the pro-Catholic group, with which Chapman

was connected, and who here attack *The Dream*, and Bottom who, historically, seem to be, in part, Alençon, and in part the Stratford William.

Love's Labour's Lost, however, is written in a vein of satire, wholly different from that of *The Dream*, and, returning to it, we find, in v. ii., Rosaline expressing her intention to victimize Oxford, in a fashion of which he, "lacking advancement," at the English court, must often have complained.

ROSAL. That same Biron I'll torture ere I go,
O that I knew he were but in by the week !
How would I make him fawn, and beg, and seek,
And wait the season and observe the times,
And spend his prodigal wit in bootless rhymes,
And shape his service wholly to my hests,
And make him proud to make me proud that jests !
So portent-like would I o'ersway his state,
That *he should be my fool*, and *I his fate*.

It is, indeed, the main purpose and theme of this essay to show that Elizabeth did, in actual fact, compel her Lord Great Chamberlain to do every one of the things she here specifies, shaping his service wholly to her "hests," and making of herself in love "his fate," and of himself in the plays—and perhaps out of them also—her "allowed" and privileged fool, just as also is Feste-Oxford to Olivia. Femininely, felinely, capriciously uncertain was the queen, in her relations with men ; and not least so with that fantastic pair who loom the largest in these strange events—Lord Oxford and Francis of Alençon :

ROSAL. Not yet ! no dance ! Thus change I like the moon.

KING. Will you not dance? How come you thus estranged?

Rosal. You took the moon at full, but now she's changed.

A strange and changing lady; yet potent over the hearts of men.

BIRON. O, I am yours, and all that I possess.

Rosal. *All the fool mine?*

BIRON.

I cannot give you less.

At her behest this courtier-poet "replete with mocks," and truly proclaimed, by "the world's large tongue," to hold all men "within the mercy of his wit," is bidden by her, as his final penance, to attempt, in his own words, the impossible task of moving "wild laughter in the throat of death."

Here we have, I think, a corroborative hint that the year 1598¹—certainly pointed to in the closing stages of this comedy—was also, as I have shown elsewhere, the year that

saw the drafting of a drama which, more than any other that he wrote, made merry "in the throat of death," and turned "the worst to laughter"—I mean the tragedy of *King Lear*.

The two following passages from *Love's Labour's Lost*, II. i., seem to me enlightening and significant. Italics are mine.

KING. Hear me, dear lady; I have sworn an oath.

PRIN. Our Lady help my lord! he'll be forsown.

KING. Not for the world, fair madam, by my *will*.

PRIN. Why, *will* shall break it; *will*, and nothing else—

followed, some hundred lines or so later, by this :

BIRON. What's her in the cap?

Boyer. Rosaline, by good hap.

BIRON. Is she wedded or no?

Boyer. To her *will*, sir, or so.

In both these passages, as I read them, "Will" is simply Shakespeare—Lord Oxford, who, though he has taken an oath of secrecy, not to reveal his identity in the plays, is revealing it, nevertheless, upon every second page of this one. In the second passage, Rosaline-Elizabeth is described as being "wedded or so" to her Will; this type of word-play matching exactly that of Sonnet CXXXIV. and the other "Will" sonnets :

I myself am mortgaged to thy will;

and so forth.

Rosaline, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, is not the only Shakesperean character thus named. There is another, in *Romeo and Juliet*, frequently mentioned at the opening of the tragedy, though not once brought upon the stage; and it is, I think, no coincidence that this lady also, in common with the Rosaline of the comedy, declines to return the love of a young man, who, many years ago, I identified historically as Lord Oxford. Is Rosaline, then, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Queen Elizabeth once more, you ask? Certainly she is, as I interpret the play; in which connection let me remind readers that in other instances of the appearance, in two plays of characters bearing the same name, we can identify them, also, as standing historically for the same in-

¹ Date of the first quarto of *Love's Labour's Lost*.

dividual. William Page in *Merry Wives*, iv. i., and William in *As You Like It*, v. i., are both William Shaksper of Stratford-upon-Avon : the Claudio of *Much Ado* and the Claudio of *Measure for Measure* both stand, at bottom, for Lord Oxford, just as the Juliets of *Measure for Measure* and of the Verona tragedy both stand, in part, for Anne Vavasour : and although the references to Rosaline carefully exclude all such expressions as "sovereign," "majesty," and so forth, which almost proclaim royalty in such dramatizations of Queen Elizabeth as Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, Rosaline in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and Silvia in *Two Gentlemen*, they contain, nevertheless, open references to the lady's resolute chastity, and to the persistent refusal to marry, so characteristic of "the Virgin Queen." There remain sufficient other clues to the identification of Rosaline in *Romeo and Juliet*, as, for example, in the line,

She (Rosaline) is too *fair*, too *wise*, wisely too *fair*—

wherein the adjectives echo those addressed to Silvia-Elizabeth in the songs in *Two Gentlemen*—"Holy, *fair, and wise is she.*"

When in ii. i. of *Romeo and Juliet*, Mercutio, conjuring the vanished Romeo, "by Rosaline's bright eyes," to appear before his friends ; and is warned by Benvolio against Romeo's anger, he answers,

This cannot anger him : 'twould anger him
To raise a spirit in his mistress's circle
Of some strange nature . . . my invocation
Is fair and honest and in his mistress's name.

Now if readers will turn to the corresponding passage in *As You Like It*, ii. v., wherein Jaques (Oxford)

sings his little ditty concerning the "ass," who left his wealth and ease

A stubborn will to please,
Duccame, ducdame, duccame ;—

he may, perhaps, agree with me that the "Duccame," here referred to, is that stubborn-willed leading lady, Queen Elizabeth ; and that the word-play which follows, between Amiens and Jaques,

AMIENS. What's that "duccame" ?
JAQUES. "Tis a Greek *invocation* to call fools into a circle.
I'll go sleep if I can—

is simply another reference to the queen, who has called fools (*i.e.* courtiers) into her circle, precisely as Prospero (Shakespeare) in *The Tempest*, v. i., draws the fooled courtiers into the magic ring, within which they stand charmed and spellbound. It will be further observed that both Mercutio in the tragedy, and Jaques in the comedy, use the words "invocation" and "circle" in a similar sense, and accompanied, in each case, by the blotting out, or loss of identity, of the characters standing for Oxford - "Shakespeare" - Romeo being hidden by the darkness of the night, and Jaques expressing intention to "sleep if he can."

Turning now to the balcony-scene, with which ii. i. opens, we reach an even clearer reference to Queen Elizabeth, though not under the name of Rosaline, whose personality has already been eclipsed, in Romeo's mind, by that of Juliet, just as, it would seem, his infatuation for Elizabeth vanished, upon the brief coming of Anne Vavasour into his life, and the

subsequent reconciliation with the other Anne, his wife.

(*Juliet appears above at a window.*)

ROMEO. But, soft ! what light through yonder window
breaks ?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun !
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief,
That thou her maid are far more fair than she.
Be not her maid, since she is envious ;
Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
And none but fools do wear it ; cast it off.

The implications here seem to be unmistakable. Elizabeth's Lord Great Chamberlain has fallen in love with Anne Vavasour, one of the beautiful maids-of-honour of a queen who was notoriously envious when any of those ladies showed inclination to slight, by example, that vow of chastity which Gloriana, like Rosaline, had publicly—though not privately—imposed upon herself ; and the above passage, as I read it, simply means that Elizabeth, the chaste moon, is envious of that rising sun, her maid, or Maid of Honour, Anne Vavasour, for which reason Romeo-Oxford advises his new love to cast off the vestal livery of the Tudors, which is “sick and green”—historically green and white—and is worn only by “fools,” whom we have just seen to be courtiers. This passage, clashing, as it does, with the pure lyricism of the remainder of the balcony-scene, was probably added at some later time, when Oxford's feeling towards Elizabeth had turned, as it certainly did turn, from an admiration that was almost love, to a repugnance closely akin to hate—sentiments that, to the passionate and impetuous

Elizabethan mind, were always more close together, and much less contradictory, than we less mercurial moderns may suppose.

Was Lord Oxford ever really in love with Queen Elizabeth, a woman seventeen years his senior, who was forty-two when the Earl was but twenty-five ? It may well have been so ; for that poetical and idealistic young men are always capable of capitulating to women many years older than themselves will hardly be denied by readers of *Candida*, or by spectators of Mr. Van Druten's play, *Young Woodley* ; and I, personally, have no doubt at all that de Vere—completely, and for a long period, alienated from his wife, in part, as we know, by the machinations of Elizabeth herself, in part by the slanders of the Howard-Arundel group, and, in part, by a temporary affair with Anne Vavasour—did contrive to imagine himself in love with his royal mistress, at a time when her grace and favour alone could fill his empty purse, and advance his personal ambitions. To a mind so swiftly and intensely fanciful and suggestible as that of Edward de Vere, concerning whom Burghley had written to Walsingham, in 1574, that the youth was showing in himself “a mixture of contrary affections,” such an affair as we are predicating, and as *A Hundreth Sundrie Flores*, the Sonnets, and several of the plays amply confirm, seems perfectly natural, bearing in mind the character of the man. A more difficult problem is the real extent to which the queen, as Venus to young Adonis, encouraged, for a time, or even initiated, the advances of one towards whom—like the Countess Rousillon, to Bertram in *All's Well*—she stood almost in the capacity of a stepmother.

That the queen, beneath her diplomatic pose of

virginity, was a coquette of the first water, accustomed to exploit, either with callous indifference or with coy delight, the enormous advantages conferred by her sex, her cunning, and her occupancy of a universally envied throne, is a proposition undeniable by any to whom her methods of dealing with suitors and their representatives—especially with nuncios so attractive as La Môle and Simier—may be even a little familiar. That she was capable of playing deliberately with Oxford's nascent affections, and of fooling him, and others with him, to the top of their bents, I take to be a certain thing ; yet it is at the same time indisputable that, especially during the decade 1565-75, Elizabeth was as genuinely fond of Oxford as it was in her egotistical nature to be of any man—an inference attested by many evidences already given, and to be given, concerning jealousy towards him, between herself and Lady Burghley, and herself and Anne Cecil. We know from Talbot that the queen delighted in her ward's dancing and valianthood, and from Fulke Greville that Oxford, in 1579, was "superlative in the Prince's favour." Both Earl and queen, in this business, were manifestly playing with fire ; and all the upper world knew it, and remembered it—else why did Mary Queen of Scots write to Elizabeth, during the early fifteen-eighties, as follows :

Même le comte d'Oxford n'osoit se rappointer avec sa femme de peur de perdre la faveur qu'il esperoit recevoir par vous fayre l'amour—

words whereby one queen—herself an expert in affairs of the heart—tells a rival monarch more truth about herself than any woman less highly placed would have

dared to do. If I am asked, as I well may be, how this same Elizabeth, relative to Oxford, can be the Venus who would seduce Adonis, and the Rosaline who will not be seduced by Romeo, I answer that the Venus of the earlier poem has not yet been tortured by jealousy of Anne Cecil ; and has, moreover, to do with an as yet sexually immature boy ; and that, in any event, these poems examined, and yet to be examined, dramatize moods, and moments, of two essentially fickle and unstable characters. Venus-Elizabeth loved her ward, surrendered to him, hated his wife, and hardened towards that wife's husband, until, at last, in process of time, the jealous alienation between them, deepened by the ageing of the queen, developed, upon Oxford's part at least, into an antipathy that was almost hate. Behind all this mysterious and intricate business, providing, in particular, a principal motive of the Sonnets, and of "A Lover's Complaint"—poems which, as we shall see, are written, one from the man's viewpoint, and the other from the woman's—lurks one crucial episode which provides the key to the whole Oxford-Shakespeare mystery—his fathering of a son to the Queen of England, probably during the year 1574.¹

¹ In Captain Ward's view, and my own, a close examination of Sir Christopher Hatton's letters to the queen make impossible any other conclusion than that Elizabeth had been Hatton's mistress before she became Oxford's.

the man whom Nature self had made
To mock herself, and Truth to imitate
With kindly counter under mimic shade,

CHAPTER VII

"MOTHER HUBBERD'S TALE"

Spenser and "gentle Willy"—Greenlaw has noted topicalities in Spenser—Close parallels between Oxford as "Shakespeare", and Spenser—Both men wrapped up inner meanings in cunning devices—Both used discernible anagram names—Strange indifference of Elizabeth's court to the power of literature—Spenser and Oxford both paid dearly for their political attacks—Poets of that age wrote with definite moral purpose—Spenser dislocated story and characters, for purposes of concealment—Smier, as Alençon's envoy, visits Elizabeth in 1579—Burghley and others favour the match; but Leicester opposes it—The Fox and Ape in *Mother Hubberd's Tale* are Burghley and Smier-Alençon—Both seek "preference" by marriage—Spenser attacks the courtiers—Detailed interpretation of the poem—Burghley as the Pandar (Pandarus)—His sales of Lord Oxford's estates—Ape-Alençon in the secret pay of Fox-Burghley—Burghley hoped, through Alençon, to wield more authority at Elizabeth's court—Stern indictment of the Lord Treasurer—Mercury listens "in disguise"—Disgrace and flight of Ape-Alençon.

In an earlier chapter I sought to convince my readers that Edmund Spenser's references, in *Tears of the Muses*, to "gentle Willy," as being "dead of late," referred, not to William Shaksper of Stratford-upon-Avon, but to Lord Oxford, under his pseudonym of "Will. Shakespeare," withdrawn in 1589 from court to country, or from London town to Arden forest, if you prefer the allegory of *As You Like It*, which was probably drafted at that same time, one year or so before the publication of *Tears of the Muses* in 1590.¹ "With Will," mourns Thalia,

"my pleasant, mirth-providing, master of the comic stage has passed"; nor would it have become the Muse of Comedy to foretell to us, had she foreseen it, that, in years not far distant, her pleasant Willy, saddened by sour misfortune, will abandon many times Thalia for Melpomene, and lead this world's tragic drama as triumphantly as he had led and glorified comedy's lighter vein.

When first drafting, however, the chapter above referred to, my want of knowledge led me greatly to underrate the importance of *The Faerie Queene* and of some of Spenser's shorter poems, in their relation to "Shakespeare"; nor was I much enlightened concerning them, until there came into my hands, in the autumn of 1932, the late Professor Edwin Greenlaw's useful little book, *Studies in Spenser's Historical Allegory*—a work which, though written by a scholar whose orthodoxy blinded him to the deeper truths of the matter, had, nevertheless, contrived to reach the obviously correct conclusion, that Spenser's work was topical, and that, in *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, for example, the poet had dared to launch a bitter attack upon the proposed marriage between Elizabeth and Alençon; and, the while, beneath the thinnest of disguises, to castigate Lord Burghley and Alençon himself, under the names of the Fox and the Ape.

Now Edmund Spenser, as I knew, having been sent to stay in one of his Warwickshire estates, inherited probably through the Trussells, and there met William of Stratford, who, through the Ardens and the Trussells, was, in some sort, a poor relation: Costard in *Love's Labour's Lost*, who is William, has Biron-Oxford for Master. Cos (William), in

¹ My conjecture is that Oxford, upon his withdrawal from court in 1589, went to stay in one of his Warwickshire estates, inherited probably through the Trussells, and there met William of Stratford, who, through the Ardens and the Trussells, was, in some sort, a poor relation: Costard in *Love's Labour's Lost*, who is William, has Biron-Oxford for Master. Cos (William), in

born about 1552, was within two years of the same age as Lord Oxford ; and no sooner had it dawned upon me that in *Mother Huberd*—written, as Greenlaw showed, about 1579—we possess a work contemporaneous almost with *Twelfth Night*, which, as I have argued elsewhere, seems to have been written about that time, as propaganda for, instead of against, that same Alençon marriage, I perceived that since the two poets were obviously working simultaneously, and by analogous methods, upon the same theme, Spenser's poem, as a whole, called for careful examination in its relation to "Shakespeare."

Accordingly, then, having first familiarized myself with Professor Greenlaw's book, I passed some profitable days with Spenser's poems, including *The Faerie Queene*, and having also read carefully R. W. Church's excellent little monograph upon Spenser, I was rewarded with illuminating results ; for it very soon became apparent to me that, although the personal characters of the genuine "Shakespeare," Lord Oxford, and his acquaintance and friend, Edmund Spenser, were widely different, important parallels between them could, nevertheless, be drawn.

The pair, as we have seen, were nearly of an age ; both men, as scholars, were copious, rather than accurate or academic ; both were nationally and religiously, rather than politically, Protestant ; and, although Spenser hated Popery far more, and more bitterly, than did Oxford, both men, as artists, possessed a keen æsthetic sense of the pomp, the beauty, and the impressionistic symbolism of the old ceremonial ; while neither could feel much else than contempt for the philistine and narrowly iconoclastic temper of the Puritan. Both men, moreover, hoped, and expected, to develop their

careers as men of action, rather than of letters, and both were destined to bitter disappointment in the result. Further, both poets, in Spenser's own words to Raleigh concerning *The Faerie Queene*, wrote topical verses of which the inner meanings were "cloudily enwrapped in allegorical devices," and both began as writers of short poems and of comedies, of which last Spenser wrote nine, though no single one of them survives. Both men, also, as writers, conformed to that utilitarian spirit of their day, which imposed, almost, upon author and reader alike, the necessity to insert discoverably into all their works a lesson which must be inculcated, and a moral to be drawn, in days that might not yet admit the exercise, for their own sakes, of pleasant fancy and imagination.

