

**SHAKESPEARE OXFORD SOCIETY**

**NEWSLETTERS**

**1974**

# The Shakespeare Oxford Society

Summer- Fall 1974

110 Argyle Road, Baltimore, Maryland 21212



Dear Fellow-Members Shakespeare Oxford Society:

Long ere now, I suspect that Those of you who last saw a News-Letter in December 1973, and who mailed in their checks for renewal of dues in the stamped addressed envelopes enclosed with it, have been wondering why they have not received another, and what has happened to the Society. Those others who did not take advantage of said envelopes to renew annual dues—approximately fifth per cent—are perhaps equally curious, but the fine edge of that curiosity is dulled by the sub-, or unconscious reflection that their procrastination, or perspicacity, has saved them \$5.00 or \$10.00 as the case may be.

The Society is alive and well, but this cannot be said of its president and editor of the News-Letter. He is now ambulatory and alive, though "well" is not applicable. Last January he was admitted to the intensive care facility of a Washington Hospital with combined congestion, coronary and pulmonary. Each of these vital organs was running on about one cylinder, and mutually pulling the other down, as each is dependent on the functioning of the other. Through the skill of the doctors, the intelligent use of modern chemical, and electronic, tests and treatments, he is now out and around, but stable, or rather in balance, from chemical therapy and medication—some of which are specifics for the impairments, other to counteract undesirable side-effects of said specifics. He has been officially declared totally "disabled" and ordered quit work, get on a low-sodium diet, and avoid all stress, physical and mental. To paraphrase Sir Francis Bacon; Let us now leave these clinical details, the third-person and return to the perpendicular pronoun, with which I am more accustomed.

I have had to shut down my office, and the headquarters of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, which are one and the same, and have been so for the last nine years.

Preserving the records, files, and research notes has been a major care, as well as finding someone to carry-on these responsibilities, temporarily, if not permanently. Fortunately I can report some success. The files, records, notes etc. have been moved to the apartment building in which I now live at 1791 Lanier Place, N.W., Washington D.C. 20009. Telephone (21 (202) 387-0792. Home, Apt. 31. Dr. or Prof. Gordon C. Cyr, Vice-President of the Society, has kindly consented to take over the presidential duties, and responsibility for the News-Letter, temporarily, not that he would not be an excellent executive, but he has a full-time position in the Department of Music at Maryland State College, at Towson, Md. Mrs. Helen Cyr, has been an assistant secretary of the Society, and will now be Secretary. These friends are both Gung-ho Oxfordians, and well versed in our mysteries. What is needed on a permanent basis, of course is a competent person in this field, who can give his full time to the Society and its program of research at his own expense, or for our Trustees to raise funds for a budget that would take care of an executive salary, and headquarters expenses. Any practical suggestions from our members on this problem will be welcomed by both Prof. Cyr and myself. Speaking for myself only, all suggestions will be received and acknowledged, but the temperature of the welcome will be rather tepid to those beginning "why don't you" or any equivalent there of. The Cyr's address and home is 110 Glen Argyle Road, Baltimore, Md. 21212 My address is in the first part of this paragraph. The Post Office has been notified to forward mail from the old address, and is now doing so, but how completely I cannot tell, for there is always a human equation to be considered.

