SHAKESPEARE'S SOUTHAMPTON

Books by A. L. Rowse

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE : A BIOGRAPHY

SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

Edited with an Introduction and Notes

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE : A BIOGRAPHY

POEMS OF A DECADE

POEMS CHIEFLY CORNISH

POEMS OF DELIVERANCE

POEMS PARTLY AMERICAN

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ALL SOULS AND APPEASEMENT

A HISTORY OF FRANCE

By Lucien Romier

Translated and completed

THE SOUTHAMPTON TOMB AT TITCHFIELD

SHAKESPEARE'S SOUTHAMPTON

Patron of Virginia

BY

A. L. ROWSE

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TO
ALLAN NEVINS
EMINENT HISTORIAN
GREAT AMERICAN
MOST GENEROUS OF MEN

CONTENTS

	PAGE
WRIOTHESLEY PEDIGREE	viii
PREFACE	ix
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	xi
CHAPTER I. THE KING'S SERVANT	I
II. THE HEIR	28
III. LORD BURGHLEY AND HIS WARD	43
IV. THE PATRON AND THE POET	58
V. THE POET AND THE PATRON	74
VI. THE FOLLOWER OF ESSEX	98
VII. MARRIAGE AND DISCONTENTMENTS	119
VIII. SOLDIERING IN IRELAND	136
IX. THE ESSEX CATASTROPHE	152
X. A NEW REIGN : THE REWARDS OF FAVOUR	172
XI. COURT AND COUNTRY	201
XII. THE VIRGINIA COMPANY	234
XIII. PARLIAMENT MAN	263
XIV. FATE	290
NOTES	306
INDEX	319

WRIOTHESLEY PEDIGREE

PREFACE

THE life of Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton, offers a double interest for us, literary as well as historical. As a young man, on his first entry into public life in the early 1590's, he was Shakespeare's acknowledged patron, to whom the poet dedicated his long poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, in 1593 and 1594. It is now perfectly clear that Shakespeare's Sonnets were written to and for his patron during the same period. This has always been the dominant view among literary scholars, from Malone downwards. But now, with the problem of the dating of the Sonnets settled, there is not merely no likelihood but not the remotest possibility that they could have been written for anyone else. Not only the dating, but all the circumstances and evidences, literary and historical, biographical and personal, cohere together with absolute internal and external consistency to make it impossible for this to be impugned.

Southampton's ardent and generous discipleship of Essex led to his condemnation to death and his imprisonment in the Tower for the last eighteen months of Elizabeth I's reign. He came out of it a sadder and a wiser man; in fact — I owe the remark to a friend — his career offers a striking example of what growing up can do for the character. He emerged in James's reign to become a dignified and singularly uncorrupt servant of the state in that corrupt and undignified court. Always popular, he became a man generally respected — for the qualities Shakespeare had discerned in him as a youth, the shining candour of his nature, as well as his generosity and gallantry. He was an honest and a good man.

Most of his public life falls in James's reign : it offers thus the historical interest of the transition from the Elizabethan to the Jacobean age. A Catholic to the end of Elizabeth's reign,

Shakespeare's Southampton

Southampton conformed under Scottish James, and became a champion of a vigorously Protestant and anti-Spanish foreign policy. (He died serving in the Netherlands in pursuit of it.) This led him to become a Parliament man, once more — at the end of his career as at the beginning — in opposition. A dominant concern throughout the second half of his life was his interest in America, in supporting voyages of discovery, in the plantation of Virginia; he was Treasurer of the Virginia Company during its last years.

In writing this book I have happily incurred many obligations: above all to All Souls College and the Huntington Library, at both of which congenial places the book was written; to Southampton's descendants, the Duke of Portland, the Duke of Buccleuch, the Duke of Bedford, and Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, for kindly allowing me to use portraits from their collections, particularly to the last for his interest in, and encouragement of, my book. I am much obliged to the Marquis of Salisbury, generous as always to scholars, for ready access to, and frequent use of, his papers; to Mr and Mrs Donald Hyde for allowing me to quote an unpublished letter of Southampton's; and to Miss N. McN. O'Farrell for her help, now over many years, with manuscript sources. I am indebted to the Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, and to Mr. A. G. Lee, Librarian, for showing me Southampton's portrait and books there; to Mr. T. Cottrell-Dormer of Rousham Park for allowing me to consult his manuscripts and for his scholarly aid in deciphering the letters of Southampton's mother; to the Warden of All Souls, Dr. J. M. Steadman, and Professor Madeleine Doran for help with books and references; to the Vicar of Titchfield for permitting photographs to be taken of the Southampton monument and to Mr. Charles Woolf of Newquay, who came all the way from Cornwall to take them; and to Mr. J. Fillingham, who guided me to Titchfield.

*All Souls College,
Oxford
May 1965*

A. L. ROWSE

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<p>The Southampton tomb at Titchfield <i>Photograph by Charles Woolf</i></p>	<p><i>Frontispiece</i></p>
<p>Palace House, Beaulieu <i>By courtesy of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu</i></p>	<p><i>facing page 13</i></p>
<p>Southampton's grandfather : the First Earl From Palace House, Beaulieu <i>By courtesy of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu</i></p>	<p>20</p>
<p>Southampton as a boy From the tomb at Titchfield <i>Photograph by Charles Woolf</i></p>	<p>37</p>
<p>Southampton's mother : Mary Browne From Welbeck Abbey <i>By courtesy of the Duke of Portland</i></p>	<p>52</p>
<p>Southampton at the period of the Sonnets From the miniature by Nicholas Hilliard <i>By courtesy of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge</i></p>	<p>60</p>
<p>Shakespeare's Dedication to Southampton <i>By courtesy of the Bodleian Library</i></p>	<p>84</p>
<p>The Earl of Essex From Woburn Abbey <i>By courtesy of the Duke of Bedford</i></p>	<p>101</p>
<p>Southampton as a soldier From Welbeck Abbey <i>By courtesy of the Duke of Portland</i></p>	<p>133</p>
<p>Southampton's wife : Elizabeth Vernon From Boughton House <i>By courtesy of the Duke of Buccleuch</i></p>	<p>148</p>
<p>Southampton in the Tower From Boughton House <i>By courtesy of the Duke of Buccleuch</i></p>	<p>165</p>

Shakespeare's Southampton

Queen Elizabeth I	<i>facing page</i> 172
From the portrait at Corsham Court	
<i>By courtesy of Lord Methuen</i>	
King James I	180
<i>By courtesy of the National Gallery of Scotland</i>	
Sir Edwin Sandys	245
<i>By courtesy of B. L. Lechmere</i>	
Place House, Titchfield Abbey	285
<i>By courtesy of the Ministry of Works</i>	
Southampton in middle life	296
From Palace House, Beaulieu	
<i>By courtesy of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu</i>	