Both Oxford and Spenser, moreover, freely packed their writings with the actual names of living persons, in more or less perfect anagram—Spenser, for example, in his *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579-80) transforming his friend, Grindal, into "Algrind," and Oxford, at about the same time, contriving the name "Orsino" from that of Monsieur (Alençon) shorn of its M, and thus reading "Orsineu." Archbishop Grindal, at this time, was in deep disgrace with Burghley and his party ; for which reason the praises of Grindal, sung by Spenser in *Shepherd's Calendar*, have been assigned as an explanation of the common dislike between Burghley and the poet. That we have here a contributory cause, I would not, for a moment, dispute ; but the deeper reasons for existence of hatred between the two men are to be found in fundamental differences of character, Burghley the "Cor-ambis" or "double-hearted" man of the first quarto *Hamlet*—sometimes, it would seem, dubbed the Fox, in that strange menagerie of beasts,

which were the courtiers about the person of the queen—being habitually cunning and subtle in his methods, employing, like Polonius, an army of spies, and given to practising, without scruple, upon such simplicities as he might chance to find, in those with whom circumstance brought him into opposition. Now Spenser, indubitably, for all his genius, was, like Oxford-Shakespeare himself, a simple and single-minded man, recognizing, and loving, faith and uprightness, when and wherever he found them, and detesting the wiles of Elizabethan duplicity. Burghley he must, instinctively, have hated, and been hated by—a most potent reason, it would seem, for that grudging preferment, which caused Spenser to die in abject poverty, being the malignity of Queen Elizabeth's all-powerful Lord Treasurer, who could, and doubtless did, poison his royal mistress's mind against all those who opposed or offended him. *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, published in 1590, but, in Spenser's own phrase, composed "long sithence in the raw conceit of youth"—actually, I suppose, in 1579 or 1580—was the visible sign of that hatred. It is, as Church points out, a remarkable fact, that Elizabeth's court, which certainly recognized the propagandist value of the stage, should have been so contemptuously indifferent to the power of mere literature as to permit the free publication of this clever and open attack upon the joint intrigues of Burghley and Alençon. Spenser's courage, however, proved disastrous to him; for it seems to follow, beyond question, that the poet's banishment to Ireland, during the summer of 1580, to the service of Lord Grey, very soon after the writing of *Mother Hubberd's Tale*—which was "called in," after it had been "disperst abroad in sundrie hands"—was, in effect, Burghley's act of

revenge for that satire. I have argued elsewhere that Lord Oxford's bitter attacks upon, and burlesques of, the courtiers, in his plays were, probably, one of the basic reasons for his expulsion, or withdrawal, from court in 1589;¹ and if that surmise be correct, we now reach the important conclusion, that Oxford and Spenser alike, in 1580 and 1589, respectively, were compelled to withdraw from court for substantially the same offence; Burghley, as we shall see, being probably a prime mover in each case. It is further noteworthy, that both poets were granted a pension by the queen—Spenser, after his return with Raleigh from Ireland, in 1595 (?)—being allowed £50, and Lord Oxford twenty times as much, *i.e.* £1000 a year in 1585; both men having to justify their employment by writing with an openly avowed patriotic intent, and, in Mr. Church's happy phrase, concerning the poets of that time, "with a purpose as definite and formal . . . as the preacher in the pulpit." The prosaic and frugal Lord Treasurer, it is said, made difficulties about paying Spenser's pension; and when examining *Measure for Measure*, in my *Life-Story of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare*, I showed that a part of Angelo-Oxford's excuse for leaving Mariana (Anne Cecil), as explained to the Duke in the last act, was that

her promised proportions
Came short of composition,

or, in other words, that Burghley withheld monies that had been promised to his son-in-law, in the matter of

¹ Other reasons, and perhaps more potent ones, were his personal relations with the queen, and the presence, in London, of the queen's son by Oxford, now become a professional actor, some sixteen years old in 1590, and not, it seems, on the best of terms with his father.

Anne's dowry or allowance, just as he boggled also over Spenser's annuity.

Both writers, it should be added, introduce Queen Elizabeth, again and again, into their works under many different names ; some of which in *The Faerie Queene* are Gloriana, Belphebe, Britomart, and Mer- cilla ; and in "Shakespeare's" plays are Silvia, Portia, Olivia, Phœbe, and Rosaline. Amid this most remarkable, and revealing, series of analogies between the characters, writings, methods, and destinies of "Shakespeare" and Spenser, not the least is this, that paragraph after paragraph of Mr. Church's book upon Spenser, written in the honest belief that "Shakespeare" was not born before 1564—and, therefore, was no more than some fifteen years old when *Mother Hubberd's Tale* was written—does, nevertheless, apply with perfect accuracy to the great dramatist. In the following extract, for example, every word is as true of the poet- Earl, writing under his pseudonym, as of Spenser writing under his own name. The italics, I should add, are my own.

Readers of my books need not be reminded that my interpretations of play after play of "Shakespeare" have led me to precisely similar conclusions concerning his habits of mind, and customary methods, as a dramatist ; and this, moreover, before I had so much as read *The Faerie Queene* !

Let us now examine, a little, some of the contemporary allusions in Spenser's two poems, *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, written about 1579-80, and *Miopotmos*, written some ten years later, and see, in detail, how closely their meaning seems to fit in with conclusions to which, from other sources, and along other lines of reasoning, we have already been unmistakably led.

It was purposely baffling and hazy. A characteristic trait was signalled out. A name was transposed in anagram, like Irena, or distorted, as if by imperfect pronunciation, like Burbon and Arrhegall, or inverted to express a quality, like Una or Gloriana. . . . The personage is introduced with some feature, or amid circumstances which seem, for a moment, to fix the meaning. But when we look to the sequence of history being kept up in the sequence of a story, we find ourselves thrown out. *A character which fits one person puts on the marks of another : a likeness which we*

identify with one real person passes into the likeness of some one else . . . it turns aside out of its actual path of facts, and ends, as the poet thinks it ought to end, in victory or defeat, glory or failure. . . . There is an intentional dislocation of the parts of the story, when they might make it imprudently close in its reflection of facts or resemblance in portraiture . . . to confuse and perplex all attempts at interpretation, which might be too particular and too certain. This was no doubt merely according to the fashion of the time, and the habit of mind into which the poet had grown. But there were often reasons for it, in an age so suspicious and so dangerous to those who meddled with high matters of state.

after harangue from Protestant pulpits, and led to the publication of such a book as Stubbs' :

The discovery of a gaping gulph, whereto England is like to be swallowed by another French marriage, if the Lord forbid not the bans by letting her Majesty see the sin and punishment thereof.

Clerical eloquence was, however, restrained by official proclamation ; and saving Sir Philip Sidney—who brought himself into deep disgrace, by daring to protest, in a frank and manly letter—no single other influential voice was raised against the match. Lord Oxford, who, I think, had strongly favoured the scheme before the St. Bartholomew Massacre ; and, about 1577, had dramatized himself, in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, as Valentine—an earlier rival of that same prince, Proteus-Alençon, for possession of that same royal hand—now, probably, though without convinced approval, poetized and jested over it, somewhat in the manner made familiar to us by the world-famous scenes of *Twelfth Night*. Lord Burghley, in the opinion of a majority of the courtiers, including Leicester, Sidney, Hatton, and Walsingham, seemed to favour the match, and Spenser, as we shall see, agreed with them. Lord Leicester, at times, openly favoured the negotiations for this marriage of a queen, who, as many hold, had been prevented only by Burghley's own machinations from marrying her himself ; yet he was so furiously jealous of Simier and Alençon as to connive at an abortive attempt to assassinate the former, in August 1579, a plot for which Simier cleverly avenged himself, by divulging to the Queen Leicester's own secret marriage with Lettice Knollys.

In November 1581, Elizabeth publicly kissed

Alençon ; and announced him as her intended husband to her other intimates at that fantastic court, whose members made up Her Majesty's menagerie of beasts and bushes, with certain of which the tale that follows is closely concerned. Among these, Hatton was the *sheep*, Leicester the *lion or bear*, Oxford the *boar*, Egerton the *dromedary*, Anjou *le loryer* or *l'Olivier*, Alençon the *frog*, Simier the *ape*, and Burghley the *fox*. With several of these, young Spenser, emboldened, no doubt by the favour of the great Earl of Leicester, whose servant he was in 1579, and by friendship with the Earl's nephew, Philip Sidney, and with Sidney's friendly foe, Lord Oxford, dares to make play in this allegorical satire, *Mother Hubberd's Tale*.

The early draft, written some ten years before the printed version of 1591—as is true also of several early Shakesperian comedies, including *Twelfth Night*—may have differed much from the version which has come down to us ; but the poem, as we have it, quite evidently tells us, though in characteristically veiled Spenserian fashion, exactly what the poet thought about Burghley's secret relations to this vexed problem of the Alençon marriage. The Ape, Spenser tells us at the start, was "misguided by the Fox," the craftier, by far, of these two "unhappy witted" beasts, both of whom were aggrieved and disgruntled because, like Hamlet himself—whose part, I suggest, was first drafted in 1583—they "lacked advancement," and had both

wasted much good time
Still waiting to preferment up to climb.

Together, therefore, the pair decide to seek fortune—the Ape, upon the Fox's advice, deciding to pose as

the soldier wounded in the wars ; a veiled allusion, perhaps, to the campaign in Flanders, with which Alençon was actively engaged when he reopened the English marriage negotiations in 1578 ; while the "old Scotch cap," which the Ape donned, would at once suggest to Spenser's readers the ancient alliance between the kingdoms of France and Scotland, whose then reigning king and queen were, respectively, Alençon's own elder brother, Henry, and his sister-in-law, Mary Stuart.

The Ape, then, becomes that familiar Elizabethan figure, an old soldier crippled in the wars that he may or may not have seen, and driven "to seek some mean to live," which he duly finds, by attaching himself to a certain "husbandman," in the capacity of "shepherd swain," with the "false fox" in close attendance, as his dog. After shamelessly abusing this trust, with "false treason and vile thievery," and having ravaged the flocks committed to them, they flee by night, and, because they will "take no pains to get their living," don, respectively, a gown and a cassock, and proceed to support themselves by vices

Much like to begging, but much better named.

The Fox inclines towards ecclesiastical life—an obvious dig at Burghley's puritanism—and is advised by a priest to apply to some great nobleman, or to the court ; whereupon we are given Spenser's opinion of both court and courtiers, in the following dangerous passage :

But if thee list unto the court to throng,
And there to hunt after the hoped prey,
Then must thou thee dispose another way.

For thou needs must learn to laugh, to lie,
To face, to forge, to scoff, to company,
To crouch, to please, to be a beetle-stock,
Of thy great master's will, to scorn or mock.
So may'st thou chance mock out a benefice.

That benefice, before long, they obtain :

And crafty Reynold was a priest ordain'd,
And th' ape his parish clerk procured to be—

whereupon the precious pair once again abuse their office, resign the living for a few pence, and "run away by night," pretty much as Alençon himself did, from Flanders, in 1583, where he had indeed grossly abused his trust, by the sack of Antwerp, and other less heinous crimes.

Meeting a mule, they ask after the "brave beasts" at court, and are told that the best method of approach is "with a good bold face," backed by "big words" carried off with "a stately grace." This they attempt, and with such success that after

the ape anon
Himself had clothed like a gentleman,
And the sly fox as like to be his groom—

the monkey very soon wins the attention of the court, which fastens "big looks basin-wide" upon the animal quaintly clad

in strange accoutrements
Fashioned with quaint devices, never seen
In court before, yet there all fashions been—

all of which I read as an open gibe at the ultra-fantastic costumes affected by the French Valois princes and

the Mignons of their court—precisely the sort of costume that had been imitated by Lord Oxford himself, on his return from Paris in 1576, and had been derided by Spenser's closest friend, Gabriel Harvey, in his *Speculum Tuscanum*, written almost contemporaneously with *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, wherein the satirist mocks at Lord Oxford's "little apish hat couched fast to the pate like an oyster," and laughs, almost in Spenser's own words, at the delicacy of speech and the quaintness of array in which the Franco-Italianized de Vere would present himself at court,

conceited in all points,
In courtly guiles a passing singular odd man.

Spenser's description of how the Ape first gained, and then maintained and augmented, his credit at the court,

Through his fine feats and courtly compliment ;
For he could play and dance and vault and spring
And all else that pertain to revelling—

seems to have been accurately true of Simier—and, in part, of Alençon also—conceded generally to be amongst the most accomplished courtiers of his age. This Ape, according to Spenser, is malicious also, ready always

with sharp quipe . . . others to deface,
Thinking that their disgracing did him grace ;

and not scorning, upon occasion, to wear "a pander's coat"—an interesting touch, when we recall that, somewhere about this time—perhaps in 1577—Lord Oxford has been writing a first draft of a play that will subsequently become the satirical tragi-comedy, *Troilus*

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and Cressida, wherein the Earl's father-in-law, the Ape's companion in mischief, Lord Burghley, the Fox, is dramatized as the pander, "Pandarus," Spenser here inserts a comparison between the ideal courtier and the Simier-Alençon variety, before going on to tell how the Ape is schooled by the Fox in "cozenage and cleanly knavery," such as

Bargains of woods which he did lately fell—

a comment worth linking up with the fact that the two years we are now concerned with—1577-80—were those in which were effected no less than eighteen sales of Lord Oxford's ancestral lands, most of them, one suspects, to some extent, at least, under his father-in-law's (Burghley's) guidance and advice. Since in no other two years of Lord Oxford's life were so large a number of such transactions carried through, I conclude that the author of *Mother Hubberd's Tale* had the Oxford estates definitely in mind ; and that, in Spenser's opinion, at any rate—and he may well have been in a position to know—some of these deals formed a part of that "cleanly knavery" contrived by the Ape and Fox,

to cozen men not well aware.
Of all of which there came a secret fee,
To th' ape, that he his countenance might be.

These lines become the more deeply significant, when it is observed how closely the inferences fit in with my interpretation of several Shakesperean plays ; and some of my readers, for example, will need no reminder of the scene in *As You Like It*, iv. i., wherein Rosalind thus openly twists the melancholy and disillusioned Jaques, who is Lord Oxford :

A Traveller! . . . I fear you have sold your own lands to see other men's; then, to have seen much and to have nothing is to have rich eyes and poor hands.

JAQUES. Yes, I have gained my experience.

Spenser well knew that he had—and dearly too! 1

It was during 1575-77 that Jaques-Oxford had effected six sales of land, to pay withal for those foreign travels, at the very opening of which he must first have met Alençon in Paris; and it was, as we have seen, in 1580, the date of many historic allusions in the comedy of Arden, and probably the year of *Mother Hubberd* also, that took place the further land sales, to which Spenser seems here to refer. His suggestion that Fox-Burghley gained the "countenance" of Ape-Alençon-Simier, by paying him secret fees, out of what look very like quasi-fraudulent land-sales, carried through at knock-out prices, by the father-in-law, for the ostensible relief of a son impoverished by extravagance, is a very interesting one, and suggests that Alençon also was wont to exploit his friend, Oxford, "not well aware" of the knaveries with which he was beset; somewhat as Bassanio-Alençon—though, in that instance, honestly and without malice—trades upon Antonio's generosity in *The Merchant of Venice*—Antonio being again Lord Oxford.

Another memorable point definitely linking de Vere with Burghley in Spenser's mind, is the fact that *Muypomas*, which I shall show to be a bitter attack, by Spenser, upon Burghley's treacherous treatment of Oxford, was probably written about 1590, one year or so before the publication of *Mother Hubbard's Tale* in ¹ See *post*, pp. 226-29, where I show that Spenser must have had *As You Like It* in mind when writing *Faerie Queene*, iv.

1591, and one year after the drafting of *As You Like It*, which I ascribe to 1589.

The Fox's crafty feats are, nevertheless, described; and he, with his Ape, are "brought to hopeless wretchedness," a statement which, though not historically true of Burghley, is wholly so of Alençon. The pair of cozeners run away by night; and, ranging the forest, come, at last, upon the Lion sleeping, and without his skin, which, for convenience, he has temporarily doffed. The Fox would seize the opportunity.

Now (said he) whiles the lion sleepeth sound,
May we his crown and mace take from the ground,
And eke his skin, the terror of the wood,
Wherewith we may ourselves (if we think good)
Make kings of beasts and lords of forests all
Subject unto that power imperial.

The Ape, though terrified at first, summons, in time, a little courage, when, spurred thereto by his ambitions, and—as being the most nimble of all beasts in the forest—is deputed to steal "those royal ornaments"; but the pair are soon disputing as to which of them shall wield the sovereignty; the Ape claiming that he was "born to be a kingly sovereign"—a plea which Alençon might well urge, whose three brothers, in turn, wore the crown of France, and one of them that of Poland, for a while. The Fox, however, as Burghley himself might well have done, claims that, since the situation springs from his own wit, policy, and wisdom, he is obviously the one fittest to govern. Willing, nevertheless—as Elizabeth's Lord Treasurer certainly, and characteristically, was—to forgo the outward shows of sovereignty, provided that he exercised, though *sub rosa*,

its functions, the Fox consents, in this matter, to yield to his Ape,

Upon condition that ye ruled be

In all affairs and counselled by me—

whereupon the pair proceed to mix among the other denizens of the forest, including the Sheep and the Boar—who are Hatton and Oxford—and to win over, by fair words, as many beasts as they may ; in all of which manœuvres the Ape is

Strongly encouraged by the crafty fox.

Their plot succeeds completely ; and the Ape, " thus seized of the royal throne " appoints, for the protection of his person,

a warlike equipage
Of foreign beasts ;

otherwise a swarm of French courtiers, soldiers, and adventurers, which, as Spenser thus warns his readers, would follow inevitably and swiftly upon Alençon's elevation to the state of England's King-Consort.

Alençon, the Ape, now rules, and tyrannizes at will, although every " practise sly," and " counter-point of cunning policy," must first pass through and be shaped by Reynard's brain and hand—he being the " kingdom's corner stone," the guide in whom, by reason of " his long experience," the Monkey could repose full confidence. Both beasts now begin to wax rich ; the " cloak " beneath which the Fox conceals his increasing hoard of treasure being " care of thrif and husbandry " ; and it is, of course, historically true that Burghley's settled policy was as parsimonious as the circumstances of the Lion's court would allow

—the Lion, or rather Lioness, let me add, being Queen Elizabeth's designation in that interesting allegorical scene, towards the close of *As You Like It*, IV. iii., wherein the royal and aged feline—" her udders all drawn dry "—crouches threateningly beside the sleeping Oliver¹—who is, in that episode, Lord Oxford himself, brother to Orlando, who, in the earlier version, at least, is none other than Alençon.

While the Fox thus rears his tower, and fills his chests, the princes and peers of the land are hard put to it to maintain their fitting states ; and there follows a passage which doubles in import, when it is remembered that the ancestral home of the de Veres, Castle Hedingham, in Essex, had been falling into utter disrepair during the 'eighties ; and in 1591—the year of publication of this poem, first drafted some twelve years before —had been alienated, by Lord Oxford, to Burghley himself, and to the Lord Treasurer's three grand-daughters! Only a short time before Lord Burghley took over the castle, his son-in-law issued a warrant authorizing the destruction or dismantling of a part of the main fabric, and many of the outbuildings.

This is the corresponding passage in *Mother Hubberd*, which may have been included in the original draft, but was, quite possibly, added at some time later, before the manuscript went to the printer.

The whiles the princes palaces fell fast
To ruin (for what thing can ever last ?)
And whilst the other peers for poverty,
Were forced their ancient houses to let lie,

¹ Oliver is here topically Oxford, though historically, in the play as a whole, he is Orlando-Alençon's brother, Anjou (Henry III.), whose nickname at the English court was " Loryer " or " l'Olivier. "

And their old castles to the ground to fall
 Which their forefathers famous over-all,
 Had founded for the kingdom's ornament,
 And for their memory's long monument,
 But he no count made of nobility,
 Nor the wild beasts whom arms did glorify,
 The realm's chief strength and garland of the Crown.
 All these through feigned crimes he thrust adown,
 Or made them dwell in darkness of disgrace ;
 For none, but whom he list, might come in place.

This is a terrible indictment of the Lord Treasurer—an attack so direct, trenchant, and unmistakable that one wonders to what extent it was justified ; and can only marvel that such lines were allowed to be published and circulated in 1591, when Elizabeth's minister, though an old man, when judged by Elizabethan reckoning, was still a power in the land, and had yet seven years of life before him. No less stern, moreover, is the passage that follows, wherein the first line and the last are both true of Burghley, who, admittedly, cared little for soldiers or scholars, and was too much exalted in the queen's confidence to be safely, or effectually, complained of. Even the visit of the "Sheep," Sir Christopher Hatton, to court, to claim the Fox's promise of friendship, is probably veridical history, for, as Greenlaw reminds us (p. 109), the protests of Elizabeth's "faithful sheep," against the proposed marriage, had brought him into disgrace with his royal mistress :

For on a time the sheep, to whom of yore
 The fox had promised of friendship store,
 What time the ape the kingdom first did gain,
 Came to the court, her case there to complain.

