

SHAKESPEARE OXFORD SOCIETY

NEWSLETTERS

1979



110 Glen Argyle Road, Baltimore, Maryland 21212

SHAKESPEARE ON TELEVISION

By Charlton Ogburn, Jr.

The inspired undertaking by the BBC in collaboration with Time-Life Books to produce for television all thirty-seven dramas conventionally recognized as Shakespeare's has got off to a splendid start in the United States with exciting performances of Julius Caesar and As You Like It. The latter especially showed again, as Sir Laurence Olivier's Henry the Fifth demonstrated thirty-five years ago, that Shakespeare comes into his own only when freed from the limitations of the stage, which he himself chafed against. It has been evident all along, if only from the length of many of his plays, that he was writing not primarily for the theatre. Where two or at most two and a half hours was the maximum playing-time for an Elizabethan stage production, Coriolanus as given by the Royal Shakespeare Company last December ran to three and a half hours, while an uncut Hamlet, as Maurice Evans discovered for us shortly before World War II, runs to five. Some of Shakespeare's plays, moreover, like A Midsummer-Night's Dream and Antony and Cleopatra, are either a comedown when staged or are virtually unstageable. We now have added confirmation that, however superb "theatre" some of his plays are, Shakespeare when he wrote was looking beyond the "unworthy scaffold" of the Rose and Globe to the imaginations of his auditors and readers, which the medium of the screen can so greatly assist.

It has been speculated that more persons will see the Shakespeare plays in their current showing on television than the total to whom they have been shown since they were written nearly four centuries ago. It is certainly our impression from what we have seen so far that the production of the series will prove to be the most important single Shakespearean event since the publication of the First Folio in 1623, if we may except the appearance of J. Thomas Looney's Shakespeare Identified fifty-five years ago.

Announcements of two plans to bring "Shakespeare's" life to the television screen preceded the BBC/Time-Life project by several years, and dissenters from Stratfordism braced themselves for the usual impostures. Since then one series has been produced by Associated British Television, Sir Lew Grade's large and prolific organization. As was to be expected, it had run into difficulties from the start. An outstanding Shakespeare-vulgarizer, the novelist Anthony Burgess--also prolific and successful--was originally engaged to do the script. However, his services were later terminated. His replacement, observing that the known facts about his subject could be got on a post-card, solved the problem of casting Shakspere of Stratford in the role of Shakespeare in the way it is always solved, by consistent resort to fiction. But television demands more than half-measures, and the resort in this case was so liberal as to shock even a hardened Stratfordian like Louis Marder, or so he indicated in his Shakespeare Newsletter. Apparently the University of Chicago professor saw the films in a studio showing. At least we cannot find that the series ever appeared on television in the United States. In Britain, according to Darrol Blake, author of Nothing Truer Than Truth (a skilful and successful play about Edward de Vere as Shakespeare), it passed across the tube with little notice or effect.

The other series was planned for production in our own country by no less an organization than the National Geographic Society. Given the tax-exempt Society's great resources and command of a large, respectful and trusting audience, earned by the generally high quality of the programs bearing its seal, the news of its intentions came as no laughing matter. The further news of the selection of a writer for the series was hair-raising. It was to be Louis B. Wright, member emeritus of the board of the National Geographic Society, director emeritus of the Folger Shakespeare Library, lifetime member of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust of Stratford and author of probably more widely-disseminated unscrupulous slander of dissenters from Shakespearean orthodoxy than anyone else. In an interview with the Washington Post of 28 December 1976 Dr. Wright himself made the chilling disclosure that he and his assistant, Elaine W. Fowler, are now working on a television series on such questions as how Shakespeare chose his themes and how he was inspired by certain events in his youth. The program was intended for presentation on public television at the end of 1977 or the beginning of 1978.

The National Geographic Society, we ascertained, was not interested in the question of whether the "Shakespeare" whose life it was going to present to the public with all its authority was the Shakespeare who had written the matchless dramas, or, as Henry James called him, "the biggest and most successful fraud ever practised on a patient world." The urgent plea that someone of responsibility in the Society take an hour or two to look objectively into the question was smiled off, along with a copy of the Harvard Magazine article on The Man Who Shakespeare Was Not (and Who He Was).

It was clear that under the law we had a right to time on the air to reply to the fallacies on which the Geographic program would be based. Our request went

both to the director of programs at the producing station, WQED-TV in Pittsburgh in a strongly worded letter of 29 May 1976 and to his equivalent, Mr. Fred Flaxman, at the public-broadcasting station in Washington, D. C., WETA. In a letter to the latter of June 8th we recalled that WETA had six days earlier broadcast a talk by Nicholas Johnson making the point, with which the station apparently agreed, that "commercial television broadcasters had little concern for fairness and regarded constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech as protecting their rights alone." In this letter we recalled that the Harvard Magazine article had been reprinted in the leading place in the editorial section of the Sunday Washington Post and cited other telling evidence of the widespread interest in the question of the Shakespeare authorship.

Well, the jobholders in public television turn one face toward you when soliciting a contribution to their salaries, quite another when you come as a troublesome member of the public. Mr. Tom Skinner at WQED, with the well-known assurance of a secure bureaucrat, simply disregarded our appeals altogether. Mr. Flaxman at WETA replied after a month's interval that we could not expect time "to present your point of view" since "the fairness doctrine" . . . pertains only to issues of 'current controversy,' " such as the issue of the Shakespeare authorship was not; the station's legal counsel was given as the authority for this airy determination. We wrote to Mr. Glaxman two days later as follows:

To maintain that the question of the Shakespeare authorship is not a matter of current controversy, you and your legal counsel would have had to ignore very nearly everything in my letter to you of June 8th and its enclosures. Naturally I reject out of hand a contention so preposterous. At the same time I am quite prepared to furnish you with abundant further evidence that no subject in the whole field of literature is one of such current controversy as the authorship of Shakespeare.

In response Mr. Flaxman referred us once more to WQED ("perhaps you should write again, or call") and was "sorry that my reply to your earlier letter was not satisfactory to you." One wondered in what circumstances Mr. Flaxman would expect a cynical brush-off of the law to be regarded as satisfactory to the injured party.

The upshot is that Dr. Wright's expectation of seeing his creation on the screen seems to be doomed to disappointment. The series must have been seen as artificial and unconvincing, as orthodox lives of "Shakespeare" inevitably are, only more transparently so for being enacted before the unsparing camera; seeing is not believing when the images are unbelievable. At present, we learn, the Geographic has no plans to show the series on television. There is, however, a large innocent, captive audience at hand--a subject people: the school population. Helen Cyr, our Secretary-Treasurer tell us that: "All is not lost! Film sales announcements for the National Geographic Shakespeare Series indicate that just one program is actually devoted to so-called biography of Shakespeare. The remaining programs consist of condensed versions of various plays."

A program based on the series is also being broadcast by public radio in connection with the BBC/Time-Life series. Morse Johnson, one of our most dynamic members, has this report to make on that:

"Cincinnati's NPR Station WGUC, enthusiastically agreed to tape an hour interview with me on the authorship question, having determined that NPR would be receptive to carrying the tape, or parts thereof, nationwide during the Shakespeare Festival. That receptivity ended abruptly with: 'Thanks again for the tape. I'm sorry I can't include it in the Shakespeare feed.' WGUC explained this 'can't' by noting that NPR 'just didn't want to touch that nerve.'"