As some of you know, and others may have surmised, a large part of my time for the last eight or nine years has been spent in digging up, and running down clues, originating in two MSS, now in this country, which may lead to a cache, or pocket of MSS in England, which could throw light on original "Shakespeare" MSS, and perhaps settle the long disputed question of authorship. Some substantial progress has been made, which is most encouraging, but is by no means complete, and final success, if it is to come, is now beyond the reach of this writer. However it is most important that the ground gained be not lost, and the trails opened up be followed to their end. The provenance of three MSS, one of which is the property of an Ivy League University, is the key to the mystery. The authorities of that University, write that nothing is known of it prior to 1958. I have traced it back, from this end, to 1928-29, and from the other end, say 1570-80 to 1660 and a private library of a man who married one of the daughters of Sir Horatio Vere, Lord Vere of Tilbury. A copy of the original has been located, or rather referred to by a contemporary, as being in the library of the man's brother-in-law, who married another of Lord Vere's daughters. Francis and Horace Vere were Edward de Vere's favorite cousins. I have been working on the postulate, or theory, that Oxford's papers and library may have been turned over to his cousins. This theory was further strengthened when I found in the British Museum an original holographic letter written in Holland, by Edward Vere, the son of Earl of Oxford and "the dark lady" Ann Vavasour, reporting to him a military victory over Tilly (Tully). "Him" is Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford, who was fighting on the Protestant side in Holland. This letter is signed "Your Lordship's loving brother and obedient servant, Edward Vere." The Society has a photostatic copy of the original in its files, Henry, 18th Earl, was married, but died without progeny in 1625. If Henry, 18th Earl, who was around ten years old when his father died, inherited Oxford's papers, etc., as seems normal, usual, and customary, what became of them upon his death? Nobody seems to know. The record of this acquisition in the B.M. shows that it came with a batch of papers etc. from the widow of the second Earl of Oxford and Mortimer (Harley), son of the first Harley who had this title conferred upon him after the Vere line ran out with death of 20th Earl, circa 1702. Here is a personal letter to 18th Earl of O. from his half-brother. That somebody considered it worthy of being preserved, is now beyond dispute, for I have had it in my own hands in 1973. Who was this Lady (Harley) Oxford? She was one of the Great-grand-daughters of Horatio Vere, in direct line (Hollis) from the man in whose library Dillingham found one of the MSS above, borrowed it for printing, and returned it circa 1658!

While I cannot count on being able to continue this research in England, I am hoping that I will be permitted one more trip, this fall, to try to find and interest someone in Essex to follow up the clues, taking advantage of what has been done, and the notes I can turn over to him. I have made some valuable contacts there among local historians, and antiquaries, who have a sort of "fringe" or peripheral interest in the Vere family, apart from the possibility the 17th Earl may have been "Shakespeare". Some of these have an expertise in reading old records in English Secretary, and might be interested in the kudos a successful search might bring to the finder. However, with the zeal of a true Oxfordian still uninspired, he may have to have his out-of-pocket expenses paid at a minimum, and perhaps some recompense for his time. That would have to come from the Society, and is one of the problems now before us, or rather you, for circumstances force me to borrow the immortal words of the late Sam. Goldwyn "Include me out." Going a little further back in time and higher in scale I can appropriately quote St. Peter. "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I unto thee." Of primary importance to any historical researcher, is knowing where to look. Of secondary, though almost as important, value; is knowing where not to look. I have an immense store of the latter and will share it freely.

Sincerely yours for E. Ver.

Richard C. Horne Jr. Shakespeare Oxford Society.

The usual function of a News-Letter published from time to time by a society or association, is to inform the members what their fellow members are doing, especially in its special field of activity. The reason that there have been little or no reports along this line of late, is that the editor has none reported to him, nor has he seen with his own eyes, troubling of the waters by his fellows. Hence the current dearth. This has of course, left plenty of time to observe the activities of the orthodox, or Stratford cultists. Perhaps it would be more strictly correct to say; those reported in their own journals, or the daily press, and journals of opinion. Below are some brief jottings.

Prof. A.L. Rowse.

His latest mare's nest, a claim to have identified "the dark lady" from entries in Simon Forman's diary, or notes, was proved to be exactly that. This time he tilted not only against his favorite foes, "the Eng. Lit. people", but all the literary critics, historians, newspaper columnists, editors, and plain reporters, who joined issue with him and scoffed at the "discovery". He definitely lost this round. One of his opponents remarked that the dark lady problem had changed to "the Rowse problem." One of the "journalist clowns" (Rowse's description) referred to his "pre-publication trumpeting" and "buffoonish behavior." Finally the professor used nine columns in the The (London) Observer to hit back. It was titled "The joys of being right (in caps.). His theme was that there are necessarily two sides to every question (1) the R side, which stands for "Right" and also "Rowse; and 2), the side taken by anyone else, which is always wrong. In it he hits out at everybody he knows, even taking a crack at our American friend, Dr. Jas. M. McManaway, calling him an "old buffer (sic)". This must be an old grievance, for as far as I know, Dr. MacManaway had taken no part in the latest controversy, being reported ill at the time. If the initial of his first name does not stand for "Arrogance" there is nothing in his language to rule it out.