"High Jove, incensed by these mischievous proceedings in this "troubled kingdom of wild beasts," which is England, sends down to earth his azure-winged messenger, Mercury, for the punishment of these "treachous viles." Clearing with speed

The liquid clouds and lucid firmament,

He descends, and doffing his immortal beauty, comes to the palace, where

standing by the gate in strange disguise
 He gan inquire of some in secret wise,
 Both of the king, and of his government,
 And of the fox, and his false blandishment,
 And evermore he heard each one complain
 Of foul abuses both in realm and reign.

Comparing those words with Spenser's earlier statement, that without the Fox's goodwill no courtier, nor none but whom he list might come in place—

I sometimes wonder whether this winged messenger of the gods, thus strangely disguised within the precincts of the palace, and concerning himself thus with the doings of King and Fox, and with those "foul abuses both in realm and reign," is not a picture of the azure-winged poet, "Shakespeare" himself, whom Spenser, in the next poem that we shall examine, describes, almost openly, as a shiny-winged, silver bright Butterfly, "Clarion," painted with a thousand colours—a creature, in common with Spenser himself, and with Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, "lacking advancement," and grieving over the "cursed spite" of a destiny that bid

him, of all men, set right, if he but could, those many things that were "rotten in the State of Denmark."¹ Upon disgrace and flight of the Ape, the poem closes, and with abject apology of the Fox to the Lion,

full lowly creeping
T' excuse his former treason and abusion,
And turning all unto the ape's confusion—

from all which there emerges, with perfect clarity, Spenser's opinion, that Lord Burghley, having hoped to rule England through Alençon—as Elizabeth's husband—more effectively than would ever be possible to him through Elizabeth alone, had encouraged the marriage, until—the game being manifestly up—he saw that it was time to make his humble peace with the queen, casting, the while, all possible blame upon the now permanently departed Valois prince. Spenser concludes with an apology for the blunt telling of *Mother Hubberd's Tale*:

So Mother Hubberd her discourse did end,
Which pardon me, if I amiss have penned ;
For weak was my remembrance it to hold,
And bad her tongue that it so bluntly told.

The reader, I hope, will share my impression that—beside Elizabeth, Burghley, and Alençon—Spenser, when he wrote these blunt and daring verses, had Lord Oxford also very vividly in mind.

¹ Cf. the disguised Mercury with the disguised Duke in *Measure for Measure* (1582), who also watched "in secret wise" the country's government.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MEANING OF "MUIOPOTMOS"

A kind of sequel to *Mother Hubberd's Tale*—The Butterfly, "Clarion," is Lord Oxford—Spenser's vision of the Earl as lyric poet—Eulogy of him as writer—Oxford as captivator of dames—Jealousy of Venus—Elizabeth—"Children of the Spring"—Links with *Hundred Sundrie Floures*—The Queen torments Astery (Anne Cecil)—And banishes her from Oxford—References to Oxford's travels abroad—Clarion's delight in the land and arts of Italy—His return to disaster in England—The Butterfly is caught in the Spider's web (Burghley)—Burghley's hatred of Oxford due to the jealousy of Elizabeth against his daughter Anne—Links with Olivia—Elizabeth in *Twelff Nignt*—Links with Burghley as Polonius—Clarion's undoing is his careless freedom from suspicion—Like Hamlet "generous and free from all contriving"—Agnol (Aragnol) (Aragnée), the Spider, is the Fox of *Mother Hubberd's Tale*—Death of "Our pleasant Willy"—Link with Pandarus (Burghley) in *Twixt and Cressida*—Oxford was crushed by the combined enmities of Burghley and the queen.

In the volume of poems which he published in 1591, Spenser included, besides *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, a versified lament entitled *Muiopotmos*, to which Mr. Philip Henderson, in his Introduction to the "Everyman" edition, assigns the date 1590. There I am with him ; but when he proceeds to intimate that the poem has no directly human or topical subject, but "inhabits that rare non-human realm in which Spenser delighted,"¹ far from the intrigues and passions of men, "I at once join issue ; being firmly convinced that *Muiopotmos* affords yet another proof of the poet's hatred of Lord Burghley, whose dupe and victim, in this instance, is not Alençon, but Alençon's former friend, the Valentine to his Proteus, in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, namely,

¹ Elizabethan writers generally did *not* "delight" in any such fantasies nine times out of ten, some double-meaning or topicality was in their minds.

Lord Oxford himself.¹ "The Fate of the Butterfly," which is the poem's sub-title, I read as a sequel to that named satire made clear, I hope, the presence, to Spenser's mind, while he wrote it, of Burghley's dealings with his son-in-law, which are strongly suggested, by the presence of certain Hamlet-Polonius motives, and also by the unmistakable references to the sales of Oxford's landed estates. Corroborative evidence of this sequence of ideas in *Muiopotmos* may be traced, I think, in its dedication by Spenser "to the most fair and virtuous lady, the Lady Carey";² since that noble dame had, for husband, Sir George Carey, eldest son of Lord Hunsdon, which last I take to have been a personal friend of Lord Oxford's, after having had the young Earl in his service, during the Rising in the North in 1570. Lord Hunsdon was, as Lord Oxford had also been, a supporter of the Alençon marriage; and it is further significant that, from 1578 to 1583, Lord Hunsdon occupied King's Place at Hackney, which was to be Lord Oxford's home, from the autumn of 1596 until his death in 1604.

The poem, *Muiopotmos*, as its opening stanza tells us, sings of a "deadly dolorous debate" between "two mighty ones of great estate" and "proud ambition," whose enmities, beginning with "small jar," increase to "heart-swelling hate," which breaks out, at last,

¹ If my memory serves well, both Mrs. E. H. Clark and Mr. Gerald Phillips had called my attention to the identity of Oxford with *Muiopotmos*.
² Sir George Carey succeeded to the Barony on his father's death in 1596. Lady Carey, *née* Alice Spenser, was a daughter of Sir J. Spenser of Althorpe, a kinsman of Edmund Spenser. Her sister, Anne, married Ferdinando, Earl of Derby, thus providing a link with "Shakespeare's" company, the Chamberlain players—Ferdinando being Lord Strange until 1593. (Note kindly supplied by Captain Ward.)

into "open war." In the second stanza, Spenser makes appeal to Melpomene,

the mournfulst Muse of nine!
That wort'st the tragic stage for to direct,
to aid him in revealing faithfully the means whereby

sad Clarion did at last decline
To lowest wretchedness. And is there then
Such rancour in the hearts of mighty men?

This Clarion had been the most promising of his kind.

Of all the race of silver-winged flies
Which do possess the empire of the air,
Betwixt the centred earth and azure skies,
Was none more favourable, nor more fair,
Whilst heaven did favour his felicities,
Than Clarion, the eldest son and heir
Of Muscarol.

'This eldest son and heir, moreover, was not only the fairest and most "favourable," he was also the stoutest-hearted :

Full of brave courage and of hardihead
Above th' ensample of his equal peers—

all of which fits Lord Oxford correctly, who, as son and heir of a great nobleman, and as royal ward, had come to Gloriana's court under auspices so favourable,

That he in time would sure prove such an one,
As should be worthy of his father's throne.

This "butterfly," Spenser tells us,

so swift and nimble was of flight,
That from this lower tract he dared to stie
Up to the clouds, and thence with pinions light
To mount aloft unto the crystal sky,
Whence, down descending, he along would fly,
Upon the streaming rivers sport to find ;
And oft would dare to tempt the troublous wind.

In this picture of the butterfly daring, upon his frail pinions,

To mount aloft unto the crystal sky,

we have, as I see it, Spenser's vision of the proud young peer winging his first flights as lyric poet—a concept matched exactly, by George Chapman, when, many years later, he inserted into *Busy D'Ambois*, II. ii., the passage which, long ago, I interpreted as a comment upon Oxford-Shakespeare's lyrical ecstasies in *Twelfth Night*—poetry :

Here high and glorious it did contend
To wash the heaven and make the stars more pure,
And here so low, it leaves the mud of hell
To every common view—

the words "low" and "mud of hell," here rebuking the too sudden and unworthy descent, from the lyrical exaltations of Viola, to the low comedy of the drunken kitchen-scene. The similarity of phrasing is here most remarkable ; for Spenser, like Chapman, speaks of Clarion as often "down descending" from heaven, "to find sport," or, in plainer English, to decline rest-

fully from poetical flights, to the harmless fun—*pace* Chapman—of those comedy episodes aimed usually at rival courtiers, and described elsewhere, by Spenser, as "kindly counter under mimic shade," the work of "our pleasant Willy."

Young Clarion's zest for movement and adventure, however, is not satisfied—mere butterfly though he be—with such flights as the home-land Muses can afford ; and when the sun is high in heaven, the young nobleman's

vauntful lustibead

After his guise did cast abroad to fare.

He dons, accordingly, by way of protection, a breast-plate of the Achilles kind—Achilles stands, in part, for Oxford in the later scenes of *Troilus and Cressida*—and throws about his shoulders

An hairy hide of some wild beast, whom he
In savage forest by adventure slew—

that beast, I opine, being the boar, prominent always in the coats-of-arms of the Earls of Oxford—Oxford himself was the boar in the court menagerie—and recalling to Spenser's readers the still-remembered adventure which befell Edward de Vere's own father, the sixteenth Earl, in France, in 1544, when, to the "distracted amazements" of the French nobility, who were present, he, being alone on foot, and armed only with a rapier, slew a boar, which, according to a temporary account of the incident, "was a beast both huge and fierce." Here Spenser, to make identity of Clarion, the Butterfly, with de Vere, the Boar, still more indisputably clear, shows us the winged insect

fastening upon his head a helmet tusked upon either side,

Like two sharp spears his enemies to gore

So did this fly outstretch his fearful horns—

a passage which recalls James Lee's post-Armada poem of 1588, wherein he describes Lord Oxford, standing upon the deck of his ship, during the naval action that was fought, at the end of July, between Plymouth and the North Foreland :

De Vere, whose fame and loyalty hath pearst
The Tuscan clime, and through the Belgike lands
By winged fame for valour is rehearst,
Like warlike Mars upon the hatches stands,
His tusked boar gan foam for inward ire,
While Pallas filled his breast with warlike fire.

There follows a lyrical eulogy of the pinions upon which this mystic Clarion flew :

shiny wings as silver bright
Painted with thousand colours, passing far
All painters skill he did about him dight

—Spenser, I think, by these thousand hues that "pass all painters skill," having in mind the all-comprehending genius of "Shakespeare," not merely as poet and master of words, but as comedic and potentially tragic writer, equally skilled in the delineation of every shade of human character. Name whom you will, among us airy rangers of the sky, and howsoever well pinioned we be,

Yet sure those wings were fairer manifold :—

and let the reader, please, not fail to set Spenser's generous eulogies against the grudging and reluctant praise of Jonson and Chapman, both splenetically jealous of their rival.

Unquestionably the court beauties sided with Spenser here.

Full many a lady fair, in court full oft
Beholding them, him secretly envide,
And wished that two such fans, so silken soft
And golden fair, her love would her provide,

Here we are close again to authentic and recorded history ; for Lord St. John had written to the Earl of Rutland, in Paris, in 1571 :

The earl of Oxford hath gotten him a wife—or at the least a wife hath caught him ; this is mistress Anne Cecil, whereunto the Queen hath given her consent, and the which hath caused *great weeping, wailing, and sorrowful cheer of those that had hoped to have that golden day.*

Nor should it be forgotten that Mistress Anne Cecil, who "caught" the Earl of Oxford, was the lady concerned in a projected match, in 1569, between herself and Spenser's particular patron and friend, Philip Sidney—an episode dramatized, as I maintain, by Lord Oxford himself, in certain scenes of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, wherein Slender and Anne Page are, historically, Sidney and Anne Cecil.¹

Hereabouts, as might confidently have been expected, in addition to the "Nymphs," or Maids of Honour, there comes into the allegory Venus herself, otherwise Queen Elizabeth ; and with her the gentle nymph, Astery,

¹ First suggested by J. T. Looney, in *The Golden Hind*, October 1922.

excelling all the crew
In courteous usage and unstained hue—

a name and person standing, undoubtedly, for Anne Cecil.¹

Here follow two verses so important that I must quote them in full. The gentle Astery,

being nimbler jointed than the rest,
And more industrious, gathered more store
Of the field's honour than the others best ;
Which in their secret hearts envying sore,
Told Venus, when her as the worthiest
She praised, that *Cupid* (as they heard before)
*Did lend her secret aid in gathering
Into her lap the children of the spring.*

Whereof *the goddess gathering jealous fear*,
Nor yet unmindful how not long ago
Her son to Psyche secret love did bear,
And long it close concealed, till mickle woe
Thereof arose, and many a rueful tear,
Reason with sudden rage did overgo ;
And giving hasty credit to the accuser,
Was led away of them that did abuse her.

Now all this, dealing, as it does, with delicate and dangerous matters, is purposely left vague and obscure by the poet ; yet concerning its general purport and intention there can be, I submit, no doubt at all. We have here Spenser's version of the same story, that we were listening to, a moment ago ; namely, the heart-burnings and jealousies of those Maids of Honour who to be Anne Cecil.

had hoped secretly for that golden day which would unite them to de Vere ; and who straightway bore to the queen spiteful tales concerning their successful rival, who, with Cupid's¹ secret aid, was gathering into her lap "the children of the spring," which I take to mean the children of her husband, de Vere, for whom the word, or name, "Spring," seems to have been often used. The goddess, Gloriana, lends ear to these tales, which not only beget in her a "jealous fear," but also remind her how, "not long ago,"

Her son to Psyche secret love did bear.

And since it is a crucial part of my argument that, at some time during the first half of the fifteen-seventies, the queen did actually bear a son, of which Lord Oxford was the father, I suggest that the bold Spenser makes here as open an allusion to that mystery of State as his prudence, which was less than his courage, will permit him. Every line of this, moreover, directly corroborates what Lord Oxford himself has told us, in those revealing *Meritum petere, grave Flores*—namely, that behind his long and heart-rending troubles with Anne loomed always the passionate, though darkly concealed, jealousies of the queen, who, as Spenser, in common with Oxford, now proceeds to tell us, banished the wretched Anne for a "pretended crime."

Eftsoons *that damsel*, by her heavenly might,
She turned into a winged butterfly,
In the wide air to make her wand'ring flight ;
And all those flowers, with which so plenteously

¹ See *post*, Chapter IX., where Amoret, in *The Faerie Queene*, will be shown

d'Amour " or " Shield of Love."

Her lap she filled had, that bred her spight,
She placed in her wings, for memory
Of her pretended crime, though crime none were ;
Since which that fly them in her wings doth bear.

Here, again, is corroborated the story told in *The Floures*, wherein Oxford, speaking through his lady's mouth, makes her bewail banishment from her dear love's presence :

My chosen pheare, my gemme, and all my joye,
Is kept perforce out of my daily sight.

But there remains more yet to be read into this stanza already packed, though we see it to be, with import.

We are here plainly told, that Venus-Elizabeth's "spight" against the gentle damsel, Astery, was "bred" by the "flowers," with which the nymph had filled her lap ; and that these caused the "jealous fear" and "sudden rage" which prompted the Goddess to transform Astery into a butterfly. But what are "flowers," in this pretty pastime of hide-and-seek through contemporary Elizabethan allegory, to which Spenser thus characteristically invites us ? Surely they are nothing else but children, as we have seen, again and again, when discussing the "flower, purple with love's wound," of *Venus and Adonis* and of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, both of which revealed themselves, upon examination, as a baby boy, of which Oxford and Elizabeth were the parents. The fundamental cause, then, of Queen Elizabeth's jealousy against Astery (Anne Cecil), as here revealed by Spenser, was the birth of a child, or of children, in respect of

which the angry Goddess alleged against the lady a " pretended crime, though crime none were," and imposed upon her a "wandering flight," including banishment from her lord.

But we have been told, in an earlier stanza, that the jealous nymphs, or Maids of Honour, had accused Astery, to Venus, of

Into her lap the *children of the spring*,
gathering

and now we are told that those "children" are flowers. These "flower children," then, are the cause of the trouble, and of the false accusations that are borne by the Queen, and by her ladies, against Anne ; so that here we have full corroboration of the argument I have put forward in several of my books, besides this one, that the queen's jealousy—to which we may now add the envy of her Maids of Honour—over Oxford and his wife, accounts for the alienation between these two, brought to a head, unquestionably, by those slanderous accusations of infidelity, and of the illegitimacy of their child, launched in the court against Anne—charges which caused Lord Oxford, on his return from abroad in 1576, to leave his wife for many years, and which caused him also—until he knew better—to dramatize her, again and again, sometimes as the faithless woman, Cressida, and sometimes as the faithful, though wrongly accused, one, such as Hero, and Hermione, in *Much Ado* and *A Winter's Tale*.

That the pitiful story, which we are here unravelling, connects itself, in Spenser's mind, with Oxford's travels abroad, is unanswerably proved by the next stanzas, which describe Clarion as "addressing himself

to his journey," and feeding bounteously upon the pleasures of the countries over which he flew.

The woods, the rivers, and the meadows green,
With his air-cutting wings he measured wide,
Nor did he leave the mountains bare unseen,
Nor the rank grassy fens' delights untried.
Might please his fancy, nor him cause t' abide,
His choiceful sense with every change doth fit.
No common things may please a wavering wit.

Those " grassy fens " I take to be the low-lying Flanders ; while the " mountains bare " are the Alps and Apennines, on either side of which, set among " lavish nature," lay spread, for de Vere's delight, the manifold arts of Italy, over which the Traveller's " choiceful sense " flitted and hovered during the years 1575-76 :

And Art, with her contending, doth aspire
To excel the natural with made delights ;
And all that fair or pleasant may be found,
In riotous excess doth there abound.

The case, surely, is conclusive and unanswerable. The winged butterfly, " Clarion," is Oxford ; the " country wide," across which he flitted, tasting its every delight, are the fair lands of France, and more especially Italy, which de Vere travelled over, from Venice and Florence, down to Syracuse and Palermo in Sicily ; and what else should be those " gay gardens " and " made delights," to which love of nature and of art have drawn him, if not the orchards, gardens, pictures, palaces, and temples of a land described by " Shakespeare's " passionate

admirer, Swinburne, as " the heavenliest part of earth " ?

There follow four more stanzas concerning the avidity with which Clarion's " glutton sense " pastures upon " the pleasures of each place " ; leading up to this one, which happily epitomizes the powerful influence that such dear delights, and the " riotous suffrances " of Italy, will exercise, in permanence, upon a mind always, and rightly, a little scornful of the state of contemporary English culture, when compared with that which existed across the Channel.

And evermore with most variety
And change of sweetness (for all change is sweet)
He casts his glutton sense to satisfy,
Now sucking of the sap of herb most sweet.
And then again he turneth to his play,
To spoil the pleasures of that paradise ;
The wholesome sage, and lavender still gray,
Rank-smelling rue, and cummin good for eyes,
The roses reigning in the pride of May.