We do not know what others' experience has been, but we have seen no reaction at all to the radio program. For the rest we are more than ever persuaded that second only to the story of the authorship itself in fascination will be the history of the controversy when it comes to be written.

MORSE JOHNSON AND THE ENQUIRER AGAIN IN THE VAN

On 13 February 1977 the Cincinnati Enquirer devoted the leading half of the first page of its Sunday book section to a review by Morse Johnson, lawyer-member of our Society, of the reissue by the Kennikat Press of J. Thomas Looney's revolutionary Shakespeare Identified as edited by Ruth Loyd Miller. Under the title The Man Who Wasn't Shakespeare (a photograph of the Droeshout engraving and the poem facing it in the First Folio was prominently displayed), the review performed the valuable service of retelling the story behind the book and the story told by the book.

Mr. Johnson and the Enquirer have now come through again as author and publisher of a first-rate attack upon the problem of the Shakespeare authorship. History's Most Successful Coverup, an extended article in the Enquirer Magazine for 26 November 1978 focuses on the contrast between the "apparently uneducated, untutored and untraveled Stratford man" and "the peerless, myriad-minded Shakespeare," whose works reveal a "vast range of knowledge and learning." It brings out the poverty of the Stratfordian's record, the evidence of his illiteracy and the lack of any contemporary connection between Shakspeare and the dramatist Shakespeare. Citing Mark Twain's and Henry James's derisive skepticism of the orthodox figure, it quotes the reference by Sir Tyrone Guthrie, eminent Shakespearean director and producer, to the theory "advanced by reputable scholars, seriously, and in my opinion, plausibly," that the Stratford man "merely lent his name as a cover for the literary activities of another person" and suggests what the reasons for

the author's necessary pseudonymity are likely to have been. At the very end Mr. Johnson unveils Edward de Vere as the one whom "the most convincing . . . circumstantial evidence" would identify as the author. The article is the best succinct statement of the case against Shakespearean orthodoxy that we have seen.

DE VERE THE SUBJECT OF SCRIPT-WRITING CONTEST

The Deep South Writers & Artists Conference has made the extremely interesting announcement of an international competition for the best television script on "Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, Elizabethan Courtier-Poet-Dramatist," with a deadline for submission of 15 June 1980. An inducement even greater than the first prize of \$1000 is the honor of being judged by Extra Stone (son of those notable friends of the Shakespeare-Oxford Society, Sol and Rose Feinstone) and his wife Sara Seegar. To list the high points of Mr. Stone's career in the theatre, beginning in the mid-thirties with minor parts in the Theatre Guild and going on to starring roles in the radio and motion pictures, then as director and producer on television, takes almost half a foot of 5 point type in Who's Who. The program and actors with which Mr. Stone has been associated reads like a history of television in the United States.

The chairman of the competition, from whom information may be obtained, is Irene Shallcross, at P. O. Box 2831, Baton Rouge, La. 70821. The locus of the competition will not surprise our membership, which is aware that Ruth Loyd and Judge Minos D. Miller have made Louisiana a center of discomfort for Stratfordism.

SUCCESS OF SHAKESPEARE CROSS-EXAMINATION

An inquiry of the American Bar Association Journal as to the sales of Shakespeare Cross-Examination has brought a reply from the editor of the Journal, Richard B. Allen, stating that there have been three printings, the latest in February 1974, and that probably between 9000 and 10,000 copies have been sold. Considering that the work has never had the benefit of a line of advertising outside the Journal (and only small notices in it) and never been in a bookshop, this seems to us (as it will to most authors) a remarkable showing and an attestation of the continued wide and vigorous interest in the questions of Shakespeare's identity despite the strident insistence of the orthodox professoriat that there is no question about it--a campaign of vituperation that before long will enter its third century.

In 1959, Richard Bentley, its editor, published in the A.B.A. Journal an unorthodox article entitled Elizabethan Whodunit: Who Was 'William Shakespeare'? The energetic correspondence provoked by the article led to the publication of nine more articles expressing the various schools of thought on the authorship, and these were gathered together and published as Shakespeare Cross Examination in 1961.

FROM ENGLAND

Harold W. Patience, Secretary of the English Chapter of the Shakespeare-Oxford Society, is, by invitation, to address the Dorothy L. Sayers Historical & Literary Society on Edward de Vere, on April 3rd: Miss Sayers, two of whose famous Lord Peter Wimsey detective novels have recently been shown on public television, lived near Braintree, Essex, where Mr. Patience had his home. Mr. Patience has also been asked by E. V. Scott, director of a company that produces the County magazines of England, to write a book on the Oxford theory of the

authorship for nationwide publication. Mr. Scott is now a member of our Society. We recall that in 1967, Robert Innes-Smith, Editor and Director of a company publishing English regional magazines (possibly the company Mr. Scott now directs?) sought to have an article on the Oxford case printed in all seventeen but was opposed on the grounds that it would "upset people" and had to settle for publication in the East Anglia News alone.

Speaking of the indefatigable Mr. Patience reminds us to express our gratitude for the quality of others who represent the Oxford case in Essex and adjacent Suffolk--the de Vere country--and give it distinction, including as they do Vice Admiral Sir Ian McGeoch, Colonel George O.C. Probert and, of course, our British Vice President, Lieutenant Colonel Ian Keelan. Their generous hospitality and helpfulness are known to several of our members, including the editor of the Newsletter.

BOOK REVIEW

By Warren Hope

HAMLET HIMSELF by Bronson Feldman
(Published by Love Lore Press,
7844 Montgomery Avenue, Elkins
Park, Penn. 19117).

When at long last teachers of English and the public at large realize that back in 1920 J. Thomas Looney gave us the most reasonable and illuminating explanation of the origin of Shakespeare's works that we have, there will be much scurrying after texts that analyze the plays and poems in the light of that explanation. "Shakespearean scholars" will then be startled to find that while they were resting on their flimsy assumptions, others, in relative obscurity, were laboring

to understand the true Shakespeare and his works. Dr. Bronson Feldman, who has been doing so for decades, stands in the front rank of these pioneer scholars. And his most recent and lengthy study, Hamlet Himself, stands in the front rank of his numerous Oxfordian analyses, a fit introduction to an Oxford-Shakespeare edition of Hamlet.

At a time of academic specialization, Feldman strives to know everything he can about every aspect of the life, times, influences, sources, works and soul of Edward de Vere, alias William Shakespeare. The result is a kind of encyclopedic analysis of the play from its conception in the family life of the boy Viscount Bulbec, through its birth at the hands of the adult Earl of Oxford, to its maturation through revisions by the aging master poet and dramatist.

The first of two major sections surveys the period from 3 August 1562, the date of the 16th Earl's death, and 17 March 1584, the date Feldman proposes for the beginning of the composition of Hamlet, and chronicles the people, events, scientific and literary works and other texts (mostly letters) that entered Edward's life and gave rise to the characters, the names of the dramatist personae, ideas, incidents and dialogue in the various versions of the play. It is a task that might have demanded a team of scholars drawn from several fields. The wonder is not only that he was able to accomplish the task in so thorough and penetrating a way but that he was able to accomplish it at all.