Prof. W. Nicholas Knight.

Nothing should be made of this juxtaposition with the above. Dr. Knight is a courteous gentleman, with whom the writer has corresponded, and has as much right to propagate another Stratfordian Myth, as anybody else, living or dead. I know of no official deadline, or cut-off date, in the orthodox canon, after which no genuine revelation of myth or legend, or tradition, can be received by a true believer, or cultist. His book has now been published. I regret I cannot remember the exact title, right now, but it is an amplification an exposition of his belief that Shakespeare (Stratford Will) was a Notary in Westminster in the '90's by day, and wrote his plays and poems; \* was an acquaintance, and perhaps a friend of Wm. Lambarde, and that he signed his name on the front page of Lambarde's "Archaeologia" now in the Folger Library. (\* at night). Just how this will be received by the "scholarly world" (code name for professional Stratfordians) is a matter of conjecture. Most probably it will be ignored. If they scoff and sneer, however, they do so at their own peril, for it is as firmly based as any of the other legends and traditions they have been propagating and profitably peddling to the gullible and indiscriminating for years. My personal opinion is that Prof. Knight is sincere. I hope his book will be a financial success, wish him well, and am glad to see him get a ~~bit~~ of the action, which has been a monopoly of his mentors and elders for too long a time.

The "Moniment" at Stratford-on-Avon.

No more known facts have been released on this, that is, its being taken from the church wall last October, by a party or parties unknown. It is now back in place, with only superficial damage. Dr. Levi Fox blames the Baconians. Dr. Louis Marder blames Oxfordians in general, and Mr. Charlton Ogburn in particular, for the desecration. The hypothesis, propounded in our last News-Letter, that it was "an inside job", for reasons that can only be conjectured, is still as good as any. Dr. Fox's plan to nick the public for funds for the "very expensive" costs of restoring it to the wall, must have died "a-borning."

Animus sedendo & quiescendo fit prudens. Arist.

And therefore Arist. sayeth that young men cannot hearken to the precepts of wisdom, because they are not settled from the boyling heat of their affections.

See Caesar's saying in Salust etc Omnes qui (etc etc. Ed Note)

Natura humana prodit se in creaturis.

Troilus & Cressida. Act II, Scene 2, Lines 163-173.

Hect. Paris and Troilus, you have both ~~said well~~ said well;

And in the cause and question now in hand

Have glaz'd, but superficially: not much

Unlike young men, whom Aristotle thought

Unfit to hear moral philosophy.

The reasons you allege do not conduce

To the hot passion of distempered blood

Than to make up a free determination

Twixt right and wrong for pleasure and revenge

Have ears more deaf than adders to the voice

Of any true decision.....

(Ed. Note. There are internal clues among others in this play to suggest that it was written circa 1583-84. It was first published, quarto, in 1609 with a peculiar preface by the publishers headed "A never writer to an ever reader. Newes. (A Never (An Ever writer to an E. Ver reader ?) In the opening sentence of the preface we are told that this play was "never clapper-clawed by the palmes of the vulgar" and not having been "sullied, with the smoaky breath of the multitude". This comes in the passage "And believe this, that when he is gone, and his comedies out of sale, you will scramble for them, and set up a new English Inquisition. Take this for a warning, and at the peril of your pleasure loss, and judgements refuse not, nor like this the less, for not being sullied, with smoaky breath of the multitude; but thank fortune for the scape it has made amongst you. Since by the grand possessor's (Ital sup.) I believe you should have prayed for them, rather been prayed." (See First Folio. "To the great Variety of Readers." From the most able to him that can but spell. There you are numbered. We had rather you were weighed. Especially when the fate of all Bookes depends upon your capacities; and not your heads alone, but of your purses. Well! It is now publique. & you will stand for your priviledges wee know; to read and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That does best commend a Booke, the Stationer saies.....)"