Years ago now—when already I knew the identity of " Shakespeare " ; although I had not read, as yet, these lines of Spenser—wandering, with intense delight, through ancient Italian cities and towns, in whose lush and opulent gardens the crimson roses were " reigning in the pride of May," I became profoundly aware that the author of *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Merchant of Venice*, with just such " change of sweetness " as that which Spenser approves, must, in very fact, for their writing, have " spoiled the pleasures of that paradise " known as Italy ; for although, in characteristic Elizabethan fashion, the deeper import of both those plays

and of others with them, is to be sought, and found, in Oxford's own life and among the men, women, and events of Gloriana's court, and of the courts of Edinburgh and Paris, it is, none the less, certain that "Shakespeare," as poet, fired his impulse, both lyrical and dramatic, in the æsthetic joys, and enthralling illuminations of French and Italian architecture and art.

And whatso else of virtue good or ill
Grew in this garden, fetcht from far away,
Of every one he takes, and tastes at will,
And on their pleasures greedily doth prey.
Then, when he hath both played and fed his fill,
In the warm sun he doth himself embay,
And there him rests in riotous sufficance
Of all his gladfulness and kingly joyance.

What more felicity can fall to creature
Than to enjoy delight with liberty,
And to be lord of all the works of Nature.

Are not these lines almost an epitome of those plays in which, with more than "kingly joyance," and to our unmeasured benefit and delight, the world's matchless master of words proved himself to be, within his chosen medium of expression, "lord of all the works of Nature." But, continues Spenser, in words which may well have been consciously present to Lord Oxford's mind, when he wrote the two Sonnets XXXIII. and XXXIV., beginning respectively :

Full many a glorious morning have I seen—

and

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day—

there is not, nor can be, any permanence in human felicity.

But what on earth can long abide in state,
Or who can him assure of happy day,
Sith morning fair may bring foul evening late,
And least mishap the most bliss alter may?

For thousand perils lie in close await
About us daily, to work our decay ;
That none except a god, or god him guide,
May them avoid, or remedy provide.

And whatso heavens in their secret doom
Ordained have, how can frail fleshly wight
Forecast, but it must needs to issue come ?

Before even Lord Oxford, then upon his homeward journey, in the spring of 1576, had left France for England ; and while yet he was rejoicing in the news of the birth to him of a daughter, Lady Elizabeth Vere, the rumour reached him, from England, that the child's legitimacy was being openly called in question, and that he was being laughed at, throughout the English court, for a cuckold ! In a fury of rage he hastened home ; was beset by pirates in the Channel ; and, having reached London, at last, refused to see either Lord Burghley or his wife ; but went straight to the queen ; thus setting in motion a train of events which will be dramatized, not only in the two plays already mentioned in this connection—I mean *Much Ado* and *Winter's Tale*—but also in *Troilus and Cressida*, and in the *Mariana* (Anne Cecil) episodes of *Measure for Measure*.

Who may escape his destiny, or avert the doom decreed ?

Not thou, O Clarion ! though fairest thou
Of all thy kind, unhappy happy fly,
Whose cruel fate is woven even now
Of Jove's own hand, to work thy misery.

Let no reader fail to observe with what truthful intimacy Shakespeare's brother poet, and sympathetic admirer and friend, leads us into the veridical atmosphere of such wistful works as *Twelfth Night*, and those unhappy, happy sonnets, in which Edward de Vere unlocks his heart.

Already, alas, the spider is busy upon the web in which the butterfly shall be taken :

It fortunèd (as heavens had behight)
That in this garden, where young Clarion
Was wont to solace him, a wicked wight,
The foe of fair things, th' author of confusion,
The shame of nature, the bondsman of spite,
Had lately built his hateful mansion ;
And, lurking closely, in await now lay,
How he might any in his trap betray.

Concerning the purport of this stanza, there cannot, I think, be any doubt. The "hateful mansion" lately built, and the garden wherein young Clarion was wont to find solace from care and trouble, sometimes in the company of Anne Cecil herself, was no palace nor garden of Italy, but the mansions and pleasaunces, famous throughout England, of Cecil House and Theobalds, which Burghley had lately built ; the author and contriver of all this boding mischief, the wicked "bondslave of spite," "shame of nature," and "foe of fair things," being none other than Lord Burghley himself, whose mind, admittedly, like that of Polonius

THE MEANING OF "MUIOPOTMOS"

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in the *Hamlet* play, is closed to the beauties of art, and, ¹¹³ Spenser here sees and draws it, is wholly given over to such schemings as may further his own personal aggrandizement, and advance that of his country, which, knave though he be at heart—as Spenser sees him—in his own narrow and egotistical fashion, he loves. Irksome to the old lord is the presence, "in this fair plot," of

the joyous butterfly . . . dispacing to and fro,
Fearless of foes and hidden jeopardy—

strongly antipathetic, this high-born and brilliant youth, whom, for family ambition's sake, the Lord Treasurer has made his son-in-law.

His heart did yearn against his hated foe,
And bowels so with rankling poison swelled,
That scarce the skin the strong contagion held.

Nor does Spenser leave us, for a moment, in doubt concerning Burghley's reasons for his hatred of Oxford.

The cause why he this fly so maliced

is to be found in the triangular feuds and love-affairs of Elizabeth, Anne, and Edward de Vere, added to the latter's deep dislike of Lady Burghley, his mother-in-law :

The cause why he this fly so maliced
Was . . . that his mother, which him bore and bred,
The most fine-fingered workwoman on ground,
Arachne, by his means was vanquished
Of Pallas, and in her own skill confound,
When she with her for excellence contended,
That wrought her shame and sorrow never ended.

For . . . the presumptuous damsel rashly dared

The goddess self to challenge to the field,
And to compare with her in curious skil
Of works with loom, with needle, and with quill.

Arachne may be, in part, Lady Burghley, who was jealous of the Queen's affection for her attractive ward,¹ and was strongly disliked by Lord Oxford; but, at bottom, Arachne is, once more, Anne Cecil, who has presumed to challenge a goddess's might, by matching, in several manners, her "curious skill" against that of the queen herself, whose identity is plainly hinted at twice over, by the use of the name Minerva, or "Dame Pallas," which is also the name bestowed upon her by Lord Oxford himself, writing as *Meritum petere, grave*, those verses in "praise of a Countesse"—the young Earl's own Countess, Anne Cecil—which we were examining in an earlier chapter of this book. Those lines run thus :

For *Pallas* first, whose filed flowing skill

Should guyde my pen some pleasant words to write,
With angry mood hath fram'd a froward will,

To dashe devise as oft as I endite.

For why? if once my Ladie's gifts were knownen,
Pallas should loose the prayses of hir own.

And bloody *Mars* by chaunge of his delight
Hath made Jove's daughter now mine enemie.
In whose conceipt my Countesse shines so bright,
That *Venus* pynes for burning jelousie.

Dame *Cynthia* holds in her horned head,
For feare to loose by like comparison.

Here Pallas, *Cynthia*, and *Venus* are just three names for Queen Elizabeth, who is described by Oxford, precisely as she is described by Spenser in *Muiopotmos*, as being venomously envious and jealous, directly "my ladie's" (*i.e.* Anne's) gifts and attractions were brought into comparison and competition with her own. These analogies are, in my judgment, alone sufficient to identify, beyond dispute, the triply-named goddess, the rival women, and the *Butterfly*. Arachne, meanwhile, is weaving goodly stuff :

A goodly work, full fit for kingly bowers;
Such as Dame Pallas, such as Envy pale,
That all good things with venomous tooth devours,
Could not accuse.

Pallas attempts to emulate her.

She smote the ground, the which straight forth did yield
A fruitful olive tree, with berries spread,
That all the gods admired: then all the story
She compassed with a wreath of olives hoary.

Amongst these leaves she made a butterfly,
With excellent device and wondrous sleight,
Fluttring among the olives wantonly,
That seemed to live, so like it was in sight.
The velvet nap which on his wings doth lie,
The silken down with which his back is dight,
His broad outstretched horns, his hairy thighs,
His glorious colours and his glistering eyes.

¹ Gilbert Talbot to Earl of Shrewsbury, May 11, 1572: "My Lady Burghley unwisely hath declared herself, as it were, jealous (*i.e.* of the Queen's 'delight' in Oxford) which is come to the queen's ear; whereat she hath been not a little offended with her" (Ward's *Oxford*, p. 78).

All this becomes interesting, when it is remembered that Olivia is the name given to Queen Elizabeth, in

the comedy *Twelfth Night*; ¹ so that the "olives" among which the butterfly wantonly fluttered appear to be these lesser Olivias of the parent tree, the Maids of Honour of Gloriana's court, described, in an earlier stanza, as Nymphs. That Olivia "made the butterfly" by training up her favourite ward, from his thirteenth year onwards, in all court attainments and devices—as also by encouraging and assisting him in the early practice of letters—my other books have conclusively shown. As for this butterfly's "glorious colours," the "velvet nap" upon his wings, and the "silken down" upon his back, these picture unmistakably the richly coloured silks, satins, and velvets in which Lord Oxford, as a young man, had loved to deck himself, ² despite, I suppose, the expressed disapproval of his powerful father-in-law, Polonus, who was probably wont to adjure his son-in-law—as we know that he did his son, Laertes—not to express his habit in fancy :

rich, not gaudy
For the apparel oft proclaims the man—

even the inner man, which it was the settled policy of Polonius to conceal, if he might, from the world's too prying eyes. Whereupon Burghley-Polonius himself comes again into the story, in the guise of Aragon—French, Araignée the spider—son of, or, more historically, Minister of Arachne—now become Elizabeth—whose once-fair corpse is turned by envy to a mere

¹ Henry III. of France, part-original of Orsino, was "L'Olivier" at the English court. Rosalind-Elizabeth's woodland cottage in *As You Like It* is set about by olive trees.

² The richness of his poetical fancy is also aimed at, as I suppose.

"bag of venom," while her "white straight legs," with long passage of time, are

altered

To crooked crawling shanks, of marrow emptied—
a phrase which carries a double reminder—first of the ulcer on the leg, from which Elizabeth suffered for years, and, secondly, of Polonius's "most weak hams," as the Prince dubbed them, in his bitter mood. This "cursed creature," Aragnol the spider,

So soon as Clarion he did behold,
His heart with vengeful malice inly swelt;
And weaving straight a net with many a fold
About the cave in which he lurking dwelt,
With fine small cords about it stretched wide,
So finely spun that scarce they could be spied.

Not any damsel, which her vaunteth most
Of skilful Knitting of soft silken twine,
Nor any weaver, which his work doth boast
In diaper, in damask or in line,
Nor any skilled in workmanship embost
Nor any skilled in loops of fing'ring fine,
Might in their divers cunning ever dare
With this so curious network to compare.

Spenser, when writing these verses, while the Lord Treasurer, though with "weak hams," could crawl, nevertheless, awhile between earth and heaven, was playing a dangerous game; because, granted that his meaning is here made wilfully obscure, the purport of his lines seems clearly to emerge—and it is this, that before the ageing statesman had been long in relation with his brilliant and witty, though erratic and headstrong, son-in-law, he conceived against him, as Spenser

believed, a vengefully malicious hatred, and proceeded accordingly, with cunning skill, to contrive a "curious network" of snares, for the capture, and ultimate destruction, of his too trusting, and, as yet, wholly unsuspecting victim.

This same he did apply

For to entrap the careless Clarion,

That ranged eachwhere without suspicion,

and who, "regardless of his governance," recked nothing of "fatal future woe."

Suspicion of friend, nor fear of foe,

That hazarded his health had he at all,

But walked at will, and wander'd to and fro,

In the pride of his freedom principal—

Never dreaming that a wily antagonist lurked "covertly" in his way, the careless butterfly winged straight "towards those parts" where lay hidden his "hateful enemy," who, "filled with hope," and with secret joy therefore, upgathered himself more closely into his den,

that his deceitful train
By his there being might not be bewrayed,

Ne any noise nor any motion made.

Passage after passage in *Hamlet*—if my reading of that play be accepted—confirms Spenser's words in *Muiopotmos*. Rosencrantz, in iii. i., tells the King and Queen, in the presence of Burghley-Polonius, that the Prince, in conversation with Guildenstern and himself, was

Most like a gentleman . . . of our demands
Most free in his reply—

and a few moments later in the same scene, the King and Polonius, like Spenser's Spider-Burghley within his web, are hiding behind the arras, for the better entrapping of *Hamlet*, and are drawing the hapless Anne-Ophelia also into the meshes of this plot. The Queen's principal minister—and Gertrude is here, unquestionably, Elizabeth—will

be placed, so please you, in the ear

Of all their conference;

and in iv. vii. the King himself will hatch a diabolical plot for the secret destruction of Hamlet, who,

being remiss,
Most generous and free from all contriving,
Will not peruse the foils.

Thus viewed, it becomes clear that *Muiopotmos* is simply the *Hamlet* story told over again.

In the next stanza, the fifth from the end of the poem, Spenser changes his metaphor; and tells us openly that the individual whom he had designated, hitherto, as Aragnol (Araignée, the Spider), is the same creature that he had portrayed in *Mother Hubbard's Tale* as the Fox, otherwise Burghley.

Like as wily fox, that having spied
Where on a sunny bank the lambs do play,
Full closely creeping by the hinder side,
Lies in ambuscement of his hoped prey,
Ne stirreth limb ; till, seeing ready tide,
He rusheth forth, and snatcheth quite away
One of the little younglings unawares.
So to his work Aragnol him prepares.

For a tale so sad, continues the poet,

where shall I find lamentable cries,
And mournful tunes enough my grief to show ?
Help, O thou tragic Muse ! me to devise.
Notes sad enough t' express this bitter throe.

Who can read these lines, and not, with "Shakespeare's" tragic muse in mind, recall Hamlet's lines (v. ii.) :

O good Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me !
Absent thee from felicity a while,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story.

As for the closing couplet concerning "the dreary stound" that has "deprived us"—*i.e.* Spenser and his friends—of all happiness, is not his theme identical, not only with the closing scene of *Hamlet* but also with that of his own earlier words, in "The Tears of the Muses":

Our pleasant Willy, ah ! is dead of late
With whom all joy and jolly merriment
Is also deaded, and in dolour drent.

In the one lament this Spenser group is "deaded" with "pleasant Willy," of "joy and jolly merriment"; in the other, that same group is "deprived of all happiness," by the undoing of Clarion. What other inference, all circumstances considered, can possibly be drawn than this, that "Willy" and the butterfly,

Clarion, are one and the same person, namely Lord Oxford or "Will. Shakespeare,"

the man whom Nature self had made
To mock herself, and Truth to imitate
With kindly counter under mimic shade—

whereupon let me point out that the closing lines of *Troilus and Cressida* provide valuable corroborative evidence; for Troilus's (Oxford's) last words in the play are an indictment of Pandarus-Burghley, exactly comparable with the bitter denunciations of that same Lord Treasurer made by Spenser, in the closing stanzas of *Muiopomos*.

(*As Troilus is going out, enter, from the other side, Pandarus.*)

PAND. But hear you, hear you !
TROI. Hence, broker-lackey ! ignominy and shame

PAND. Pursue thy life and live aye with thy name.

PAND. A goodly med'cine for my aching bones ! O
*world ! world ! world !*¹ thus is the poor agent
despised . . . why should our endeavour be so
loathed, and the performance so loathed ? what
loved, and the performance so loathed ? what
verse for it ? what instance for it ? Let me see.

Full merrily *the humble-bee doth sing*,
Till he hath lost his honey and his sting ;
And being once subdued in armed tail,
Sweet honey and sweet notes together fail.

Now as we saw, when examining *Love's Labour's Lost*, iii. i., Armado's trio—"the fox, the ape, and the humble-bee"—seemed, obviously, to be Burghley, Simier, and Oxford; and here in *Troilus* is the last of the three again described as a humble-bee, in verses which epitomize Spenser's poem, since here is Pandarus—

¹ Observe the historically characteristic tautology of Burghley-Polonius.

THE MEANING OF "MUIPOTMOS"
In "Tears of the Muses," we are told that Willy

Doth rather choose to sit in idle cell;

and here, in *Muiopotmos*, is Clarion written of, as finding,

at last, " all his youngthly forces idly spent."

From a comparison of these poems by Spenser with those by Lord Oxford and others, that we examined in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flores*, one seems able to draw no other conclusion but that Lord Burghley, though he always used agents, and especially the queen herself, as the conscious, or unconscious, workers out of his will, was a principal villain of the piece—the individual primarily responsible for Lord Oxford's banishment from court in 1589, and for the final destruction of the Earl's worldly career. Unmistakably, in play after play by "Shakespeare," and in poem after poem by Oxford and other authors, as Pandarus, Polonius, Aragnol, and the Fox, we find him pictured as controller of diabolical plots, and weaver of most subtle webs for the luring, to inexorable doom, of the dramatist-poet, who, nevertheless, at last, in due process and fulfilment of destiny, and by the just and awful revenges of time, will be fully vindicated to posterity.

Exactly by what means the Earl's final overthrow was accomplished, Spenser, for prudence' sake, no doubt, dare not so much as hint; and even in Lord Oxford's own morality play, *Measure for Measure*, we are told that the reasons for the Duke's withdrawal—which I interpret as meaning Lord Oxford's banishment—are "a secret that must be locked between teeth and lips." Personally, I believe the mystery to be directly connected with the bringing into this world, by Queen Elizabeth, about the year 1574—as argued

Burghley, the Fox of *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, and the Spider of *Muiopotmos*, telling us openly that his son-in-law, the honey-tongued, humble-bee singer and satirist, can sing no more, nor do any damage, now that his "armed tail" has been "subdued" by the removal of its sting. This ruthless and cruel silencing of a brother poet, by Lord Burghley, is the burden of Spenser's complaint.

With the following three stanzas, now clearly comprehensible to the reader, the poem *Muiopotmos* ends.

The luckless Clarion, whether cruel Fate
Or wicked Fortune faultless him misled,
Or some ungracious blast, out of the gate
Of Aeole's reign, perforce him drove on head,
Was (O sad hap, and hour unfortunate !)
With violent swift flight forth carried
Into the cursed cobweb, which his foe
Had framed for his final overthrow.

There the fond fly, entangled, struggled long,
Himself to free thereout; but all in vain.
For striving more, the more in laces strong
Himself he tied, and wrapt his winges twain
In limy snares the subtil loops among;
That in the end he breathless did remain,
And, all his youngthly forces idly spent,
Him to the mercy of th' avenger lent.

Which when the grisly tyrant did espy,
Like a grim lion rushing with fierce might
Out of his den, he seized greedily
On the restless prey; and with fell spite,
Under the left wing struck his weapon sly
Into his heart, that his deep-groaning sprite
In bloody streams forth fled into the air,
His body left the spectacle of care.

elsewhere in these pages—of a son of whom Lord Oxford was the father, and who would have been about fifteen years old in 1589. In the present state of our knowledge, however, these abstruse and delicate matters cannot be—perhaps they will never be—conclusively and finally determined.

Some mystery, “yet hidden in the clouds,” still broods over “Shakespeare,” and over that “secret doom,” which, in Spenser’s own words, “the heavens have ordained.” But no careful or sympathetic reader of these pages, will, I imagine, deny that the investigations, and interpretations, of the modern Oxfordian school of writers, have brought these profoundly important, though, of state-necessity, secret matters, to the very gates of full discovery and elucidation.