Feldman has not only read Hamlet innumerable times; he has so lived with it and brooded over it that he is able to see its shadows and hear its echoes while combing historical documents and literary works. As examples of the connections he makes, he writes:

The reader has probably noticed a curious difference between the ballad of Jephthah as given by Bishop Percy and the song recited by Hamlet. Instead of "He had one

only daughter and no more," he declaims: "One fair daughter, and no more." The model for Polonius had two daughters, Anne and Elizabeth. Only the elder seems to have won from observers the tribute of a pretty, attractive girl. Her father understood whom Sir Henry Sidney meant when he wrote, in November 1568, his respects to Lady Mildred and "my sweet jewel, your daughter."

and

". . . And surely, my lord," Burghley added (in a letter to the Earl of Rutland dated August 15, 1571) "by dealing with him (Oxford) I find that which I often heard of your Lordship, that there is much more in him of understanding than any stranger to him would think."

In copying that last remark, a line from the first printed version of Hamlet recurred to me, King Claudius's comment on the prince: "There's more in him than shallow eyes can see."

This in turn suggests to him Polonius's exclamation: "How pregnant sometimes his replies are! A happiness that often madness hits on."

In another instance, Feldman recalls a remark by Sir Henry Percy on the kind of marriage Thomas Cecil might contract: "I think it were not amiss if he were planted in some stock of honor." He married, in fact, the granddaughter of a sister of the 14th Earl of Oxford's. Feldman speculates that Edward de Vere might have thought of the remark when he and Anne Cecil were married in the presence of her half-brother Thomas and his wife Dorothy (named for her grandmother Dorothy de Vere) and the thought have surfaced in Hamlet's observation about marriages to Ophelia:

"You should not have believed me" says the prince; "for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we relish of it."

These examples of possible reflections in Hamlet of the circumstances surrounding Edward de Vere are drawn from just two of the fact-filled pages of the first section of Hamlet Himself.

Feldman's passionate stalking of the play through de Vere's life is tempered by a rigorous, scholarly conscience and an historian's respect for evidence. It is a combination of thorough knowledge and restrained and responsible yet imaginative conjecture that makes his book a feast of Shakespearean scholarship. One of his conjectures is that Hamlet's humor provides a key link between his tragedy and the dramatist's own life. This leads to a dissection and diagnosis of the unconscious drives in Hamlet and his creator.

In the second section as in the first, a cornucopia of esoteric lore (from history, myth, literature, anthropology, religion) and the methods of psychoanalysis are used and several languages mined to illuminate the play and its author. Some readers are likely to be put off by the recourse to psychoanalytic terminology, in part because of the imprecise common employment of the terms in pejorative senses. Some may be put off, too, by the conclusions to which Feldman is led by his analysis; for where in the first section we are concerned more with surface values, in the second, covering the years from 1584 to de Vere's death in 1604, we explore the unconscious and the phantom horrors that people it. The author summarizes his findings as follows:

The primary Hamlet appears to have been written in a blaze of hysteria, when the dramatist struggled to persuade himself that he was a man of action, eager to crush his foes, and courageous enough to tell Queen Elizabeth the truth. His second treatment of the story may be described as an interlude of obsession, counter-attack, making a desperate religious effort to escape the ravages

of his real disease. Finally he rewrote the drama as if with the deliberate intention to portray the malady of his soul, to understand himself. In his old age, verily on the verge of extinction by one of London's periodic plagues, he made the tragedy a revelation of narcissic fury and folly that should have encouraged the creation of a true science of memory (psychology) centuries ago.

Attempting more than the first section, the second also demands more of the reader--of his knowledge, his attention, his understanding. But it rewards him well. And it offers an argument for Edward de Vere as the author of Shakespeare's works that, if implicit, is very difficult to refute. While it is possible to credit William Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon with a supposed education, career, body of work and literary reputation, can he be granted another man's parents, wives, children, in-laws, mistress, illegitimate son, friends and enemies, fantasies and fears, dreams, schemes, passions, inhibitions, illusions and delusions, sadness, suffering, sense of humor--that other man's soul?

CORRECTION

Several sentences were inadvertently omitted in our last Newsletter's report on the October conference in Philadelphia. The omission occurred in line 17 of page 5. The passage should read, "But he pointed out that the problem here was quite different from that of Shakespeare, inasmuch as anti-Stratfordians are not concerned with the assignment of one, two, or even a dozen works to this particular person, but of the whole body of Shakespeare's works. President Ogburn added that he is not aware of any wholesale concern of anti-Stratfordians with the authorship of other works of art, and he reminded us that the case of Shakespeare is almost

unique in civilization. On the matter of snobbery, Mr. Ogburn also said that anti-aristocrats should insist on a noble autorship of Shakespeare's works, since contempt for the 'common man' seems to abound therein.."

ADDRESS CHANGES

Since our last mailing of the Membership list, the following changes of address have been received:

Innes, Mrs. Donald W.
109 Cambrian Way
Birmingham, Ala. 35243

Rea, David A.
2123 West 14 Mile Road #104
Sterling Heights, Mi 48077

George Siegel
18621 Verde Drive
Sun City, Ariz. 85373 (Temporary address)

We regret to announce the death of George W. Showalter of Dayton, Ohio, a member of our Society, of which we were informed by Mrs. Showalter in November.

The spring issue of the Newsletter, which we trust will not lag the season as much as this one, will offer a report on the Folger Library and the authorship of Shakespeare.



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HENRY CLAY FOLGER'S MEMORIAL

To anyone whose interest in Shakespeare leads to research into original Elizabethan and Jacobean sources, the Folger Shakespeare Library is a treasure for which thanks may fervently be offered up --preferably, in the well-warranted view of the director, in the form of contributions to help defray the Library's operating expenses and the costs of long overdue work of maintenance and construction now in progress. (So extensive is this work that the building has recently been closed for at least a year.) Certainly the Library deserves all the help it can get. Not only is it an inestimable boon to all students of the immortal poet-dramatist and his contemporaries regardless of the student's view of the authorship, but, so pleasant is its atmosphere in which to work, so accessible and well-ordered its magnificent collections, so helpful the services, that it is in itself a reward for pursuing Shakespearean studies and an excuse for pursuing them as long as one's budget permits.

Oxfordians visiting the great gallery from which one enters the replica of the Globe (the reading-room and library are open only to those granted permits to use them) will examine it in the spirit of future tenants, or, rather, agents of the future tenant, Edward de Vere. The gallery now stands tenantless. Nothing is more striking--or less surprising to members of this Society--than that, among all the memorabilia of the plays and of Shakespeare's times, the author to whom this temple is dedicated is missing. Of Will Shakspeare there is of course nothing. A nonentity in life, he is a nonentity here. The portraits of "Shakespeare" occupying a section of the wall have, it hardly needs saying, come to be recognized as unrelated to the Stratfordian.

