

meaning of the words as well as themselves, although, for want of thorough school instruction, he mispronounced them. Indeed, it is quite evident that, after the decease of his parents, at least, he had not enjoyed the advantage of regular schooling so long, as many children under the care of their parents, do, but often fail to improve. As soon as he had passed his childhood, he was recommended to be a page in the family of the Earl of Northampton, under whom he had excellent opportunities to acquire courtly manners and genteel accomplishments.

This position was usually coveted by the younger sons of nobles and the most noted families of the gentry. The acquirements to be made in the retinue of an Earl fitted youths for high posts both in military and civil life. Young Dudley must have been intended for important affairs by his friends, who helped him to such a place.

This is a stronger proof that he belonged to a family of distinction, than the secret bequest, made to him, or the name he bore. A boy of ordinary expectations and humble parentage would have been apprenticed to a mechanic or tradesman, instead of being preferred for the attendant of Earls or Knights. But the authors, who have left accounts of him, expressly assert that he belonged to a proud family, whatever that may signify. Their words are, "he was a man of high spirit, suitable to the family to which his father belonged."

There must be something inaccurate in the statement about young Dudley being placed in the family of the Earl of Northampton. The Nicolls family were intimate with the Comptons, but Wm. Compton did not become an Earl till 1629. The fact probably was that Dudley was in the family of this Wm. Compton, who afterwards became Earl of Northampton. Judge Nicolls' father says, in his will, he had a cup from Sir Henry Compton. This Henry Compton, father of Wm., was born 1538 and died 1589 at Compton in Warwickshire, his family seat. He was a Baron, and was knighted by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester in 1566. He is said to have been a "person of fine wit and solid judgement."

Wm. Compton married Elizabeth, daughter and heir of Sir John Spencer, Lord Mayor of London, in the 36th year of Queen Elizabeth (1593). He was made Lord Lieutenant of Wales, Worcester, Hereford and Salop in 1618.

The other Earl of Northampton, whom Thomas Dudley might have served as page some time, (but not probably after he obtained his title), was Henry Howard, son of the famous Earl of Surrey, the poet, which Henry Howard was born 1539, created Earl of Northampton in 1603, and died unmarried in 1614, at London. Dudley