CHAPTER IX

SCUDAMOUR AND AMORET

Spenser admits that he wrote of Lord Oxford in *The Faerie Queene*—Timias, the gentle squire, in Book iii., is Oxford—His waylaying by the Foresters is concealed narration of Oxford’s quarrel with the Howard-Arundel-Knyvet group—Belphoebe (Elizabeth) comes to his aid—Amore (Anne Cecil) loves Scudamour (Oxford)—He is “Escu d’Amour,” of *Hundreth Sundrie Floweres*—Spenser tells, as openly as he dares, the havoc that court-gossip, and royal jealousy, play with the destinies of Oxford and Anne—Britomart is also Elizabeth—Duessa, Blandamour, and Partidell are Mary, Queen of Scots, Arundel, and Howard—The slandering of Amore—Anne compared with the slandering of Hero-Anne in *Mach Ado*—Scudamour blames Britomart-Elizabeth—Links with the Sonnets, and with Oxford’s *Grief of Mind* poem—Artegall (Leicester) and the Dark Lady—Striking allusions to “the hairy man,” and the forest-scenes of *As You Like It*—Links with Scudamour-Oxford as Romeo—The torments of love—Links with *Richard II* and *Hamlet*—Savage beasts at Gloriana’s court—Efficacy of “The Shield of Love.”

THAT Queen Elizabeth, Lord Oxford, Burghley, and Anne Cecil are frequently referred to in Spenser’s work, the two last chapters will have sufficiently established; and a very brief examination of Books iii. and iv. of *The Faerie Queene* should be enough to reveal the identities of several persons in that poem also. Spenser, indeed, in the third of his introductory verses, tells us openly, that the ancient glories of Lord Oxford’s house, and the Earl’s own “long living memory,” are written in his poem. Thus we read :

*To the Right Honourable the Earle of Oxenforde,
Lord High Chamberlayne of England, etc.*

Receive, most Noble Lord, in gentle gree,
The unripe fruit of an unready wit;
Which by thy countenaunce doth crave to bee
Defended from foule Envie’s poisonous bit.

Which so to doe may thee right well beft,
Sith th' antique glory of thine auncestry
Under a shady vele is therein writ,
And eke thine owne long living memory,
Succeeding them in true nobility.

And also for the love which thou doest beare
To th' Heliconian ymps, and they to thee.

They unto thee, and thou to them, most deare.
Deare as thou art unto thy selfe, so love
That loves and honours thee, as doth behove.

This statement is unequivocal ; and it only remains, therefore, to determine which character, or characters, in the poem stand for Lord Oxford.

The first two books, it seems, contain little to our immediate purpose ; but when—following upon a hint from Captain Ward, to keep a close eye upon Timias and the Foresters, in Book iii.—I began to examine the third Canto, it was not long before I concurred with my friend in opining that the three

Ungratiuous children of one graceless syre,

in stanza 15—who waylaid the “gentle Squire,” Timias, when he sought to cross the ford in the forest—were Howard, Arundel, and Knyvett, plotting secret treacheries against Lord Oxford, when he crossed the Channel from France to England, in the spring of 1576. The forester, indeed, is described as carrying a “borespeare,” to be used upon Oxford, known as the Boar (Verres) at court ; and the lines in Book iii., Canto v., stanza 20 :

The wicked steele stayed not till it did light
In his left thigh, and deeply did it thrill—

I take to be a reminiscence of the duel between Oxford and Knyvett, in 1582, during which the Earl was wounded, apparently, in the left thigh, and made permanently lame, as the Sonnets tell us, several times over, when they refer openly to the poet's lameness, and scorn

The coward conquest of a wretch's knife.

The “other two,” who “both attonce on both sides him bestad” (22), are, of course, Howard and Arundel ; and the lines in 25—telling how Timias struck at one of them a blow so violent,

That headlesse him into the foord he sent.

The carcass with the stremme was carried downe.
But th' head fell backward on the Continent—

refer to Oxford's denunciation of Arundel in 1580-81, which compelled his erstwhile friend to flee to the Continent, where he ended his days, shamefully, as a spy in the service of Spain.¹ Lord Oxford, however, as all students of the period know, did not escape unscathed from that conflict ; the counter-charges levelled against him, by Howard and Arundel, being of so comprehensive and serious a kind that, pending investigation, the queen sent her favourite to the Tower (26) :

He lives, but takes small joy of his renown
For of that cruel wound he bled so sore
That from his steed he fell in deadly swowne.

Spenser, however, hastens to add, that the individual who rescued Lord Oxford from the worst of that

¹ Stanza 25 : “They three be dead with shame.”

dilemma, and comforted him "with busie paine" (36) was Belpheobe,¹ otherwise Elizabeth, in her womanly capacity, who finds him swooning "with blood deformed,"² "Deformed" being another name for Oxford—and in so dire a plight,

That could have made a rocke of stone to rew—

a line that echoes the words of Lord Oxford's own "Echo" song :

And sigh'd so sore as might have moved some pity in the rocks—

The "goodly boy" is borne (stanza 40) into a "faire Pavilion," set in the forest, and environed with

mighty woodes which hid the valley shade
And like a stately theatre it made—³

a significant line, when it is remembered that nearly all these important events of Lord Oxford's life were dramatized by him, and, we may be sure, were acted, either at court, in noblemen's houses, or in private theatres, within the next few years.

The Queen, then, according to Spenser, seems to have been Oxford's good angel, during all this wretched business of the Howard-Arundel-Oxford feuds ; and it is certain that she did not keep him in the Tower for more than a very short time ; but—alas for de Vere's untoward destiny !—out of this leniency further disaster

seems to grow, because, according to Spenser, the queen's reluctance to punish her former lover seems to have reawakened, in that too impressionable mind, something of his former passion. She dressed and bound his wound, and (stanza 42) :

She his hurt thigh to him recurd againe,
But hurt his hart, the which before was sound,

and again enslaved her poet, as indeed the Sonnets confirm,

To be captived in endlesse durancce
Of sorrow and despeyre without alggeaunce

In Spenser's own words (43), de Vere had but saved a part, to lose the whole ; for, though the young courtier warred (48) "long time against his will," he yielded, at last, to his passion for (51)

That daintie Rose, the Daughter of her Morne ;

though these lines, I imagine, do not imply that the queen again became Oxford's mistress, upon his return to court favour in 1583 ; but refer back, rather—Spenser being, of set purpose, chronologically chaotic, upon occasion—to the earlier liaison of the 'seventies.

Canto vi. recalls, again and again, the basic motives and phraseology of *Venus and Adonis*, and of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—works which we have seen to be closely allied—especially in connection with the mysterious child of those two poems. It tells how Belpheobe (Elizabeth) and Amoretta, whom we shall see to be Anne Cecil, were "twins" ; and how Venus,

¹ Elizabeth is also Phœbe (Diana) in *As You Like It*.

² Oxford is "The Deformed," spoken of by the Watch in *Much Ado*, which dramatizes the Oxford-Arundel quarrel.

³ *As You Like It* and *The Dream* make a theatre of the Woods.

who is again Elizabeth, brought her sister, Amoretta-Anne, to court, where she was loved of many, but would respond to none,

Save to the noble knight Sir Scudamore
In faithfull love, t' abide for evermore.

Scudamore, as we shall see, is none other than Lord Oxford ; and this twin relationship between his queen and his wife—Belphebe and Amoretta—becomes the more interesting, if my interpretation be accepted, that this same pair are the Hermia and Helena of *A Mid-summer Night's Dream*, described, in that play, as having “grown together,”

Like to a double cherry seeming parted . . .
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem.

Not before the eleventh Canto, however, does Spenser take up, in earnest, the tale of Amoret and Scudamour, prefacing it, very pertinently, with a denunciation of that “vilest of all the passions,” the “hellish Snake,” Jealousy, which was to be a principal cause of the miseries of Lord Oxford and his Countess. Fair Britomart (7), following Scudamour, finds him, at last, wallowing and groaning upon the grass wherowen

A little off his shield was rudely throwne,
On which the winged boy in colours clear
Depeincted was, full easie to be knowne,
And he thereby, where ever it in field was shoune.

Here the name Scudamour is alone sufficient to identify the sorrowing knight with Oxford, because the poem, “Escu D'Amour,” printed in *A Hundreth Sundrie*

Flowers,¹ headed, “The absent lover (in ciphers) dis- ciphering his name,” and signed “*Meritum petere, grave*”—which Captain Ward has shown to be one of Lord Oxford's poems—contains, ciphered into it, the acrostic, “Edward de Vere.” Spenser further tells us, that Oxford's shield bore painted upon it “the winged boy (Cupid) in colours clear,” which Cupid supplies the origin of the name, “Shield of Lowe.” We now, therefore, make the interesting discovery, that the cause of Scudamour's groans, in *The Faerie Queene*, iii. ii., is identical with the cause assigned by Oxford himself, in his own above-cited poem, namely, jealousy ! Busyran, says Scudamour—meaning, I take it, “rumour full of tongues” or Slander—has, with wicked hand, imprisoned his lady,

In doleful darkness from the view of day.²

All for she Scudamour will not deny.

Britomart offers her help, persuades Scudamour to rise from the ground ; and so together they fare forth.

No single reader, I imagine, will deny—and a closer study of the full text must, I think, further convince him—that, in these passages—under the names of Britomart (the Briton Maid), Busyran, Scudamour, and Amoret—Spenser, vaguely and darkly, yet with most deliberate intention, is telling, as directly as he dares, the havoc that royal jealousy and malignant court-gossip are making with the destinies of Lord Oxford and Anne Cecil—a story that the first Canto of

¹ Captain Ward's edn., pp. 81, 82, and Introd., pp. xxviii-xxx.

² In *The Flowers*, p. 70, she is “Kept perforce out of my daily sight”—i.e., Anne is forcibly separated from Oxford by the queen.

Book iv. continues ; for, as the poet writes, in his opening stanza :

Of lovers sad calamities of old

... none more piteous ever was ytold

Than that of Amoret's heart-binding chain—

words which echo, or are echoed by, the closing couplet of *Romeo and Juliet*, who also are Oxford and Anne :

For never yet was story of more woe

Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.

We must not, however, unduly lengthen this chapter, by quoting fully from the text of Canto i. ; but, in brief, Spenser tells his readers that from the day when Scudamour won Amoret in fight, from the

“ twenty knights,” or rival suitors—Sidney being one

—who were, or had been, seeking her, “ she never

joyed day,” because, at her very wedding, amid the

bridal feast, and before ever the maid was bedded,

“ that same vile Enchantour,” Busyran, or tattling

Rumour, “ by way of sport,” captured her, “ conveyed

her away,” and kept her “ seven moneths . . . in

bitter smart”—a statement strongly confirmed by

Angelo's (Oxford's) own words in *Measure for Measure*,

v. i., when he gives, as a principal reason for the breaking-

off of his proposed marriage with Mariana (Anne),

that “ her reputation was disvalued in levity ” ; or,

as both Spenser and Shakespeare agree, that their

mutual happiness was ended by a form of mockery

intolerable to the proud and sensitive spirit of Oxford

—the derisive laughter of a gossiping and lascivious

court.¹

The only serious discrepancy is that found in

(Oxford) says, “ I spoke it but according to the trick.”

words quoted from Oxford himself, in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, wherein the Earl, writing in 1573, asserts that the separation was due—as, in part, must certainly have been the fact—to the burning jealousy of Venus-Elizabeth. Spenser, however, writing under his own name, dared not too openly blame the queen, and says (iv. i. 4) that finally “ noble Britomart released her.” All the three versions, however, agree—and the tragedy of *Othello*, wherein Desdemona is Anne, bears it out—that Amoret, in Spenser's words, “ could deserve no spot of blame ” ; while stanza 6 makes it clear that, according to Spenser, Oxford also was guiltless in the matter, as also is Claudio-Oxford of the slandering of Hero-Anne in *Much Ado*.

For well she wist, as true it was indeed,

That her lives Lord and patron of her health

Right well deserved, as his duefull meed,

Her love, her service, and her utmost wealth—

that last word being also pertinent, because Angelo, it will be remembered, in the speech above quoted, says, openly, that a reason for the breach between the pair was, that “ her promised proportions came short of composition,” which means, I take it, that her wealthy father, Lord Burghley, had failed to keep his promises as to dowry. Concerning Elizabeth, however, Spenser hints broadly at his own knowledge of the queen's part-complicity in the torturing of Anne, whose

fears were made so much the greater

Through fine abusion of that Briton maid ;

Who, for to . . . maske her wounded mind, both did

and say

Full many things so doubtfull to be wayd,

That wel she wist not what by them to guesse—

¹ Lucio (Arundel) in *Measure for Measure*, v. i., apologizing to the Duke

a proceeding wholly characteristic of Elizabeth, borne out by the stanza quoted on page 88 from *Venus and Adonis*, and appositely illustrated by the enigmatically jealous speech that Masters reports her as having made, when she heard that Anne was about to become a mother.¹

At this point there comes into the allegory a certain young and "jolly knight," by name Blandamour, who avows that Amoret "is his by right," and who, challenged by Britomart to fight for her, jousts accordingly, and is "soone overthrowne"; whereupon fair Amoret is adjudged, by the Seneschal, to Britomart, who promptly reveals her sex, by unlacing her helmet, and letting downe "unto her heeles," her long, golden hair. Amoret is greatly relieved by the discovery that Britomart is a woman, and a passionate one—my interpretation of this part of the allegory being, that Anne, young and virginally innocent, had been slow to realize how, beneath the glamorous attributes, real and imaginary, of royalty, there beat, nevertheless, the susceptible heart, and lay hidden the emotional frailties, of a strangely unbalanced feminine mind.

There now ride into the picture two females, still more formidable, even, than the English queen—Jove's daughter, Ate, goddess of all evil, and "false Duessa," generally accepted as being Mary, Queen of Scots, that mistress of duplicity, who "could forge all colours save the true"; and who was cunningly adept at crossing noble knights, in their quests after glory and honour (18 and 19). Duessa, at this time, was enjoying the company of a new-found mate :

¹ Ward's *Oxford*, p. 114.

Her mate he was a jolly youthful knight

That bore great sway in armes and chivalrie,

And was indeed a man of nickle might;

His name was Blandamour, that did descrie

His fickle mind full of inconstancie.

And now himselfe he fitted had right well

With two companions of like qualite,

Faithlesse Duessa, and false Paridell,

That whether were more false full hard it is to tell.

Now that the presence of the Scottish queen has provided an additional clue, there need be no hesitation in proclaiming the identity of Blandamour, even though his name did not, as, in fact, it does, provide a rough anagram for Arundel.¹ Years before interpreting Spenser's allegory, I had stated, in my *Life-Story of Edward de Vere as William Shakespeare* (pp. 155-156), that "Howard and Arundel were the probable authors of those slanders upon the Countess of Oxford, which became de Vere's excuse, if not his justification, for a long separation from his wife"; and—not overlooking Spenser's description of Duessa's friend, Blandamour, as "a jolly youthful knight"—I had written, upon page 174 of the same book, concerning the jolly young gentleman, Lucio, of *Measure for Measure*, that this "inward,"² or aforetime close friend of the Duke (Oxford), is simply Oxford's cousin, Arundel!—a corroboration completed by the fact that, as might have been expected, Blandamour has a close male friend and companion, Paridell, who is, of course, Lord Henry Howard.

That this pair intrigued incessantly with Mary Stuart is a matter of common historical knowledge.

¹ Blandamour spells Arundel, when the letters B.M.O. have been eliminated.

² "Lucio. I was an inward of his" (*i.e.* of the Duke, or Oxford).

Paridell, on behalf of his friend, hastens to attack Scudamour, who, seeing his enemy approach, prepares to receive him.

So furiously they met, that either bare
The other downe under their horses feete,
That what of them became themselves did scarsly weete.

The last-quoted line, with its sequel, describes vividly the issue of the charges, and counter-charges, in the notorious quarrel between Oxford and Howard-cum-Arundel during 1580-81, resulting in the arrest of all three men—Oxford, as we have already seen, being sent to the Tower of London, where he remained but a very short time; whereas his two enemies were held much longer in durance, and ultimately fled to the Continent, as Spenser has already hinted, when telling briefly of the same episode in Book iii.—the fight between Timias (Oxford) and the Foresters.

Duessa, in stanza 46, begins to slander Amoret (Anne) to Scudamour:

Ne be ye wroth, Sir Scudamour, therefore,
That she, your love, list love another knight . . .
For love is free.

Ate, who stands not for Love, but for Hate in the allegory, continues to calumniate Anne; and, at Blandamour's instigation, tells the company that she saw a stranger knight (49),

have your Amoret at will.

I saw him kiss. I saw him her embrace;
I saw him sleepe with her all night his fill;
All manie nights—

whereupon we join up again with the play, *Much Ado*, referred to a few pages back, which I have shown, elsewhere,¹ to be a dramatization of the Oxford-Arundel quarrel, with slandered Hero standing for the slandered Anne, and Conrad and Borachio for Arundel² and Howard—Borachio, plotting with Don John in II. ii., says:

Offer them instances . . . to see me at her chamber-window, hear me call Margaret, Hero: hear Margaret term me Claudio—

and in v. i. Hero's father, Leonato, says to Claudio—Oxford, concerning the injured girl:

Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart—

Antonio adding, a few minutes later:

My niece . . . is dead, slander'd to death by villains.

Dogberry's speech, further on in this same scene referring to Conrad and Borachio captured by the watch:

Marry, sir, they have committed false report; moreover, they have spoken untruth; secondarily, they are slanders; sixthly and lastly, they have belied a lady . . . and to conclude—they are lying knaves—

I have shown³ to be a deliberate parody of Arundel's

¹ *Life-Story of Edward de Vere as William Shakespeare*, pp. 168-174.

² Conrade=C. Aronde(l).

³ *Ibid.* pp. 158-162.

charges against Oxford, as recorded in the Elizabethan State Papers.

Fifthly. To show that the world never brought forth such a villainous monster. . . .
To conclude. He is a beast in all respects.

" Fifthly . . . and to conclude," writes Arundel; " Sixthly and lastly . . . to conclude," mocks Don Pedro, in this comedy entitled *Much Ado about Nothing*. Scudamour, furiously angry, blames Britomart (Elizabeth), whose jealous passions he holds to be at the bottom of the business :

Discourteous disloyal Britomart. . . .
 That hast with *shameful spot of sinful lust*
 Defil'd the pledge committed to thy trust—

and the reader, no doubt, will share my own surprise that Spenser, who had pictured Elizabeth as Oxford's guardian angel, in an earlier version of the same events, should thus, under his own name, dare to repeat the attribution to Britomart of a major part of the blame in this business ; thus corroborating the Earl's own similar reproaches against the queen, as voiced in several plays and in the Sonnets ; and corroborating also our inferences concerning Elizabeth's relations with her Lord Great Chamberlain. Long was Scudamour " fired with furious rage " ;¹ and thrice he raised his hand to slay the offending woman, before being persuaded to forbear, while remaining, nevertheless, as Canto v. tells us (31), still

Bent to revenge on blameless Britomart—

¹ Sullen, stormy rages, as in *Hamlet*, were, it seems, characteristic of Lord Oxford. Chapman frequently refers to them.

Spenser, this time, be it observed, keeping himself on the windy side of trouble, by wholly acquitting his queen.