In two of these portraits at least it seems safe to say that Oxford is already in occupancy, slightly disguised by minor doctoring. These are the Ashbourne and the Janssen. Beside the former, marking a signal departure in the practice of the Folger Library, a small placard reads:

The Ashbourne portrait might be a painting of a Jacobean gentleman who happened to look like Shakespeare; more probably the painting was altered to resemble Shakespeare. X-rays revealed extensive over-painting. In 1940 Charles W. Barrell argued in the Scientific American that the subject of the underpainting is Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, believed by some to be the author of Shakespeare's plays. Unfortunately the various scholars who have examined the portrait and its x-rays disagree strongly as to whether or not there are enough details to make any identification possible.

In a letter of last December to the director we expressed appreciation of the credit given Mr. Barrell and the acknowledgement of his deductions but pointed out that

one would not guess from the placard that it was Mr. Barrell who had had the x-ray (and infra-red) photographs made. With respect to the last sentence we wrote:

The "unfortunately" would seem to put the Folger Library in the same boat with the Shakespeare-Oxford Society. How would you feel about having new x-rays made, utilizing the vastly improved techniques of today or about sending the portrait to the National Bureau of Standards for analysis by neutron radiography?

We included an excerpt from Smithsonian Magazine for October 1978 reporting that the National Bureau of Standards had agreed to authenticate certain old paintings for the Smithsonian's Conservation Analytical Laboratory by neutron radiography and explaining that

A neutron scan can penetrate much deeper than x-ray. It will show things like whether there is another picture beneath the one on the surface, whether the signature has been painted over, the character of the artist's brush strokes, whether the pigments are ancient or modern.

The director, Dr. Hardison, replied that when the Ashbourne was rehung after the present renovation he would suggest changing the legend to give Mr. Barrell credit for the photographs and that he would be much in favor of the plan we had proposed for the Ashbourne. That was good news indeed. We shall keep the membership informed of what may develop from it.

Osborne Bennett Hardison, Jr., known to those who claim friendship with him as O.B., came to the office of director of the Folger in 1969 from the Department of English at the University of North Carolina bringing

with him a reputation as a notable Medieval and Renaissance scholar and as an author of distinguished writings in the poetry and drama of his field. From the same univers he also brought Richmond D. Crinkley. In the four years before the latter was snatched away by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts the two had converted the Globe replica to an active theatre in which Shakespearean and other plays are performed in steady succession and made the Folger Library part of the main stream of Washington's cultural life.

To restore and improve the Folger physical plant, Dr. Hardison, we are glad to report, has proved to be an outstanding fund-raiser, having won a grant of half a million dollars from the Kresge Foundation, one nearly as large from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and grants totaling about a million and a quarter from the National Endowment for the Humanities. On the recent alleged birthday of the Stratfordian stand-in, April 23rd, Washington's classical-music station, WGMS, was inspired to devote its entire programing to musical renditions of Shakespeare's works, specifically for the benefit of the Folger.

The new spirit with which the Library is being administered has been manifested, too, happily for us, in a changed attitude toward Shakespearean heterodoxy, at least as far as the director is concerned. Dr. Hardison has made representatives of our Society feel welcome at the Library and has shown us unfailing friendliness. Where Louis B. Wright, director of the Library from 1948 to 1968, consistently went out of his way to speak and write of dissenters from orthodoxy with a sneering animosity which seemed barely to suppress a choking rage (though for the past ten years he has been strangely silent on his bêtes noires) his successor has not, so far as we know, had an uncivil word for them. We are tempted to say that the difference between the two is that between the two portraits held up by Hamlet for the edification of the Queen. That would be, however, to do Dr. Wright an injustice. Dr. Hardison is doubtless correct in estimating as invaluable his predecessor's contribution to the Folger Library from which all students of Shakespeare benefit

regardless of who they think he was. Dr. Wright found the Library a facility for a tiny minority of scholars, and by adding to its collection of rare books a copious variety and quantity of secondary research material and material from Continental sources and of the period of about 1640 to 1725 in England (particularly a notable Dryden collection), he made the Library of service to a far broader spectrum of scholarship. Dr. Hardison calls it a "superb job," and we are glad to recognize and give thanks for it.

We are also mindful that the placard on the Ashbourne portrait would have been unthinkable under the old regime, as would the Earl of Oxford's banner hung high in the public gallery with fifteen others bearing emblems whose owners were prominent in Elizabethan times, most in some connection with Shakespeare. It is gratifying to see there the star of the de Veres even if it has to share place with the ill-gotten lance of the Shaksberes (as the name was spelled by the ex-master of the Stratford school, who should have known what he was about). Last spring your editor nearly fainted with astonishment on finding for sale in the Folger bookshop four copies of Shakespeare: The Man Behind the Name, of which he was part author. They have gradually disappeared, presumably sold, but supposedly they will be replaced.

The display emboldened us to ask Dr. Hardison whether, if the Society decided to reprint its booklet, Shakespeare and the Man of Stratford, this could be put on sale in the bookshop matched, as it were, against the pro-Stratfordian Folger booklet of the same format by James G. McManaway entitled The Authorship of Shakespeare. We noted that its much lower price would bring it within the reach of many more visitors than can afford the hard-cover book and make it competitive with the Folger Booklet.

Dr. Hardison's reply was that this would be up to the Kiosk Committee, to which he would be glad to give a copy of the booklet if we would supply him with one. Should the Society find itself possessed of sufficient funds--and if memory serves an original edition of 1000 copies in 1968 cost \$1000--reprinting the booklet with corrections and improvements might be worth considering, especially if the Kiosk Committee had accepted it after inspecting the proposed new text. In raising with the director five years ago the question of selling The Man Behind The Name and our booklet at the Library (to which no answer was received) we wrote that if any mistakes or significant omissions were found in the latter we should be glad in reprinting it to make the necessary changes, subject to limitations of length, and this offer we could repeat. It is difficult to see how the Kiosk Committee could refuse to accept the booklet on those terms.

It would be interesting to know if the decision of the Kiosk Committee to stock an anti-Stratfordian, pro-Oxfordian title reflected concern over the appalling record of the Folger Library's handling of the authorship question. This began in 1947 with the slanderous treatment of Charles W. Barrell by Giles E. Dawson of the Folger staff and was continued during the twenty years of his directorship by Louis B. Wright, whose idea of dealing with dissent was to misrepresent its nature and engage in character-assassination of the dissenters. Speaking of these in an interview on the occasion of his retirement, Dr. Wright declared that "From time to time I have had to rise up and smite a bore, because these people are tiresome beyond belief." This was most amusing to those who were aware that no power on earth could drag Dr. Wright onto a public platform with one of those bores where the smiting would have had the greatest effect but where also he would have been exposed to counter-smiting in all his vulnerability.

While the atmosphere of the Folger has changed dramatically, we must not overestimate the practical consequences of the change. The Library was bequeathed by its donor, Henry Clay Folger (who, we may believe, did not foresee the results) to the trustees of Amherst College. The Library, whatever the directors might wish, remains the captive of academia, in which dogma is substituted for ethics. It was made clear to us in 1972 that the Shakespeare Quarterly, which the Library had recently taken over, would not be open to a contribution challenging orthodoxy; the issue even broke into the press, as was reported at the time in this Newsletter. That any dissenter, whatever his qualifications, would be among the many scholars invited to speak at Folger is simply not conceivable. Indeed, when Samuel Schoenbaum lectured at the Library and several Oxfordians were visible in the audience, loaded for bear, as the old term is, the customary question period was cancelled. When on November 24, 1974, the Washington Post published in the leading place in its editorial section a somewhat abridged version of The Man Who Shakespear Was Not (and Who He Was) from Harvard Magazine, Dr. Hardison felt it incumbent upon him to rebut this attack upon orthodoxy. (Of his reply it may be said that it displayed a remarkable innocence about the matter at issue, such a stance being perhaps the only possible one for an honorable gentleman who is, perforce, the agent of a college.) The position of the Folger Library is that Will Shakspeare of Stratford was William Shakespeare the poet-dramatist. Period.