So much--for the time being--for T.&C? but that digression is not the purpose of this mention. Far from it. Most of us know there are several so-called anachronisms in Shakes-peare, such as a clock striking in Julius Caesar, Cleopatra playing billiards, and Hect. quoting Aristotle. We know of the latter but very few seemed to have paid attention to what the quotation was. It is reproduced above. So what? I'll tell you what. In a bound MS never published, which can be dated circa 1570-80, now in possession of an Ivy League University, there are a number of blank pages, which have been used as a common-place book to jot down notes, presumably by the owner. On one of these pages appears the matter in the first paragraph above. The handwriting, Italian cur-sive, or "sweet Roman", is either Edward de Veres, or bears an uncanny resemblance to it. Several who have read and studied this MS, and the additions thereto, are firmly convinced it belonged to, or was once in the hand of, the man that wrote "Shakespeare" for there are several other extracts that bob up later in Shakespeare. On the last page is a hand written poem, alliterative and Euphuistic "Oh heavy hearte when harms are hid" which, with two verses added, appears in an anology pub. in 1576.

Are we Oxfordians "Ignorant and Naive Snobs"?

"To those acquainted with the history of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, it is incredible that anyone should be so naive or ignorant as to doubt the reality of Shakespeare as the author of the plays that bear his name.....The anti-Shakespeareans base their arguments upon a few simple premises, all of them false..... Most anti-Shakespeareans are naive and betray an obvious snobbery. The author of their favorite plays, they imply, must have had a college diploma framed and hung on his study wall, like the one in their dentist's office, and obviously so great a writer must have had a title or some equally significant evidence of exalted social background." So Dr. Louis B. Wright told us twenty-five years ago, and is still telling us today. We know better, of course, but do we realize that Dr. Wright, is, for a price, telling it to our children and grand-children, and to millions and millions of high-school adolescents through the United States, and that they have no reason to doubt it, accept it blindly, and nine out of ten of them will never hear or read anything to the contrary on The Authorship Question? (Note. For the benefit of those of our members who may have come in late, i.e., not read the reviews and discussion on this subject in former News-Letters, the above is an excerpt from the introductions in paper-back copies of Shakespeares Plays, titled "the Folger Library General Reader's Shakespeare. The Editor is Louis B. Wright, who was Director of the Folger for Twenty years. The publisher is Simon and Schuster, Inc. Though forty or more copies are on prominent display for sale in the Folger Lobby and entrance to the Exhibition Hall, it is not a publication of the Folger, and its present Director and Staff disclaim any responsibility for the statements such as the above, saying that they are there for the convenience, and benefit of the public and tourists, who buy them by the thousands. The Library buys them wholesale from the publishers, and makes the usual profit that a retail book-seller would. The main profit goes to Simon & Schuster Inc. and royalties to the editor or editors. Now there is nothing wrong in that, and I have no doubt that when Dr. Wright was Director, a perfectly legal arrangement was made for the use of Folger Library's name on the cover of his books. But the public at large does not know this, especially the school teachers and school boards, as well as State Boards of Education who provide them in the millions in the several states for use by the pupils studying Shakespeare. They think they are teaching the truth, pure and undefiled, published under the imprimatur of a respected institution, a world center and authority on Shakespeare, and certainly with no axe to grind. Further note for late-comers. Dr. Wright is a Life Trustee of the Stratford "Birthplace" Trust at Stratford-on-Avon, its American representative, an expert P.R. man, and probably the ablest propagandist in promoting the prosperity of The Stratford Cult of Authorship, now alive. This commercial exploitation is Big Business in England and bigger in the U.S.)

Lets look into the basis of the statements quoted at the top of this page, as well as similar ones that "Stratford Will" and his family were of, and from, the middle class; some say upper middle, others, lower. That Will undoubtedly received a good education from the Grammar School in Stratford, because his father was Bailiff, and could send his son there for free. (So could any other man, bailiff or laborer, if the boy was qualified to enter, viz: knew how to read and write.)