To the house of Care comes Scudamour—Care the Blacksmith, who has Pensiveness to servant, and whose bellows are blown by Sighes. So filled is the house with harsh noises, that the hapless knight can sleep no more (41) :

And evermore when he to sleepe did thinkie,
 The hammers' sound his senses did molest,
 And evermore, when he began to winke,
 The bellowes' noyse disturb'd his quiet rest,
 Ne suff'red sleepe to settle in his brest.
 And all the night the dogs did barke and howle
 About the house, at scent of stranger guest.
 And now the crowing Cocke, and now the Owle
 Lowde strikynge, him afflicted to the very sowle.

Who can read these lines, and not recall the slumber-motives, the knocking on the door, and the cries of owl and raven, in the Scottish tragedy—" Macbeth shall sleep no more ! "

Slumber comes to the care-stricken Scudamour at last :

Yet in his soundest sleepe his dayly feare
 His idle braine gan busily molest,
 And made him dream those two disloyal were.
 The things that day most minds, at night doe most appeare—
 whereupon we link up, not, this time, with the plays, so closely as with the Sonnets XXVII. and XXVIII. :

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
 The dear repose for limbs with travel tired,
 But then begins a journey in my head,
 To work my mind, when body's works expired. . . .

Lo, thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,
For thee and for myself no quiet find. . . .
I . . . am debarr'd the benefit of rest
But day by night, and night by day oppress'd.

The analogies, it will be granted, are very close ; and in each case the cause of Oxford's grief is likewise analogous, namely, "jealous dread," as Spenser describes it in v. 45, and absence from the beloved—"still farther off from thee"—in Sonnet XXVIII. No less revealing are the opening lines of Canto vi., which run thus :

What equal torment to the grief of mind
And pynng anguish hid in gentle hart,
That only feeds itselfe with thoughts unkind,
And nourisbeth her owne consuming smart ?—

because these lines seem to paraphrase, not Shakespeare-Oxford's sonnets, but Lord Oxford's own poem, "Grief of Mind" :

What plague is greater than *the grief of mind* ?
The grief of mind that eats in every vein ;
In every vein that leaves such clots behind ;
Such clots behind as breed such bitter pain.
So bitter pain that none shall ever find,
What plague is greater than the grief of mind.

(E. or Ox.)

The first lines of the two verses, it will be observed, are almost verbally identical.

Scudamour (Canto vi. 2) leaves the House of Care, and, still "full of melancholy," tides on, until he meets a "salvage knight," apparently Artegall, or Lord Leicester, as I suppose, who criticizes the conduct of

a mysterious knight, "knowne by fame and by an Hebene speare"—a token which Scudamour instantly recognizes.

When Scudamour heard mention of that speare,
He wist right well that it was Britomart,

The which from him his fairest love did bear,
Tho gan he swell in every inner part
For fell despight, and gnaw his gealous hart—

whereupon he tells the "salvage knight" how
Lately he (Britomart) my love hath fro me refst,
And eke defiled with foule villanie

The sacred pledge which in his faith was left—
or, in plainer words, Oxford complains to Leicester—or whoever Artegall may be—that the queen has forcibly separated him from Anne. The two peers agree, accordingly, "both to wreake their wrathes on Britomart," who is again identified, as Elizabeth, by the ebony spear, the dark symbol of the dark lady of the Sonnets, and also of Birton-Oxford's dark lady, Rosaline, of *Love's Labour's Lost*, iv. iii.

KING. By heaven thy love is black as *ebony*.
BIRON. Is *ebony* like her ? O wood divine !

Both knights attack Britomart ; both are felled by her ; but Artegall, rising, joins combat again, and fiercely :

Ah, cruel hand ! and thrise more cruel hart,
That workest such wrecke on her to whom thou dearest
art—

all of which aims, I suppose, at the quarrels between Elizabeth and Leicester, especially at the anger occa-

sioned by the bickerings over the proposed Alençon marriage, the attempted assassination of Simier, and Elizabeth's discovery of Leicester's secret marriage with Lettice Knollys in 1578. Leicester's powerful strokes, falling upon her helmet, displace it (vi. 20) :

And round about the same her yellow heare
Having through stirring loos'd their wonted band,
Like to a golden border did appeare,
Framed in a goldsmith's forge with cunning hand.
Yet goldsmith's cunning could not understand
To frame such subtle wire, so shinie cleare.

Here again we connect with the "dark lady"; for the author of the Sonnets wrote, in Sonnet CXXX. :

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun.
Coral is far more red than her lips red:
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wres, black wres grow on her head.

Neither Artegall-Leicester, however, nor Scudamour-Oxford, dare long to maintain their "revengeful purpose"; but fall, instead, to apology, and to worship before this "peerless patterne of Dame Nature's pride." There is truce, awhile, and Britomart herself, while "thinking to scold" (27), can speak none save mild words. As for Scudamour, he is secretly pleased to know that his jealous fears had much less justification than he had supposed. In any case, as Glaucè proceeds to remind Artegall (32, 33) :

lovers' heaven must passe by sorowe's hell.

Ne thinke th' affection of her heart to draw
From one to other so quite contrary.

Piquant, it will be agreed, are these sly comments, by Spenser, upon the relations between Queen Elizabeth, and two of her loves. Scudamour is eager now to hear

Some gladdfull newes and sure intelligence

of his Amoret-Anne; but Britomart does not know, or will not be drawn.

What is become of her, or whether ref,
I can not unto you a read a right—

though she can, and does, relieve his sorrow, by promising (38) to go in search of her. Artegall, meanwhile, woos, entreats, and blandishes Britomart, so irresistibly as to bring her "wits a bay," whereupon she softly relents, yielding her consent

To be his love, and take him for her Lord,
Till they with marriage meet might finish
That accord.

"Then Britomart and Scudamour fare forth again, " to seeke fair Amoret."

Canto vii. recites one of those fascinatingly allusive, and elusive, episodes with which Spenser loved to tickle the intelligence and ingenuity of his readers. I do not pretend wholly to understand it; but I feel certain that it is less an allegorical record of actual facts, than a series of veiled allusions to the comedy, *As You Like It*, which, in its present form, I ascribe to 1589¹; this Book iv. of *The Faerie Queene* being printed in 1591.

The story tells the adventures, in the forest, of Britomart and Amoret, whom I take to stand here for

¹ I date the first draft 1582.

Rosalind and Celia of the Arden comedy, still representing Elizabeth and Anne. Britomart, grown weary, falls asleep, and, while her "sister" still slumbers, Amoret is snatched up by "a wilde and salvage man . . . all overgrown with haire," who seems to be Oliver (*i.e.* Oxford¹) of *As You Like It*, iii. iv, therein described by Oliver himself, addressing Rosalind and Celia, as

A wretched ragged man, o'ergrown with hair,
sleeping, upon his back,

Under an oak (England) whose boughs were moss'd with
age,
And high top bald with dry antiquity.

Spenser, also, introduces the oak-motive, by informing us (vir. 7) that "in his hand a tall young oake he bore," and that, by this wild and hairy oak-bearer, or lower and supporter of England, the poet means none other than Lord Oxford, we find strong corroboration in the statement that this strange creature possessed "a huge great nose," and was armed

With huge great teeth like to a tusked Bore—

which amounts to saying that he is the boar (*Verres*) of the de Vere coat-of-arms. So long ago as 1930, when writing my *Oxford-Shakespeare Case Corroborated*, I had argued (pp. 311-314) that Orlando and Oliver stood, respectively, for the good and bad sides of Lord Oxford's character—otherwise for the complete Oxford—and that Elizabeth was the lioness, and also the snake, who

¹ As in history, so in the play, Oliver-Oxford marries Celia-Anne, the Amoret of Spenser's poem.

threatens Oliver, should he reveal his identity by speech; —and this despite the facts that I had not then read *The Faerie Queene*, nor had at all comprehended that Rosalind and Celia dramatize Elizabeth and Anne Cecil.

Making no attempt to work out, in detail, all the meanderings of this difficult canto, let us now pass on to its 42nd stanza, where the clues to *As You Like It*, which, in characteristic Spenserian fashion, have been dropped awhile, are again, and unmistakably, picked up. There chanced, by fortune, to pass that way the Lord Prince Arthur, who espied a cabin in the wood.

Arriving there he found this wretched man
Spending his daies in dolour and despair,
And through long fasting woxen pale and wan,
All overgrown with rude and rugged haire ;
That albeit his owne dear Squire he were,
Yet he him knew not.

Here we have an exact repetition of the wretched-hairy-man motive, of the Arden forest comedy, with the same failure to recognize the individual, and the same idea that, beneath this "rude brutishness," the knightly gentleman lay hid.

The penultimate stanza of this Canto vii. 46 runs thus :

And eke by that he saw on every tree,
How he the name of one engraven had
Which likely was his liefest love to be,
From whom he now so sorely was bestad,
Which was by him "Belphebe" rightly rad.
Yet who was that Belphebe he ne wist ;
Yet saw he often how he waxed glad
When he it heard, and how the ground he kist
Wherein it written was, and how himselfe he blis.

No single reader, I suppose, will fail to perceive that here we have another close link with *As You Like It*, since the carving of Rosalind's name, by Orlando, upon the trees of Arden forest, is among the best-known incidents of the play ; and it seems to follow, undisputably, that Rosalind and Belphebe are the same woman, namely Elizabeth, because Spenser, in his Introduction to the first book of *The Faerie Queene*, tells us openly that Belphebe, in his poem, is Elizabeth, in her womanly, rather than in her officially royal, capacity.

In that Faery Queene I meane . . . the most excellent and glorious person of our souveraine the Queene and her Kingdome in Faerye land. . . . And yet in some places I doe otherwise shadow her. For considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royal Queene or Empresse, the other of a most vertuous and beautiful Lady, this last part in some places I doe expresse in Belphebe, fashioning her name according to your owne excellent conceived Cynthia.

But the wretched, ragged man, who carved these verses, we have seen to be Oxford, the Boar ; otherwise the duplicate character, Oliver-Orlando of Arden Forest. Spenser, therefore, as I interpret Book iv. of *The Faerie Queene*, wrote this seventh Canto with the text of *As You Like It* either before his eyes or vividly present to his mind, with Rosalind-Elizabeth becoming Belphebe ; Celia-Anne Cecil becoming Amoret ; and Orlando-Oliver as the wretched man, or Oxford. Recollecting, further, the general purport of the book that I am writing, readers will not overlook the significance of my discovery—if such they will allow it to be—that although, in historic fact, Oliver-Oxford did

marry Celia-Anne ; yet, in *As You Like It*, Orlando-Oxford marries Belphebe-Rosalind-Elizabeth, Queen of England.

The eighth Canto continues, in part, the same theme, when the “gentle squire,” Oxford, falling before his royal mistress, complains bitterly to her against his foes (16) :

“ Then have they all themselves against me bent :
For heaven, first author of my languishment

Envyng my too great felicity,
Did closely with a cruelle one consent

To cloud my daies in dolefull misery,
And make me loath this life, still longing for to die.

Ne any but your selfe, O dearest dred,
Hath done this wrong, to wreake on worthlesse wight

Your high displeasure, through misdeeming bred.

That, when your pleasure is to deeme aright,

Ye may redresse, and me restore to light ! ”

Which sorry words her mightie hart did mate
With mild regard to see his ruefull plight,

That her inburning wrath she gan abate,
And him received againe to former favours state.

In which he long time afterwards did lead
An happie life with grace and good accord.

These lines I read as describing the reconciliation between Oxford and his Queen, after the Howard-Arundel troubles ; and the Earl's subsequent return to court, in June 1583, as sketched also in the opening scenes of *Hamlet*, drafted during that year. Later on, Spenser deals with the reconciliation between Lord Oxford and his Countess, which was effected about the end of 1581 or a little later ; and the righting of that

deeply injured lady with the queen, whose vindictive jealousy, nevertheless, had been a primary cause of the trouble. Thus Elizabeth addresses the Arundel-Howard-Knyvet faction, in words strongly suggestive of the brawling scenes of *Romeo and Juliet*, which Spenser seems to have had in mind (ix. 37):¹

" Certes, Sir Knight, ye seemen much to blame
 To rip up wrong that battell once hath tried ;
 Wherein the honor both of Armes ye shame,
 And eke the love of Ladies foule defame ;
 To whom the world this franchise ever yeelded,
 That of their loves choise they might freedom claim,
 And in that right should by all knights be shielded.
 Gaint which, me seemes, this war ye wrongly have wielded."

" And yet " (quoth she) " a greater wrong remains.
 For I thereby my former love have lost ;
 Whom seeking ever since with endlesse paines
 Hath me much sorrow and much travell cost.
 Ay me, to see that gentle maid so lost ! "
 But Scudamour, then sighing deepe, thus saide :
 " Certes, her losse ought me to sorrow most,
 Whose right she is, where ever she be straide,
 Through many perils wonne, and many fortunes waide.
 For from the first that I her love profest,
 Unto this houre, this present lucklesse howre,
 I never joyed happinesse nor rest ;
 But thus tormentid from one to other stowre
 I wrast my life, and doe my daies devowre
 In wretched arguise and incessant woe,
 Passing the measure of my feele powre ;
 That living thus a wretch, and loving so,
 I nether can my love ne yet my life forgo."

'This, I submit, is, at once, a fairly accurate description of the relations between Elizabeth, Oxford, and Anne, during the early 'eighties, but sums up also the play *Romeo and Juliet*, whose principals are again Oxford and Anne. Scudamour's words might have been spoken by Romeo, that love-sick " Fortune's fool."

Canto x., in which " Scudamour doth his conquest tell of vertuous Amoret," opens thus :

True he it said, what *ever* man it sayd,
 That love with gall and hony doth abound ;
 But if the one be with the other wayd,
 For *every* dram of hony therin found
 A pound of gall doth *ever* it redound.
 That I too *true* by triall have approved ;
 For since the day that first with deadly wound
 My heart was launcht, and learned to have loved,
 I *never* joyed howre, but still to care was moved.
 And yet such grace is given them from above,
 That all the cares and evill which they meet
 May nought at all their settled mindes remove,
 But seeme, gaist common sence, to them most sweet.

Most striking, indeed, are these verses ; for here is Scudamour-Romeo-Oxford rhyming—amid what appear to be " true " and " ever " puns—upon his conquest of Amoret-Juliet, and doing so in words that vividly recall, not merely the manner, theme, and enchantment of the Verona tragedy, but also Lord Oxford's own poem :

Love whets the dullest wits, his plagues be such,¹

together with " Love is Worse than Hate,"² and many

¹ The duel between Oxford-Romeo and Knyvet-Tybalt was fought in

² " Love and Wit," *ibid.* p. 36.

other kindred passages, as well as the line from *Venus and Adonis*, stanza 190 :

Sorrow on love hereafter shall attend.

These verses by Spenser afford, in my judgment, final and conclusive proof of Romeo's identity with Scudamour-Oxford.

Long were to tell the travell and long toile
Through which this shield of love I late have wonne.
For though sweet love to conquer glorious bee,
Yet is the paine thereof much greater than the fee.

Stanza 5, telling of the

temple faire and auncient,
Which of great *mother Venus* bare the name,
And farre renowned through exceeding fame,
Much more than that which was in *Paphos* built—

echoes the closing couplet of *Venus and Adonis*—

Holding their course to *Paphos*, where *their queen*
Means to immure herself and not be seen.

Venus, of course, is again Elizabeth, in both poems ; and Spenser proceeds to tell us that this temple was

seated in an Island strong
Abounding all with delices most rare
And wall'd by nature against invasion strong—

words which paraphrase Gaunt, in *Richard II*, II. i., speaking also of England, as

This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war—

and which put on a double significance when we realize that so shrewd and learned a commentator as Admiral Holland¹ gives 1582, and the early part of 1583, as the dates of *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Richard II*, respectively ; and that 1583, moreover, is the very year during which, as foreshadowed in the opening scenes of *Hamlet*—also drafted, as we have seen in 1583—England began first to arm against the impending invasion from Spain. There follows, corroboratively, in stanzas 12 and 13, another deeply interesting link with *Hamlet*—the passage being that in which Scudamour is confronted by two formidable Janitors, whose names are Doubt and Delay :

On th' one side he [Doubt], on th' other sate Delay,
Behind the gate that none her might espy ;
Whose manner was all passengers to stay,
And entertaine with her occasions sly.

Who will not remember here the vacillations, doubts, and delays of Hamlet ; and his passionate acknowledgement, in iv. iv. :

How all occasions do inform against me
And spur my dull revenge.

I infer also, from this portion of *The Faerie Queene*, that Spenser, thoroughly familiar with the text of *Hamlet*, knew well that the revenge motive dramatized, in part, at least, Lord Oxford's determination to punish the queen, if he could, for her jealousies, and for her treatment of his Countess.

With stanza 37, Scudamour brings us into the “inmost temple,” wherein stood the statue of the

¹ *Shakespeare, Oxford, and Elizabethan Times* (1933).

goddess, Venus-Elizabeth, which—because the original was both male and female—was covered with a veil, while the feet and legs were “twyned with a snake,” a symbol which, as I have shown elsewhere, is used for Elizabeth, by Oliver-Oxford, in the hairy-man scene of *As You Like It*. This wonderful image,

in shape and beautie did excell

All other Idoles which the heathen adore,
Farre passing that, which by surpassing skill
Phidias did make in Paphos Isle of yore.

All this seems to foretell *Venus and Adonis* (1593), and connects up strongly with Marston's satire, *Pigmalian's Image* (1599), wherein we read,

Cyprus was Paphos call'd, and evermore
Those islanders do Venus name adore—

with verses following concerning the birth of “a jolly boy” to Pigmalion. Marston continues :

So Labeo did complain his love was stone,
Obdurate, flinty, so relentesse none ;
Yet Lynceus knows, that in the end of this,
He wrought as strange a metamorphosis.

This satire I shall analyse later, in a forthcoming book. For the moment, I will merely say that “Labeo”—for reasons that will appear—is, in my judgment, Oxford, and that Marston seems to me to hint daringly at the birth of Labeo's son, with Venus-Elizabeth for the mother.

For, where England's queen is concerned—more especially around the late fifteen-seventies, and early

'eighties, which are the crucial years—there will the suitors be gathered together (43).

And all about her altar scattered lay
Great sorts of lovers . . . cause of good or ill—
beasts of the wildest kind, made savage by ambition
and desire, in that strange menagerie which we have
seen to be the Elizabethan court.

Then do the salvage beasts begin to play
Their pleasant friskes, and loath their wonted food.
The lions roar ; the Tygres loudly bray ;
The raging Bulls rebellow through the wood,
And breaking forth dare tempt the deepest flood
To come where thou dost draw them with desire.
So all things else, that nourish vitall blood,
Soone as with fury thou doest them inspire,
In generation seeke to quench their inward fire.

But, while the savage beasts played and roared around the world's first idol, which was England's queen, Scudamour, no less open-eyed where women, than where men, were concerned (52),

Spyde where at the Idoles feet apart
A bevie of fayre damsels close did lye—
damsels whose names, I need hardly say, were those of the Maids of Honour of Gloriana's court.