Further, we understand that Dr. McManaway's booklet on The Authorship of Shakespeare is being reprinted, though when it appeared in 1962 it constrained us to send a 20-page, 79-point critique of its incompetence and worse to Eustace Seligman, a prominent New York attorney who was then chairman of the Folger trustees and above such considerations as we brought out. Dr. Hardison has said

that he would entertain a statement from us of factual errors committed in the booklet, and we shall supply one, though we consider the book unsalvageable, irredeemably slanted from beginning to end, corrupt in its conception.

Also on sale at the Folger bookshop, and prominently displayed in a cylindrical rack, are the thirty-eight paperback volumes of The Folger Library General Reader's Shakespeare, edited by Louis B. Wright with the assistance of a staff member of the Library. In the introduction to each of the volumes (one to a play plus the poems) we may read that the dissenters from orthodoxy are "so naive or ignorant as to doubt the reality of Shakespeare as the author of the plays that bear his name" and are engaged in an "effort to prove him a myth," which "the obvious reputation of Shakespeare as early as 1598" makes "one of the most absurd in the history of human perversity." Left open-mouthed by the sheer audacity--if it is not mindlessness--of these wild misrepresentations, one goes on to read that "The anti-Shakespeareans," as Dr. Wright, with undiminished contempt for fact, calls anti-Stratfordians, "base their arguments upon a few simple premises, all of them false." Indeed, "Most anti-Shakespeareans (still sic) are naive and betray an obvious snobbery." And so forth.

So we have it that in the proclaimed official view of the Folger Library disbelievers in the Stratford man as Shakespeare are fools guilty of one of the greatest absurdities in the history of human perversity, though these disbelievers include at least three of the probably four greatest figures in American literature (two of them positively derisive of the Stratford theory) and evidently a host of lawyers, including the past editor of the American Bar Association Journal, the Story Professor of Law at Harvard, Sir James Plaisted Wilde Baron Penzance, and Sir George Greenwood, Queen's Counsel, who would have vaporized Dr. Wright in one of his footnotes. All fools, and not only fools but fools who have "developed a neurosis...that may account for an

unhappy truculence that sometimes makes them unwelcome in polite company"; fools "lacking . . . a sense of humor," whom "a fog of gloom envelops." (One pictures Charles Chaplin as a snob lacking a sense of humor and enveloped in gloom, and, for that matter--to cite other disbelievers or doubters not unversed in the stage--Leslie Howard, Vivian Leigh, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Sir Tyrone Guthrie and Daniel Frohman.) These calumnies are from the paperbacked "Shakespeare for Everyman, by Louis B. Wright, an independent publication but one sold in volume in the Folger bookshop as the work of the "Director Folger Shakespeare Library and co-editor of The Folger Library General Reader's Shakespeare series."

In brief, as concerning the origin of the greatest works in Western literature, what the Folger Library is doing is disseminating under its cachet, and pouring into the schools, malicious and deceitful trash. One can only believe that Henry Clay Folger would be dismayed and heartsick at the directions given his bequest. Unfortunately, he and Mrs. Folger left no heir to see that the spirit behind it be respected. That Mr. Folger, incidentally, was open to the Oxford case is indicated by the favor he reportedly showed Esther Singleton's Shakespearean Fantasias, in which the author, a thorough believer in Looney's identification of Shakespeare as Edward de Vere, presented the merry, madcap Earl as three of the characters in which the dramatist unmistakably (we believe) presented himself: Berowne, Jaques and Benedick. According to the Shakespeare Fellowship Quarterly, Mr. Folger bought twenty or more copies of the book to give to his friends and was negotiating with Miss Singleton for the purchase of the manuscript when he died. (The Quarterly adds that the heirs of Miss Singleton, who died two weeks later, presented it to the Library in her memory.)

What we have long asked of the Folger Library is no more than we believe the donor would have insisted upon:

* Fair and objective treatment of the question of the Shakespeare authorship in its publications, in its lecture programs, in the management of the bookshop;

* Withdrawal of the sanction of the Folger name from the discreditable publications of Louis B. Wright; and

* A statement in the name of the Folger Library--to undo as far as possible the damage done by past and current slander--that the question of the Shakespeare authorship is one on which intelligent, informed and responsible men and women may legitimately differ.

In other words: simple justice and honesty.

To bring about such a revolution we have had to look to the Folger Library Committee of the Trustees of Amherst University. The appointment of W. Willard Wirtz, former Secretary of Labor, to the chairmanship of the Committee revived hopes that Mr. Seligman had killed. In a letter to Mr. Wirtz of November 18, 1973, the present editor of this newsletter said that he wrote:

in the belief that, as a man of the law and of broad public service... you will feel as I do, that the Folger Library has certain responsibilities and that among these are acting with honesty and in consonance with the public interest. The attachments to this letter give some indication of how far it is falling short of doing so. When you have read them, as I hope you will, I should be most grateful for a chance to see you and go more fully into the situation.

Mr. Wirtz replied immediately and most encouragingly that the Library had become a prime interest of his and that he was greatly interested in following up on

our interests in the matter. However, the material we had sent him, when he had read it, and the further reports we mailed him must have shocked him with their disclosure of how deeply the issues cut that they raised. Doubtless also he had got the Word. Nothing was heard from him. In a letter to him of December 30th we mildly interjected that:

As I wrote you, I recognize the difficult character of the problem with which I have confronted you and have had no wish to rush you. But as I explained, time is a consideration with me in this matter, for human and professional reasons. I should like to know then, say before the end of this week, when I may expect our discussion to take place.

Two months later, having still had no reply, we wrote in a note to him that his interpretation of the responsibilities of his position was obviously different from what ours would be in his place. This did produce a rejoinder:

I found your letter of December 30th so ungracious in suggesting a "before the end of this week" time for reply to it, and had at that point become so concerned about your uses of others' correspondence and conversations with you, that it seemed to me advisable... as it still does...not to pursue further with you a subject in which I nevertheless remain much interested.

This astonishing nonsense at least made clear the length to which Mr. Wirtz would reach for an excuse not to grant us the common courtesy of a meeting, which any sense of the Folger responsibility to the public would have compelled him to do. Nevertheless, off and on until the following November we sent him occasional letters bearing on the Folger's derelictions and the misconduct of orthodox academicians. We wondered how much hoodwinking of the public and intellectual crime he would be willing to have his committee (himself included) and the Library identified with.

It developed that as no appeal to his fairness could entice him out of hiding, neither could he be shamed or baited out of it. No more could his fellow committee-members to whom individually we made a 1200-word statement of the position. In this we quoted a declaration made by Andrei Sakharov at the risk of his liberty:

Intellectual freedom is essential to human society--freedom to obtain and distribute information, freedom for open-minded and unfearing debate, and freedom from pressure by officialdom and prejudice.