First, I will cheerfully stipulate that Dr. Wright is not only "acquainted with the history of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods", but is a recognized authority thereon, as well as on Colonial America. We would not dream of aspiring to such distinction, but in twenty-five years reading and researching on this period, a smidgeon or trace has stuck, or rubbed off, as the case may be. However what follows, is not from me, but from those much closer in time, recognized authorities in several fields, and generally regarded as men of integrity who knew what they were writing about.

Let's hear from Dr. Samuel Johnson in the preface to his edition of Shakespeare.

"The English nation, in the time of Shakespeare, was yet struggling to emerge from barbarity. The philology of Italy had been transplanted hither in the reign of Henry VIII; and the learned languages had been successfully cultivated by Lilly, Linacæ, and More; by Pole, Cheke, and Gardiner; and afterwards by Smith, Clerke, Haddon, and Ascham. Greek was now taught boys in the principal schools, and those who united elegance with learning, read, with great diligence, the Italian and Spanish Poets. But literature was yet confined to professed scholars, or to men and women of high rank. The publick was gross and dark; and to be able to read and write was an accomplishment still valued for its rarity.....But the powers of nature is only the power of using *it* to any certain purpose the materials which diligence procures, or opportunity supplies. Nature gives no man knowledge, and when images are collected by study and experience, can only assist in combining or applying them. Shakespeare, however favored by nature, could impart only what he had learned; and as he must increase his ideas, like other mortals, by gradual acquisition, he, like them, grew wiser as he grew older, could display life better, as he knew it more, and instruct with more efficacy, as he was himself more amply instructed... "

When, sixty years ago, J. Thomas Looney, in his search for the author of "Shakespeare" by looking for similarities in style and imagery among the courtier poets, found and identified Edward de Vere as the author in the class to whom "literature was yet confined" does that discovery make him "an ignorant and naïve snob, as well as other, otherwise reasonable men and women, who are impressed by his deductions, which are now strengthened and undergirded by a mass of modern research? People who gag at swallowing the pretentious pap of the "Stratford Cultists" which has no firmer basis than that of Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy, or the Easter Bunny that lays all those pretty eggs, however intriguing these myths may have been to us as children, and to those whose minds never grew up.

On the distinction, HIGH CLASS (excuse it please!) and status of John Shaksper and his progeny in contemporary England, lets turn to William Harrison in 1570s.

Excerpts from William Harrison's AD A Description of Elizabethan England.  
From the first topic; On Classes and Rank of Men: The fourth and last sort of people in England are day laborers, poor husbandmen, and some retailers (which have no land) copy-holders and all artificers as tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, brickmakers, masons etc" (Ed Note. Could, perish the thought!, "etc" embrace "glovers", "whittawers", "butchers" and their apprentices ?) As for slaves and bondsmen we have none.... This fourth and last sort of people therefore have neither voice nor authority in the commonwealth, but are to be ruled and not to rule other: yet they are not altogether neglected, for in cities and corporate towns, for default of yeomen, they are fain to make their inquests of such manner of people. And in villages they are commonly made church wardens, sidesmen, ale conners, now and then constables and many time enjoy the name of headboroughs". Harrison was born in London, educated first at St. Pauls School, then at Westminster, under Master N. Owell (Alex.) later Dean of St. Pauls. He earned degrees from both Universities. He was a great friend of Sir Thomas Smith, the wise and learned Sec. of State in days of Ed. VI. Harrison for a long time was the Parson at Red Winter in Essex, and later Prebendary of Windsor. (Note, Americans who have access to Harvard Classics, or Dr. Elliot's "Five foot shelf of Books" can turn to the volume "Holingshead" and find abridged Harrison in the first half.)

Readers: Look not on the typos, overstrikes, transpos. and misspellings. They are of the hand, and not the head, but look on the substance. In our next N-L, not too far away, and edited by Dr. Gordon C. Cyr, both the eye and mind will be pleased. I hope to contribute more on these last topics, including a personal relationship of the Earl of Ox. with six of the proper names mentioned by Johnson and Harrison. Meanwhile au revoir, and not good bye.

R.C.H., Jr.