And in the midst of them a goodly maid
Even in the lap of Womanhood there sate,
The which was all in lilly white arrayd,
With silver streames among the linnene stray'd ;

¹ Cf. *Midsummer Night's Dream*, iii. 2 : Demetrius (Oxford) to Helena (Anne), “Let me kiss this princess of pure white”; also Romeo, seeing Juliet (i. v.), “So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows.” Anne was the “white lady,” Elizabeth the “black lady.”

Like to the Morne, when first her shyning face
Hath to the gloomy world it selfe bewray'd.
That same was fayrest Amoret in place,
Shyning with beauties light and heavenly vertues grace.

Whom soone as I beheld, my hart gan throb,
And wayde in doubt what best were to be done ;
For sacrilege me seem'd the Church to rob,
And folly seem'd to leave the thing undonne
Which with so strong attempt I had begonne.

Scudamour has fallen to the charms of Amoret, the lily maid, whose very hand, a "white wonder," it was a sacrilege almost, and a "robbery of the church" to touch—words which tally but too well with those of Romeo, concerning Juliet, and with Hamlet's to Ophelia : "Get thee to a nunnery, go," and "Nymph, in thy orisons be all my sins remembered."¹ There follows the answer :

For Cupid's man with Venus mayd to hold
With that my shield I forth to her did show,
Which all that while I closely had conceld ;

although Cupid's man, Scudamour, well knew the danger of allowing love for any other woman to come within the knowledge of his Queen.

And evermore upon the Goddess face
Mine eye was fixt, for feare of her offence—

lines which, in a slightly different form, had appeared, many years before, when, in 1573, Lord Oxford pub-

lished *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, wherein, writing under the pseudonym, "Merium petere, grave," in "praye of a Countesse," who is his own wife, Anne Cecil, he tells how—

My bashfull spirits be full ill affaid
To purchase payne by my presumption ;
Such malice reigne (sometimes) in heavenly mynds,
To punish him that prayseth as he finds.

Spenser, however, signing with his own name, must, perforce, for prudence sake, ignore the jealousy motive, which may explain why he makes Scudamour fear the Goddess's offence.¹

Whom when I saw with amiable grace
To laugh at me, and favour my pretence,
I was emboldened with more confidence.

Thus emboldened, then, ignoring the prayers and entreaties of the loving, though apprehensive, maiden "to let her go," the young Earl, smothering his own fears and hers, leads her triumphantly through "the Temple gate," confident in the power of Love to shield him :

But evermore my shield did me defend
Against the storne of every dreadfullle stoure.
Thus safely with my love I thence did wend.

That very Love, however, though shielding him, at the moment, exposed him, later, to those tempests

¹ Quite possibly, of course, Elizabeth, at first, smiled at and favoured the suggested marriage between her favourite Maid of Honour and her favourite Ward.

which, at last, destroyed his Countess, and almost overwhelmed himself. It is the saddest tale in all literary history, hallowed, nevertheless, and made everlasting by beautiful to us, by the genius of that Shield-bearer, who, beneath differing guises, and from various viewpoints, has dramatized it in a succession of triumphant masterpieces, known to us as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and the rest.

CHAPTER X

"A LOVER'S COMPLAINT"

A mysterious poem—Proved by Robertson to be Chapman's—Opening stanza recalls Oxford's "Echo" song—Also *Romeo and Juliet*—The wronged lady of "A Lover's Complaint" is Queen Elizabeth—The "hive of straw" is Elizabeth's wig—The "thousand favours" are royal privileges at her disposal—Allusions to Elizabeth's age—The man she loved is Lord Oxford—Paraphrase of Giles Fletcher, upon Oxford's horsemanship—The Earl's "craft of Will"—His art in youth and youth in art—Links with closet-scene in *Hamlet*—And with the "not to be" Sonnet (CXXI)—Also with *Romeo and Juliet*—The lady's leisure charmed E. Ver—"Deep-brained sonnets"—More links with the "Echo" song—Links with Isabella in *Measure for Measure*—The Rose motive and Queen Elizabeth—The *Hue* (son) motive—Oxford's irresistible attraction for women—"Errors of the blood not of the mind"—"A Lover's Complaint" is a counterblast to the Sonnets, written by Chapman, in defence of the queen against Oxford.

WHEN the Sonnets of "Shake-Speare" were first published in 1609, there appeared with them a mysterious poem, entitled "A Lover's Complaint," by "William Shake-speare," the meaning and purpose of which have altogether baffled the commentators, hitherto: some of them considering it to be a genuine Shakespearean production, while others, including the late J. M. Robertson, have opined that it was by Chapman, or one of his group.¹

That Stratfordians, lacking the necessary clues, can make nothing of the poem, is, of course, natural; since it has no more connection with William Shaksper of Stratford-upon-Avon than have the Sonnets, with which the "Complaint" was bound up; but to Oxford-

¹ A re-reading of the first two parts of the late J. M. Robertson's *Shakespeare and Chapman* (1917) has convinced me that Chapman wrote "A Lover's Complaint," Robertson makes out an unanswerable case.

ians, on the contrary, now initiated into the subtle intimacies of these Shakesperean publications, the poem becomes, upon examination, as transparently clear as it is deeply revealing. Myself—absorbed in other, though kindred, Elizabethan researches—had temporarily overlooked its probable significance; but when, during February 1933, Captain B. M. Ward wrote inviting me to read "A Lover's Complaint" again, and to decide with him, if I could, that here was just another version of the Elizabeth-Oxford love-affair, written in a style that seemed, again and again, to paraphrase some of the best known Shakesperean sonnets, it did not take me ten minutes to decide that my friend was wholly right; and that we had here one of the strongest among the many links in our chain of evidence connecting Elizabeth, and her Lord Great Chamberlain, with "Shakespere's" poems, as intimately as with his plays.

The case for Lord Oxford, as author of the Sonnets, has long been unanswerable; and Captain Ward and I satisfied ourselves, two years or more ago, that many of them were written to, and pointed directly at, Queen Elizabeth herself; but that the same inference was equally true of "A Lover's Complaint," we, for want of sufficient attention, had never yet divined. Let us now, then, examine this epilogue to "Shakespere's Sonnets," and see what corroborations will emerge therefrom.

The first stanza runs thus :

From off a hill whose *concave* womb *reworded*
A *plaintiffl* story from a sistring vale,
My spirrits t' attend this *doble* *voyn* accorded,
And down I laid to list the sad-tun'd tale;
Ere long espied a *fickle* maid full pale

Tearing of papers, breaking rings a twaine,
Storming her world with sorrowes, wind and raine.

Now that opening stanza "remembers" at once—and intentionally, I suppose, upon the author's part—a well-known Elizabethan poem written, not by "Shakespere"—since it was in being long before any such pseudonym was adopted—but by Lord Oxford, over his own name—I mean the famous "Echo" song, of which, in several lines, it is almost a paraphrase. Both poems are written in the first person; both are concerned with the secret woes of a maid; and both contain the re-wording, or "echo" motive, as the following parallels show :

"*Echo*" *Song*.

Sitting alone . . . in *melan-*
choly mood, I saw a fair *young*
lady come her secret fears to
wail.

Echo *answered* her . . . O
hollow *caves* tell true?—You
conceive womb reworded . . .
Storming her world with sorrow.
this *doble* *voyn*.

A Lover's Complaint.

And *downe* I *laid* to list the
sad-tun'd *tale*. . . .
Ere long espied a *fickle* *maid*
full pale. . . .

The resemblances are, in my judgment, conclusive; the pregnancy of meaning being deepened by the close of the "Echo" song, which reads thus :

And I, that knew this lady well,
Said, Lord, how great a miracle,
To hear how Echo told the truth,
As *true* as *Phœbus oracle*,

THE EARL OF OXFORD.¹

¹ We have seen that "Phœbus" often stands for Oxford. Observe the reading here: "true . . . Phœbus oracle, the Earle of Oxford."

These lines, moreover, link up closely with Juliet's line :

Else would I tear the *cave* where *Echo* lies—

Juliet's historic original being, in part, Anne Vavasour, to whom, it seems—though Anne Cecil is also glanced at—Lord Oxford's "Echo" poem was written.

The lady of "A Lover's Complaint," however—whose fickle mood includes the tearing of papers and the breaking of rings, which I take to be some of Lord Oxford's love-verses and tokens—is not Anne Vavasour, the Queen's Maid of Honour, nor even Anne Cecil—already, as this book has shown, closely linked with her royal mistress, in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flores*, and also in Spenser's poems. She is none other than the queen herself, as is made clear by the second stanza, which runs thus :

Upon her head a *plattid hive of straw*,
Which fortiffid her visage from the Sunne,
Whereon the thought might thinke sometime it saw
The *arkas of a beauty spent and done*,
Time had not sithed all that youth begun,
Nor youth all quit, but spight of heaven's fell rage,
Some beauty peep through lettice of sear'd age.

Here the "plaited hive of straw," that the lady wears upon her head, is Elizabeth's red-gold periwig, which she wore for Alençon, and, it seems, at all public appearances ; while her person, described as possessing still some relics of youth and freshness, in "the carcase of a beauty spent and done," is just the ageing body of a queen born in 1533, and who, at the time of her love-affairs with Lord Oxford, being about forty years old, was an aged woman, when judged by Elizabethan

standards of longevity. Lord Essex once said, of that same lady, some years later : "Her carcase is as crooked as her mind." Typical of her also is that roving, restless glance described, in stanza four, as directed

To every place at once and no where fixt,
The mind and sight distractedly commixt.

The "thousand favours" which proceed from her, as stanza six tells us, are, of course, the innumerable posts, privileges, preferments, and monopolies, that were then at the disposal of the Crown ; and when the poet tells us that these things were done "like usury, Or Monarchs hands," he goes as near as prudence will permit to telling his readers that a Monarch, and a Monarch's love, are the themes of which he writes. No less significant is stanza seven :

Of folded schedulls had she many a one,
Which she perusd, sighd, tore, and gave the flud ;
Crackt many a ring of posied gold and bone,
Bidding them find their Sepulchers in mud,
With sleide stike, feate and affectedly
Enswath'd and seal'd to curious secrey.

It was Elizabeth's fate, as it was of every queen in that age, to open "folded schedules" by the dozen, and to receive—being what she was, and unmarried—"rings of posied gold" ; but Elizabeth alone was fortunate enough, or unfortunate, to possess suitors from the four corners of the globe, and to have by her side a "Shakespeare," whose "letters" to her, including certainly the Sonnets, and perhaps also some of

the plays, were "sadly pend in blood," affectedly bound up in "sleided silk," and, by means of a clasp or otherwise, "seald to curious secrecy." Readers familiar with my book, *Plays of Shakespeare and Chapman in Relation to French History*, may, perhaps, remember that, when considering Chapman's *Revenge of Bussy*, n. i., I showed that the rival poet of the Sonnets knew them to be the works of de Vere,

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.

Similarly, Lady Capulet, sounding Juliet (l. iii.) concerning a marriage with County Paris, speaks of a precious, though, as yet, coverless book of love :

'tis much pride

For fair without the fair within to hide.
That book in many's eyes doth share the glory,
That in gold clasps locks in the golden story.

Here again we have the exactly parallel idea, of "rich and curious secrecy" in the pages of a volume whose "golden story" is clasped within a golden lock. The references in the next stanza (No. 8) to "blacke inke," and to the rending of "the lines," recalls the "black lines" and "black ink" of Sonnets LXIII. and LXV.; and when, in stanza 11, the lady begs her hearer to ignore, in her face,

The injury of many a blasting hour—

and follows the request with (11) :

Let it not tell your judgment I am old,
Not age, but sorrow, over me hath power—

we are reminded that Elizabeth, in the later period of her life, intensely resented any reminder of her years. Love, this lady urges, is the grief that has aged her too soon, because (12)—

woe is me, too early I attended
A youthfull suit it was to gaine my grace ;
A one by nature's outwards so commended,
That maiden's eyes stucke over all his face.

For the identity of the individual whose beauty drew all women's eyes, one need look no further than Lord Oxford, of whom, at the time of his marriage in 1571, St. John wrote to Lord Rutland concerning the "great weeping, wailing, and sorrowful cheer of those that had hoped to have that golden day," which should unite them with the court's chiefest Adonis, and give them, for plaything, that pleasing head, upon which the "browny locks did hang in crooked curls." The well-known picture of Lord Oxford, standing beside Queen Elizabeth, with the sword of State in his hand, shows that his hair was curly; and I suppose it to have been brown, from what I have been able to see, at close quarters, of the Welbeck portrait of the Earl, when it was recently exhibited in London.¹ As for the queen's statement, in the first line of stanza 14, that

Small show of man was yet upon his chinne—

¹ During 1933 in Grosvenor Place.

both the Welbeck and Grafton portraits, of Oxford and "Shakespeare" respectively, show him beardless, and with no more than an incipient moustache, and so also do the references to him in *Troilus*; though he was conventionally bearded, in later life, as the "Ashbourne" Shakespeare, which is a portrait of Lord Oxford, shows; and as is hinted at by the use of the word "yet" in the stanza above quoted.

His qualities were beautious as his forme,
For maiden-tongu'd he was and thereof free ;
Yet if men mou'd him, was he such a storme
As oft twixt May and April is to see.

Here, then, is an outline of the mental, and temperamental, qualities which are among the most notable in the character of Hamlet, who is simply an idealized portrait of Edward de Vere, including his characteristic gentleness, "when like the female dove his pinions will lie drooping"—words used of him by Queen Gertrude, who is, in part, Queen Elizabeth herself. Further, the man's stormy outbursts, when moved, are those same tempestuous gusts of anger that find vent in such a passage as

O what a rogue and peasant slave am I.

Compare Lord Oxford's characteristics, as here set down, probably by Chapman himself, in "A Lover's Complaint"—the maiden tongue, the headstrong unruliness, the "rudeness" of this charmer of dames—with Chapman's own attack upon Lord Oxford, in stanza 6 of "A Coronet for His Mistress Philosophy" (1595) :

not the weak disjoint
Of female humours ; nor the protean rages
Of pied-faced fashion.

The next stanza (16) of the "Complaint" is simply a paraphrase of Giles Fletcher's verses upon Lord Oxford's horsemanship, written in Latin, and anglicized thus in Captain B. M. Ward's *Life of the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*:

But if at any time with fiery energy he should call up a mimicry of war, he controls his foaming steed with a light rein, and armed with a long spear rides to the encounter. Fearlessly he settles himself in the saddle, gracefully bending his body this way and that. Now he circles round; now with spurred heel he rouses his charger. The gallant animal with fiery energy collects himself together, and flying quicker than the wind, beats the ground with his hoofs, and again is pulled up short as the reins control him.¹

As early as 1571, George Delves, himself one of the "Defendants," had written to Lord Rutland :

Lord Oxford has performed the challenge at tilt, tourney, and barriers far above the expectation of the world—

and Jonson, when satirizing the Earl, as the Knight Puntarvolo, in *Every Man Out of His Humour*, II. i., makes Carlo say :

He (Puntarvolo) has a good riding face, and he can sit a great horse : he will taint a staff well at tilt ; when he is mounted he looks like the sign of the George.

¹ Pp. 60, 61. Hatfield MSS, Cal. xiii. 109.

Thus we read, in "A Lover's Complaint" :

Wel could hee ride, and often men would say
 That horse his mettell from his rider takes :
 Proud of subjection, noble by the swaie,
 What rounds, what bounds, what course, what stop he
 makes,
 And controversie hence a question takes,
 Whether the horse by him became his deed,
 Or he his manad'g, by th' wel-doing Steed.

No less revealing is stanza 18 :

So on the tip of his subduing tongue
 All kinde of arguments and question deepe,
 All replication prompt, and reason strong
 For his advantage still did wake and sleep,
 To make the *weeper laugh*, the *laugher weape*.
 He had the *dialect* and the different skill
Catching all passions in his craft of will.

This, surely, is among the most clinching stanzas of all ; for what can the "arguments," "deep questions," "strong reasons," "prompt replication," "dialect," and "different skill," of the individual thus referred to, be, if not the all-embracing universality of "Shakespeare," as dramatic poet, and the genius with which :

Catching all passions in his craft of will—

the *Will* of Sonnet CXXXV. and others, as also of *Love's Labour's Lost*—he makes, whether in comedy or tragedy, the weeper laugh, and the laugher weep ? How else, I ask, can these lines be intelligently read by any man, except as an accurate epitome of the effects achieved in the Shakesperean plays, wherein the char-

acters, as stanza 19 phrases it, "dialogued for what he would say." The statement, in the same verse, that this so gifted being reigned "in the general bosom of young and old," "and sexes both enchanted," is repeated, almost *verbatim*, by Chapman, when, in *The Revenge of Bussy*, v. i., he makes Guise say to Clermont, who is simply Chapman's version of Oxford as Hamlet :

How strangely thou art loved of both the sexes.

We have already seen, when considering stanza 12, how many pairs of lovely eyes were turned, hopefully though unavailingly, upon Lord Oxford, and in stanza 21 the queen returns to this theme :

So many have that never toucht his hand
Sweetly suppos'd them mistresse of his heart.
 My wofull selfe that did in freedom stand,
 And was my own fee simple (not in part),
 What with his *art in youth* and *youth in art*
 Threw my affections in his charmed power,
 Reserv'd the stalke and *gave him al my flower.*

The meaning here is, surely, obvious. The unmarried queen, "her own fee simple," could not, any more than could her ladies, resist the compelling charms of her dazzling young ward, the courtier, joustier, talker, poet, and dramatist, with his "art in youth and youth in art." The royal woman's affections soon succumbed to his "charmed power" ; and although she "reserved the stalk," or maintained appearances, she "gave him all her flower"—"flower," as we know, being the symbol used in *Venus and Adonis*, in the Sonnets, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and in *Antipomos*, for the child that was born of this union.

At this point, the poet, having, perhaps, hinted somewhat too broadly at the facts of the case, makes the lady "hedge" a little, in stanza 22, very much as Spenser does after speaking too openly of Britomart or Belphebe in *The Faerie Queene*. She did not yield, we are told, to her own desire, nor to his; but, bulked by "experience,"

With safest distance I mine honour sheelded,

at least for a while, before that frailty, "whose name is woman," brought about surrender at last.

But ah! who ever shun'd by precedent,
The destin'd ill she must her selfe assay,

Counsaile may stop a while what will not stay;

Nor gives it satisfaction to our blood
That we must curbe it upon others prooфе,

O appetite from judgment stand aloof!
The one a paillate bath that needs will taste
Though reason weep and cry it is thy last.

These extracts, from stanzas 23 and 24, are of speculative interest; since they link up most intimately with—and may, perhaps, be a Chapmanese counterblast to—the closet-scene between the mother, Queen Gertrude, and Hamlet, a tragedy, the second quarto of which—though probably familiar before that year to the élite of London playgoers—was published in 1604, five years before the appearance in print of "A Lover's Complaint."¹ The last three quoted lines especially,

¹ It probably circulated in manuscript several years before that date.

with their pointed reference to sexual "appetite," as challenged by "judgment" and "reason," almost paraphrase such lines as those in which Hamlet approaches the Queen :

You cannot call it love, for at your age
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon the judgment.