While doubtless holding that this stuff was fine to beam back at the Soviet authorities, as the National Academy of Science had just done, the committee was to be judged as considering it as inapplicable to the American academic establishment. Its members preserved a stony silence--among them being Judge William H. Hastie of Philadelphia, President Gail Thain Parker of Bemington College, Jane Weinberger, wife of the Secretary of H.E.W. and Francis T. P. Plimpton, a lawyer showered with honors and brother of the president of Amherst University. It turned out at this time that Mr. Plimpton was a "dear friend" of Louis B. Wright and perhaps served as a conduit to the committee of the former director's wishes, which would explain Mr. Wirtz's initial abrupt turnaround.

Mr. Plimpton was then receiving some attention as a trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York owing to a book, The Grand Acquisitors, by John L. Hess, which had come out with an account of an investigation into wrongdoing in the Museum and disregard of the public interest by its director. Mr. Hess believed that "laymen are too easily cowed by museum curators and art historians--even the Met's trustees evidence an awed inferiority complex." Mr. Plimpton was quoted as saying that "In a way, it makes no sense for museums to be run by me and the people like me."

It may well be. But in Washington worse was to come with the appointment to the Folger trustees of Samuel Schoenbaum of the University of Maryland, whose treatment of J. Thomas Looney in his Shakespeare's

Lives was justifiably described by our late president, Richard C. Horne, Jr., as obscene; indeed, whose whole burlesque of dissent, graciously introduced by him as "a rough beast" that "slouched towards Stratford to be born," may be termed a hundred-page affront to scholastic decency.

The Folger will change--but only when the younger generation in the universities has been roused by developments off the campus to shunt aside the authorities who have confined Shakespearean studies to the barren fields of orthodoxy and has entered the vastly greener pastures that now beckon from behind the huge OFF-LIMITS signs. For his sake and ours we hope Dr. Hardison will still be administering the Folger when the time comes to install a Shakespeare in the gallery whom, whatever he thinks now, he will find incomparably more believable and congenial than the nullity supposedly celebrated in the memorial today.

relied on total fiction, in direct contradiction to the historical record," without ever having considered the question of whether he was in fact the author.

Mr. Johnson went on to say, "I am sure you are not unaware that hundreds of thousands of persons tuned into any segment of the biography would not have any idea that it was largely guess, assumption and invention." He pointed out that "even some of the orthodox experts expressed concern" over such an "unscholarly and distorting" presentation. In his conclusion, he wrote:

I also feel it necessary to point out that for NPR to let fiction and distortion not only prevail but be its exclusive contribution to biography of an asserted author of the immortal works would be a decision which is indefensible by any ethical, journalistic and scholarly standard.

EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION VERSUS HONESTY IN PROGRAMMING

In our last issue we reported that the National Public Radio station in Cincinnati, WGUC, refused to carry the tape Morse Johnson of that city had prepared rebutting with the actual facts the version of "Shakespeare's" biography it had aired. Having subsequently taken his case to National Public Radio itself in Washington, D. C., Mr. Johnson heard from the Senior Producer that while he would keep the correspondence "on file," it might be that "you may want to approach the program people at WGUC with your program concept."

Our attorney-member is not one to give in tamely to genial bureaucratic disregard of the law. He replied in a letter of May 8th that the reference to "your program concept" implied that National Public Radio in connection with its Shakespeare Festival had put on a four-part biography of William Shakspeare of Stratford, and one that "frequently

FROM ENGLAND

We learn that the talk on the Shakespeare authorship given by Harold Patience to the Dorothy L. Sayers Society in Witham, Essex, in April went off very successfully. It must have, for when, after a question period over coffee, a vote was taken on the question of the authorship, it turned out that the speaker had held Will Shakspeare to a plurality of three--not bad considering that he had had his listeners for only an hour, Stratfordians all their previous lives.

Also in April, Mr. Patience had an excellent article in the Essex Countryside in which parallels were drawn between de Vere's experiences in his native county and incidents in the plays. The inevitable ill-formed and ugly reply by a Stratfordian appeared in a subsequent issue. Mr. Patience's counter-rebuttal was printed in part with an announcement by the editor cutting off further correspondence on the subject.

A BOOK OF INTEREST TO OXFORDIANS
by Harold Patience
Secretary, S.O.S., English Chapter

THE FIGHTING VERES: The Lives of Sir Francis Vere, General of the Queen's Forces in the Low Countries, Governor of the Brill and of Portsmouth, and of Horace Vere, General of the English Forces in the Low Countries, Governor of the Brill, Master-General of Ordnance, and Baron Vere of Tilbury. By Clements R. Markham. 1888.

The long title explains the contents of this ninety-year old book: the life-histories of the two brothers who were cousins of Edward de Vere. (The "Tilbury" in Horace's title of Baron Vere refers, by the way, to his manor house at Tilbury-juxta-Clare, in the heart of rural Essex--not to the Essex coastal port of Tilbury, scene of Queen Elizabeth's great Aramada speech in 1588.) The military campaigns in the Netherlands are explored in great detail and there are seventeen maps. The history of the Vere line is given in excellent detail in Chapter One.

As has frequently been observed, it could be well that, as Sir Horace Vere was also known as Horatio, the characters Horatio and Francisco in Hamlet, are tributes to Lord Oxford's famous soldier-cousins, though Francisco's part is a minor one. Naturally, no such connection is made by Mr. Markham. Indeed, as is to be expected in a book published when his was, any mention of the 17th Earl of Oxford follows the traditional line: "Edward, who was a boy at Hedingham in the childhood of Francis and Horace, had led a life of reckless extravagance, and had ended in totally destroying the noble inheritance to which he had succeeded. One by one the numerous manors and estates in Essex and Suffolk were mortgaged or sold."

There is mention of Wivenhoe, the port of Colchester, Britain's oldest recorded town, the ancient seat of Cunobelinus, otherwise known to

history as Cymbeline. At Wivenhoe the Earls of Oxford owned "a noble mansion with a gate-house flanked by towers of great height, which served as marks at sea for vessels approaching the mouth of the River Colne." I would guess that there is a veiled reference to these towers in Sonnet No. 116. Love, says Shakespeare, is looked to for guidance:

...It is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempest and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height
be taken.

"E-ver" occurs three times in these four short lines. Could there also be a glance at the de Vere arms, bearing a five-pointed star in the quarter, as Percy Allen suggested?

Whilst in residence at Wivenhoe the 17th Earl of Oxford was apparently engaged in some form of creative literary activity, for, as J. Thomas Looney observed, "The introductory letter to Thomas Bedingfield with which the Earl prefaces his 1573 publication of Bedingfield's translation of Cardanus' Comforte, bears a sentence: 'From my new country Muses of Wivenhoe . . .'"

Mr. Patience also writes that in a book of 1752 by Arthur Collins "Containing the Lives of the Earls of Oxford, concluding with Aubrey de Vere, the 20th and last Earl of the illustrious family," "I naturally hoped... I would perhaps come across some sort of overlooked Oxfordian 'clue' or signpost. But, alas, it was not to be. There is an account of perfumed gloves being introduced into England by the 17th Earl, and mention of how he distinguished himself in joust and tournaments before the Queen; but once more we have the usual denigration of his character. Collins quotes from Anthony Wood's account of the life of the Earl in which he states that de Vere "wasted his estates" and lived "in great enmity with his father-in-law Lord Burghley." But then comes a significant passage:

"This most noble Earl of Oxford, September 6, 1566, waiting on Queen Elizabeth at Oxford, had the degree of Master of Arts conferred on him by the University. He was in his younger days, an excellent Poet and Comedian, as

several of his Compositions that were made public shewed, which I presume are now lost and worn out. All I have yet seen are certain Poems on several subjects . . . "

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P O R T R A I T I D E N T I F I E D

"ASHBOURNE" SITTING NOT OXFORD, NEW FINDINGS SHOW

by

Gordon C. Cyr

Executive Vice-President

This summer, in preparation for a traveling exhibition around the United States, the Folger Shakespeare Library had its "Ashbourne" portrait of "Shakespeare" cleaned and restored. Engaged for this purpose was Peter Michaels, who members will recall was a guest at the Shakespeare Oxford Society's First National Conference in Baltimore, 1976. As an expert conservator with impressive credentials, Mr. Michaels summarized at our meeting the newest techniques for discovery of overpainted surfaces (see Newsletter Summer 1977). The present writer, in his capacity then as president pro tem., had engaged Mr. Michaels for this lecture following a controversy in which the Folger Library's director, Dr. O.B. Hardison, expressed doubts he still entertained about Charles Wisner Barrell's interpretation of the "Ashbourne" X-ray evidence described in the latter's January 1940 Scientific American article.

Although at that time Society members felt that Mr. Barrell's case was a good one, such lingering doubts as those of Dr. Hardison, as well as the technological improvements discussed by Mr. Michaels, suggested that further investigation in cooperation with the Folger Library into their various holdings in "Shakespeare" portraiture was in order. Due to the high cost, however, and because of the lesser importance of any portrait evidence in establishing authorship issues, the project was put "on the back burner," taking second place to such problems as Shakspeare's handwriting and the statistical word studies of Oxford's possible authorship of Shakespeare's works. Fortunately for our Society's financial health, almost all of the costs of further investigating the "Ashbourne" have been resolved without any expenditure on our part!

The first thing Peter Michaels did with the protrait was to clean off some of the overpainted surfaces, including the shield and the inscription. Using as a guide the excellent x-ray photographs the Folger made in 1949 (Barrell's x-ray and infrared negatives were not properly stored, apparently, and are presently irretrievable), Mr. Michaels was able to find that

1) the inscription was original (i.e., not overpainted), except for the final "1" in the date 1611, which was painted over a figure "2"

which had been unsuccessfully rubbed out. This means that the sitter was aged 47 in the year 1612 (the date of the painting) and would indicate he was born in 1565.

2) the shield had been over-painted, and with Mr. Michaels's cleaning now stood fully revealed with all of its original colors. No x-ray photograph can indicate the charges' colors, an all-important tool for identifying any armorial device. The charge bears no relationship to the Trentham coat, as Barrell had surmised, since the three charges are clearly revealed as rams' heads and not as griffins'. The colors and other details do not match the Trentham coat either, since the charges there are described as "sable" (black), whereas the rams' heads are gold (in heraldic terms, "or") on a red background ("gules"). (The background designation for the Trentham shield is "argent" or silver.) Further, the heads are not "erased," as in the Trentham coat's description, meaning with a ragged neck, but "couped," or cut off cleanly at the neck. A griffin does appear at the top of the shield (see drawing), but this bears no relationship to the Trentham usage, since that family's design -- reproduced by Barrell in his article -- clearly shows three griffins, arranged in the very common inverted triangular pattern of so many other heraldic devices. The charges' heads in the "Ashbourne" shield also lack beaks ("gules" or otherwise), an important part of the Trentham heraldic description. The scroll beneath the shield still retains the traces of the letters "MORE" -- all that can now be seen of a motto preceding.

3) the forehead has been raised substantially by overpainting, but rather than a full head of hair being revealed, a very thin wisp of hair is visible in the x-ray photographs ("almost bald," Michaels says).

4) the ruff is original painting.

5) the signet ring is also original painting. The design's vagueness which Barrell interpreted as "undersurface shadows" outlining a "boar's head," is apparently part of the artist's intention.

6) the belt and gloves were originally "white," rather than the "lemon gold" which, according to Mr. Michaels, many varnishings have subsequently added to this pigment.

7) varnishings have also covered myriad pleats in the clothing and details of the skull, now visible after the cleaning.

After a conference at the Folger which included the present writer, Mrs. Helen Cyr, Dr. Hardison, and two of his assistants, Mr. Michaels gave these details orally to me. (As of this writing, Mrs. Cyr and I have not yet visited Mr. Michaels's Baltimore studio to view the painting, which we have arranged to do in August -- on which occasion more information may be forthcoming.)

Armed with a color photograph of the newly-exposed shield and Mr. Michaels's line drawing of the details (accompanying this article) -- both kindly furnished by the Folger Shakespeare Library -- Mrs. Cyr consulted sources at the Peabody Library, inasmuch as the Folger's staff had not yet identified whose family had exhibited this particular grouping of charges and colors. Mrs. Cyr soon found that the shield belonged to Hugh Hammersley, who had been Lord Mayor of London in 1627, but a typographical error showing this date as "1687" momentarily confused her. She also found several mottoes ending with "MORE," but in the time available was unable to tie any of these to anyone named Hammersley (sometimes spelled "Hamersley" and "Hammerle"). The next day she phoned Ms. Lievsay, one of the Folger staff members who participated in our meeting with Dr. Hardison, and found that the Folger superior reference sources had yielded the same information, that the motto was "Honore et Amore" (which Mrs. Cyr could

only find listed for the Richards family), and that the portrait subject's year of birth was 1565. All of the evidence, therefore, converges on this particular Lord Mayor, who was officially granted arms in 1614. Some unknown person, then, subsequent to 1612, in order to quench the growing thirst for "Shakespeare" portraits in the 18th and 19th centuries, found by happy coincidence a portrait of an almost bald gentleman which could, with very little effort (such as changing a single figure in the natal statistics), be converted into a "newly discovered genuine Shakespeare," of provably ancient vintage! When Mr. Michaels notified the Folger Library about his inscription and shield findings, Dr. Hardison ordered further work halted until the Folger decided how much of the original surface should be revealed.

The question arises: since these discoveries are so radically at variance with those of Charles Wisner Barrell in his 1940 article, where did Barrell go wrong? In the first place, the resemblance of the "Ashbourne" portrait to that of the 17th Earl of Oxford at age 25 (known as the "Welbeck" portrait) is by no means a Barrell discovery. The first one to notice the startling similarities (in which the two heads can be overlaid with almost mathematical concordance) was the Rev. Father C.S. de Vere Beauclerk, S.J. -- a descendant of the earl and a supporter of the Oxfordian theory. (A series of composite photographs he had prepared for Lt. Col. Montague Douglas's Lord Oxford was Shakespeare -- London 1934 -- appears in Ruth Loyd Miller's 3rd edition of J.T. Looney's "Shakespeare" Identified.¹⁾ The coincidence is indeed remarkable, and it extends even to the hair color and complexion, but as the evidence now shows, this convergence is deceptive. It should be noted that the comparisons are between representations of youth and middle age. If the "Ashbourne" were really of "Oxford at 47" or thereabouts, we should seek a resemblance to the known

portrait of the mature earl, i.e. the "St. Albans" portrait. The "Ashbourne" bears much less resemblance to the superior Gheeraedts painting owned by the Duke of St. Albans than it does to that picture of Oxford at a much earlier age, when the features have not yet acquired that "settled" look, so typical of people fully matured.