No less important is the intimate connection that this stanza 24, with its opening line :

Nor gives it satisfaction to our blood—

bears not only to Hamlet's speech above quoted from, but also to Sonnet CXXI., which runs as follows :

Tis better *to be* vile than vile esteemed,
When *not to be*, receives reproach of being,
And the just pleasure lost, which is so deemed,
Not by our feeling, but by others seeing.
For why should others' *false adulterate eyes*
Give salutation to my sportive blood?
Or *on my frailties why are frailler spies*;
Which in *their wits count bad what I think good?*

Noe, *I am that I am*, and they that levell
At my abuses, reckon up their owne,
I may be straight though they themselves be bevel
By their rancke thoughts, my deedes must not be
shown.
Unlesse this general evill they maintaine,
All men are bad and in their badnesse raigne.

This sonnet, as I have shown elsewhere, with the words "to be," and "not to be," contained in its first two lines, is just Hamlet-Oxford through and through.

The phrase "false adulterate eyes" echoes the adultery motive of that play, while the line :

Give salutation to my sportive blood—

is matched by the opening line of stanza 24 of "The Complaint" :

Nor gives it satisfaction to our blood—

which, as we have just seen, is again strongly reminiscent of *Hamlet*. Further, the "frais spy,"¹ in the sonnet above quoted, is simply Ophelia, compelled by her father to spy upon her lover, who, historically, was her husband, Lord Oxford ; while the phrase that follows : "I am that I am"—was one frequently, and characteristically, used by Lord Oxford of himself, notably in the well-known letter written to none other than Burghley-Polonius, dated October 30, 1584 :

I mean not to be your ward nor your child. I serve
Her Majesty, and I am that I am.

It is, in my judgment, impossible, almost, to exaggerate the importance, to our whole argument, of this proven and inextricable connection between Queen Elizabeth and Lord Oxford, as the writer, or the written of, or both, in *Mitopotmos*, and *The Faerie Queene*, in the Sonnets, "A Lover's Complaint," in *Hamlet*, and the no less conclusive linking up of both these, in the

same writings, with Lord Burghley, and his daughter, as Polonius and Ophelia respectively.

Let us now return to "A Lover's Complaint," of which stanza 25 reads :

For further I could say "this mans untrue,"
And knew the patterns of his foul beguiling,
Heard where his plants in others' orchards grew,
Saw how *deceit* was gilded in his smiling,
Knew *vowes* were *ever brokers* to defiling,
Thoughts, characters, and words merely but art
And bastards of his foul adulterate heart.

This verse again is pregnant with revelation ; for who can read the words concerning the youth's "plants" that "in others orchards grew"—plants here meaning, I suppose, "children" or mistresses—and not remember Juliet's words, to Romeo-Oxford, in the balcony-scene ii. ii., concerning the Capulet's orchard, in which the scene is set :

The orchard walls are high and hard to climb.

Most significant, also, are the two conventional Vere puns, used exactly as in the Sonnets, "this man's *untrue*," and "ever brokers" ;¹ and still more so the line :

Thoughts, characters, and words (are) merely but art—

¹ Cf. also Sonnet CIX., certainly addressed to Elizabeth :

O never say that I was false of heart,
Though absence seem'd my flame to qualify ;

Never believe, though in my nature reign'd
All *frailities* that beset all kinds of *blood*.
. . . thou, my *ruse*.

¹ Stanza 26 contains two more Vere puns: "none was *ever* said" and "nor *never* vow."

for the exercise of his dramatic art—a thesis which, in book after book, I have been arguing now, for some years past. In particular, this idea of words being wholly at the service of art, recalls that scene of outrageous punning between Romeo and Mercutio in II. iv., containing Mercutio's eulogy of his friend, as the skilled punster :

Now art thou *what thou art by art* as well as by nature.

Remembering also that Elizabeth was Diana, the moon-goddess, it becomes interesting to set the line :

And be not of my holy vowes afraid—

beside Romeo's vows of truthful purpose to Juliet, spoken from that same Capulet's orchard :

Lady, be yonder blessed moon, I swear.

Oxford pleads guilty to the lapses ; but disclaims full moral responsibility for them.

All my offences that abroad you see
Are errors of the blood, not of the mind.¹
Love made them not—

by which he means that such desire for sexual indulgence comes not, as did his desire for Juliet, from a spiritual affinity and genuine love ; but solely from the baser physical passions, or "blood," which he seems to differentiate completely from the higher impelling motives. This stanza 27, be it noted, paraphrases, almost, Sonnet CIX. :

¹ Nothing either good or bad but *thinking* makes it so.

O never say that I was false of heart

Though absence seemed my flame to qualify

As easy might I from myself depart

As from my soul, which in thy heart doth lie

That is my home of love : if I have ranged

Like him that travels, I return again ;

Just to the time, not with the time exchanged,

So that myself bring water for my stain.

Never believe, though in my nature reign'd

All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood.

Here, as I interpret the sonnet, he tells the woman, who is either Queen Elizabeth, or possibly Anne Cecil, that, whatever she may have heard—and possibly she had heard much—of his amours abroad in France and Italy, his flame, though qualified by absence, amounted never to falseheartedness ; that his soul, and not his body, was still his "home of love," to which again, at last, his true self, the traveller, returns : in which connection it is worth remembering that one of Oxford's names, in contemporary London, seems to have been the "Traveller" ; and that Jonson, in *Cynthia's Revels*, i. i., burlesques Oxford, as Amorphus, the Traveller, who, in various princes' courts of Europe, has been

fortunate in the amours of three hundred and forty and five ladies, all nobly, if not princely descended, whose names I have in catalogue.

Moreover, the last-quoted line of the above quoted sonnet—

All *frailties that besiege all kinds of blood*—

written in direct connection with de Vere's travels

a broad, links up, at once, with the couplet that opens stanza 27 of "A Lover's Complaint" :

All my offences that abroad you see
Are errors of the blood, none of the mind,

and with the closet-scene in *Hamlet* already referred to. Stanza 28 opens :

Among the many that mine eyes have seene,
Not one whose flame my hart so much as warmed,
Or my affection put to th' smallest teene,
Or any of my leisures *ever Charmed.*

No one of them all, save this one woman, had charmed the leisures of E. Ver, whose own charms, as we know, had kept many "hearts in liveries," by which, I suppose, the writer indicates a badge of servitude. Lord Oxford's deeper fancies remained free :

And raigned commanding in his *monarchy*—

for, as "Shakespeare" tells us, in Sonnet LXXXVII, this poet was "in sleep a king," and had been the intimate companion of queens, one of whom, namely, the Queen of Navarre—if we are to believe the Howard-Arundel allegations—had "sent a messenger to desire him to speak with her in her chamber," while "the Countess of Mirandola came fifty miles to be with him for love." In Sonnet CXIV. de Vere had written :

Or whether doth my mind, being *crown'd* with you,
Drink up the *monarch's* plague, this flattery :
... My great mind most *kingly* drinks it up.

Stanza 30, moreover, tells us that "deepe brain'd sonnets" formed part of the loving armoury of this

false, fond man, who, nevertheless, will yield up "all these trophies of affections hot" only by reciprocity—

where I my selfe must render.
That is to you my origin and ender.
For of force must *your oblations* be,
Since I their Aulter, you enpatrone me—

whereupon we link up directly with Sonnet CXXV., the famous canopy sonnet :

No, let me be obsequious in thy heart,
And *take thou my oblation*, poor but free.

Stanza 33, with its picture of

that phraseless hand,
Whose white weighs down the airy scale of praise,

recalls "the white wonder of dear Juliet's hand," and Romeo's delight in his love's lightness of foot ; while the last three lines of the same verse :

What me your minister for you ohaies
Workes under you, and to *your audit comes*
Their distract parcels, *in combined summe*,

seem to echo Sonnet IV. :

Profitless usurer, why dost thou use
So great a sum of sums, yet canst not live ?
What acceptable *audit* canst thou leave ?

and also Sonnet CXXVI. :

Her *audit*, though delay'd, answer'd must be.

Stanza 34 runs thus :

Lo, this device was sent me from a *Nun*,
Or Sister sanctified of holiest note,
 Which late her noble suit in court did shun,
 Whose rarest havings made the blossoms dote,
 For *she was sought by spirits of rithest note*,
But kept cold distance, and did thence remove,
 To spend her living in eternall love.

But oh my sweet, what labour ist to leave,
 The thing we have not, mastryng what not strives,
 Paling the Place which did no forme receive,
 Playing patient sports in unconstraind gives,
 She that her fame so to her selfe contrives,
 The scarres of battaille scapeth by the flight,
 And makes her absence valiant, not her might.

These verses sound distinct echoes of Oxford's "Echo" poem ;¹ and its lines concerning the maid who loved him :

I saw a fair young lady come, her secret fears to wail
 Clad all in colour of a nun, and covered with a veil—

with other echoes of Hamlet and Ophelia following :

Nymph in thy orisons be all my sins remembered,
 and, "Get thee to a nunnery, go" ; while a glance
 back at stanza 1 reminds us that "A Lover's Complaint" opens upon the same motives as the "Echo" song, namely, upon the Echo, and a "Maid full pale."

¹ Further, they paraphrase, almost, the following passage from *The Faerie Queene*, IV. x. 52, 53, spoken by Scudamour-Oxford of Anne and her "heavenly virtues grace," so pure that "sacrifice me seem'd the Church to rob." See *ante*, p. 236.

Throughout this part of the poem, in fact, its author seems to have in mind, not Queen Elizabeth alone—although she is certainly present—but also Anne Cecil, and Anne Vavasour, co-originals of Juliet and Ophelia ; for in stanza 36 he continues :

O pardon me, in that *my boast is true*,
 The accident which brought her to my eye,
 Upon the moment did her force subdewe,
 And now she would the caged cloister fly.
 Religious love put out religion's eye.
 Not to be tempted would she be enur'd,
 And now to tempt all liberty procur'd.

That first line probably holds a *Vere* pun—"my boast is *true*," and the young woman's desire to fly "the caged cloister," now that "religious love" has "put out religion's eye," in the maid who was "not to be tempted," strongly suggests the precisely similar experience of the novice, Isabella, in *Measure for Measure*, who also will not be tempted, although she prefers a husband to a cloister¹—in which connection it should not be forgotten that the Juliet of the last-named play is also the Juliet of the tragedy of Verona, and that Mariana is Anne Cecil, deserted by her lover under compulsion by the queen. "A Lover's Complaint" is, quite certainly, the work of some one who was thoroughly familiar with the plays and sonnets of "Shakespeare," and who knew perfectly well that the former were, in the main, dramatizations of actual incidents in the lives of prominent persons at Gloriana's court, including the queen herself. The opening line of stanza 38 :

My parts had powre to charme a sacred Sunne—

¹ See *ante*, p. 236, for the same motive in *The Faerie Queene*.

recall again Romeo to Juliet, at the opening of the balcony-scene :

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,

where the sun and the moon are, respectively, the two Annes, with Queen Elizabeth as Diana. Stanza 39 :

How coldly those *impediments* stand forth
Of wealth, of filial fear, lawe, kindred fame,
Love's armes are peace—

expresses exactly the sentiment of Sonnet CXVI. :

Let me not to the marriage of *true* minds
Admit *impediments*. *Love* is not love
Which alters . . . it is an *ever* fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is *never* shaken—

where-through again flows a stream of Vere puns, including the most significant of them all, “Ever and Never.” “Love,” writes the poet of “A Lover’s Complaint,” “sweetens in the suffering pangues it bears.” “Love,” writes “Shakespeare,” in the sonnet, “alters not,

But bears it out even to the edge of doom.”

With the opening of stanza 41, the man’s self-spoken defence comes to an end; and the woman, taking up the tale, describes how her lover wept :

Each cheek a river running from a fount,
With brynnish currant downe-ward flowed a pace.
Oh how the channell to the streaume gave grace!
Who glaz’d with Christall gate the glowing *Roses*,
That flame through water which their *hew* incloses.

Once more a succession of Sonnets is recalled—the first with “*beauty’s Rose*”; the 20th, with its “man in *hew* all *Hews* in his controlling”; and the 67th, of which the second quatrain runs as follows :

Why should false painting imitate her *cheek*,
And steale dead seeing of his living *hue*?
Why should poor beauty indirectly seek
Roses of shadow, since his *Rose* is *true*?

The connection of ideas here, as formed by the words “Roses,” “hew” and “cheek,” repeated in both poems, is unmistakable; and if, as seems necessary, we must conclude that both poems aim at the intimacy between Lord Oxford and his queen, of which a son, the Tudor Rose, and the “purple flower” was born, we can find modern corroboration—and from a Stratfordian writer—in Lord Alfred Douglas’s recent interpretation of the Sonnets, wherein I read, on page 15, concerning

the truth which is as nearly obvious as anything which is sometimes disputed can be said to be; namely, that *the youth to whom Shakespeare addressed the greater part of the Sonnets was one William Hughes* (or Hews, as the name would indifferently have been spelt).

Lord Alfred further concludes that this Will. Hughes is the “Mr. W. H.” of the Sonnet dedication, and that he was an actor in “Shakespeare’s,” and probably in other companies as well, though particularly in one which was acting Chapman’s plays. This seems to be unanswerable, since in the concluding couplet of

Sonnet LXXXVI.—a “rival poet,” verse, aiming certainly at Chapman—we read :

But when your (Will. Hughes) countenance fill'd up his
(Chapman's) line
Then lack'd I matter ; that enfeebled mine.

I wished, wrote de Vere, to see you playing, not in Chapman's, but in my own plays, who am your father.

Further, Lord Alfred, following Wilde, quotes this quatrain from Sonnet LIII.:

What is your substance, whereof are you made,

That millions of strange shadows on you tend ?

Since *every* one hath, *every* one, one shade

And you, but one, can *every shadow* lend—

and argues, unanswerably, that the lines would be unintelligible, were they not addressed to an actor, because that otherwise mysterious word, “shadow,” had, in Shakespeare's day, a technical meaning connected with the stage, as illustrated, for example, by Theseus's words concerning the actors in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—“the best in this kind are but shadows.” Again, Proteus (Alençon), in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, iv. ii., says : “I am but a *shadow*, and to your *shadow* will I make *true love*”—the “shadow,” that he holds so adoringly in his hands, being nothing else than a picture of Silvia, who is, once more, the Tudor Rose Elizabeth, and the wronged lady of “A Lover's Complaint.” Sonnet LXVII, already quoted, reiterates the same ideas, since—in direct connection with the word “Beauty,” which stands, throughout the Sonnets, for Queen Elizabeth—we have here brought together, in intimate connection, “hue” (the son) “shadow” (that son in his capacity as actor), “Rose,” which is the

Tudor Rose, and “purple flower,” standing also for the son ; and, finally, the phrase, “his *rose* is *true*,” linking the boy's mother, as a Tudor, with the boy's father, as a Vere. The same theme is treated even more intimately in Sonnets XXXIII.—XXXV., wherein de Vere puns, again and again, upon the “sun” (son), that, for one brief morning hour, before being masked by the “region cloud,” or cloud *regina*, had shone “with all triumphant splendour” on his brow ; and the son (sun) who, no less splendidly shining, was destined to be, nevertheless “but one hour mine.” To the father, indeed, this Tudor Rose is born, but

Sonnet XXXV.—

Roses have thorns and silver fountains mud ;
Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun.

Stern “civil war” is pending between de Vere's “love” and “hate.”

In the Sonnets, the episode is poetized by Lord Oxford himself, from his own personal viewpoint: in “A Lover's Complaint,” some other individual of the Chapman group—almost certainly Chapman himself—versifies the matter upon the queen's behalf, depicting her as a victim of Lord Oxford's seductive powers, that “art of craft,” as she calls it, which impelled her, at last, to doff, before his importunities, her “white stole of chastity,” and to shake off her “sober gardes” (stanza 43). This courtier-poet-dramatist, with his supreme gifts of person, tongue, and pen, his “plenitude of subtle matter” (44), and his teeming fancy, overcomes her royal defences, while he teaches her

To blush at speeches rank, to weep at woes,
Or to turn white and swoon at tragic shows—

just as he has done for millions of moderns, while we have listened spellbound to the master-magician, in comedy and tragedy alike.

Revealing also is stanza 45, which follows :

That not a heart which in his leuell came,
Coul'd scape the haile of his all-hurting ayme,
Shewing faire Nature is both kinde and tame.
And vail'd in them did winne whom he would maine
Against the thing he sought he would exclaime,
When he most burnt in hart-wisht luxurie,
He preacht pure maide, and praisd cold chastity.

These descriptions of the hurts sustained by all hearts that came "within the hail of his aim," and the man's amazing skill, while remaining within the kindness of nature, at "winning whom he would main," are aimed, deliberately and directly, first at the loving and tender bitterness of Hamlet-Oxford's attacks upon Ophelia—who had given him all her love—and, secondly, at his at once kind, yet deadly cruel reproaches and rebukes of Queen Gertrude, whom also, though differently, the Prince had loved, and was loved by. Especially those last two lines :

When he most burnt in hart-wisht luxurie,
He preacht pure maide, and praisd cold chastity—

almost paraphrase Hamlet's "get-thee-to-a-nunnery" scenes with Ophelia, and,

Be thou chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny.

I am perfectly certain that the author of "A Lover's Complaint" wrote these closing stanzas with the text

of *Hamlet* strongly in mind, and in the full consciousness that Lord Oxford was at once the author of the play and the original of the Prince of Denmark, cordially detested, and certainly here slandered, by his rival, Chapman, or by a poet of that school.

Thus merely with the garment of a grace,
The naked and concealed fiend he covered,
That th' unexperient gave the tempter place,
Which like a Cherubin above them hoverd.

Lord Oxford, in the Sonnets, certainly admits, in part, the truth of such charges, pleading always, however, that, while he can set down, well enough (Sonnet LXXXVIII.),

Of faults concealed wherein I am attainted—
a story

his offences, nevertheless, as he has already pleaded in "A Lover's Complaint," are "errors of the blood, not of the mind"; so that he can, from his viewpoint, honestly write in Sonnet CIX. :

O never say that I was false of heart

For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save thou, my Rose; in it thou art my all.

Then the poem closes upon the lady's admission of her lover's compelling and irresistible charm—the spell, potent to-day as then, of the world's supreme master of noble words :

Ay me, I fell, and yet do question make,
What I should doe againe for such a sake.

O that infected moysture of his eye,
 O that false fire which in his cheeke so glow'd,
 O that forc'd thunder from his heart did fye,
 O that sad breath his spungie lungs bestowed,
 O all that borrowed motion, seeming owed,
 Would yet againe betray the fore-betrayed,
 And new pervert a reconciled maide.

Such was the charm, such were the dangers of contact with "Shakespeare," the living man.

That this poem, "A Lover's Complaint," adds enormously to our knowledge and understanding of de Vere, in relation to Queen Elizabeth, his Tudor Rose, and throws vivid light upon him also as author of the Sonnets and the Plays, no reader of this chapter, I hope, will be disposed to deny. My argument simply is, that while the Sonnets were written by Oxford, and touch, primarily, upon his relations, past and present, with Elizabeth, and with their son, the actor, "The Complaint," on the other hand, was written by Lord Oxford's rival poet, George Chapman, and treats of the same matter from what Chapman conceives to be the late queen's viewpoint. The publication of "The Complaint" in the same book with the Sonnets, points to a strong probability that Chapman and his group—presumably through the good offices of the boy, Will—were behind this most important, and revealing, publication.

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