But a comparison between the "Welbeck" and the "St. Albans" portrayals of Oxford yields another set of features -- absent in the "Ashbourne": both a richness of dress (almost "dandified") and more than a little overweening self-confidence. Here is a man, these paintings seem to tell us, who is fully conscious of his status as representative of the English feudal nobility, even to the point of arrogance. The expression on the "Ashbourne" face is more bland, almost pensive; if it were really that of Oxford, we could not acquit the artist of having failed to capture his essential character. This may all seem like hindsight, but in truth this aspect of the "portrait evidence" has bothered a few Oxfordians long before the Folger revelations here described.

Mr. Barrell also seems to have relied too much on M.H. Spielmann's findings in the latter's 1910 magazine article² dealing with this painting in detail. Dr. Spielmann, who enjoyed a reputation as the top authority in his day on the subject of Shakespearean portraiture, says in that article,

The middle stroke of the E in the first AE is wanting, and serifs here and there have disappeared. Whether or not it is a later addition is an open question; but the fact must not be lost sight of that the colour of it corresponds to that of the book-cover gold and that of the thumb-ring, and is in sharp contrast to that of the belt and glove . . .³

When Barrell's x-rays showed overpainting in the inscription area, he resolved Spielmann's "open question" in favor of the whole inscriptions being a "later addition." Then, again following

Spielmann, he conceived that those portions of the painting in the same pigment were also later additions. (Peter Michaels confirms that the signet ring is the same pigment as the inscription, but as we have seen, the inscription turns out to be original paint, except for the one figure mentioned above.) The color of the belt and glove, apparently of a color resembling but not identical to the other pigment, also misled both Spielmann and Barrell, who concluded that the over-painter had attempted an unsuccessful "match." But the cleaning has revealed that the belt and glove were originally white, thus no matching was intended.

While on the subject of the signet ring, doubts concerning Mr. Barrell's interpretation have long been evident on both sides of the authorship controversy. Canon Rendall, a confirmed Oxfordian, says in a pamphlet published immediately after Barrell's Scientific American disclosure,

Minor indications, the supposed Boar's Head on the signet ring, or the crossed spears on the small volume, seem questionable from the light of newspaper reproduction, and can carry only subsidiary weight.⁴

The Scientific American article understandably drew some fire from the orthodox with Barrell's attempt to bolster his interpretation on the signet ring's indistinct lines by drawing in the "boar head" with white paint.

We are left with the "CK" monogram Barrell uncovered with the x-ray photographs made of the shield area. He reasonably interpreted this as a monogram for the painter Cornelius Ketel, a Netherland artist who is known to have painted a "lost" portrait of the Poet-Earl. As mentioned earlier, we have yet to investigate Mr. Michaels's findings

with respect to this monogram. But in any case, the CK monogram Barrell shows in the article bears little similarity to the known monograms of Ketel, some of which are reproduced there as well. This fact, along with the stylistic considerations, led one "Ketel specialist" in this country -- one W. Stechow of Oberlin, Ohio -- to challenge Barrell's identification on this point.⁵ For whatever reason, Barrell never tied up this loose end by responding to Stechow's contention.

The Scientific American article, instead of leading to a reasoned critique of the claims made therein, gave rise to all the usual impassioned claims and counter-claims between the so-called "orthodox" and "heretical" partisans. These came to a head when, in 1947, Dr. Giles Dawson, Curator of the Folger Library, replied to a letter from one Meredith Underhill of New York, saying that he (Dawson) had been unable to see any of the things that Barrell had seen in the x-ray negatives. Dr. Dawson added, "If he can produce pictures of these things they must have been doctored up."⁶ Mr. Barrell rightly regarded the charge as a slur on his professional integrity, and he sued Dr. Dawson for slander and libel in 1948.⁷ Barrell dropped the suit when Dawson, in a second letter to Underhill, denied a libelous intention on his own part.

More recently, responding to complaints by the late Craig Huston, a trustee of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, that the Folger Library still did not officially acknowledge the force of Mr. Barrell's conclusions, Dr. Dawson reiterated both his Stratfordian convictions and in his denial of Barrell's identification. He argues (correctly as it turns out) that Barrell had failed to prove the three charges on the shield were griffins or that the heads could be "erased." To support his own contention, Dawson had a letter from Anthony Wagner, the Richmond Herald, in 1950 to the effect that identification of the shield's

family was impossible, because the three charges were too indistinct in the x-ray photographs sent him (the Folger had made its own x-rays when Barrell initiated his suit, and these are the ones Peter Michaels used as a guide to his "Ashbourne" restoration) and the colors were unknown. Enough of the rest of the coat was visible to show the arms were those of a man, thus ruling out Elizabeth Trentham. Wagner also said that the usual practice of displaying the arms of two families by marriage was the device of "impalement," in which the shield is split down the middle with each family's charges on either side. This was not the case with the "Ashbourne" shield, however, since the entire shield is occupied by the three rams' heads.

Further, Dr. Dawson cited the opinion of the Folger's art expert at the time, to the effect that the original painting was done no earlier than the latter half of the seventeenth century and the overpainting no earlier than the first half of the eighteenth century. The first part of this statement has proven fallacious, however, inasmuch as Mr. Michaels's findings show 1612 to be the original painting's date.

Oxfordians will naturally be disappointed in consequence of these latest findings but should be able to take them philosophically and in stride. Their case has never been in any way dependent upon de Vere's having been the subject of "Shakespeare" portraits. It is based on evidence and reasoning that are as cogent as ever. The new discoveries would, of course, be a severe blow to Mr. Barrell, but his major contribution remains: it was he who demonstrated that the "Ashbourne" as a portrait of Shakspeare was a fake, and his literary research still provides invaluable links in the chain of evidence connecting Lord Oxford with the authorship of the plays.

If the overturn of Mr. Barrell's conclusions is discomfoting to us owing to the claims we have made for them (in this newsletter, as well as elsewhere!) it also furnishes us with a salutary lesson. If we are to appeal for a scientific approach to evidence we must accept the scientific method in its entirety not merely embrace it where it supports our claims; and this, as Carl Sagan states in his latest book "requires skeptical scrutiny of every step."⁸ It is far more important for us than for the Stratfordians to be scrupulous in respect for fact and to make sure of the facts. That is because the burden of proof always rests upon those who challenge convention, tradition and authority, even when these are without visible evidentiary support. And in this case "orthodoxy" is not without such support. It has, if not contemporary evidence, nearly contemporary evidence in the First Folio of 1623 pointing, equivocally, to be sure, to Shakspeare of Stratford as the author. That this evidence is not what it seems, that it was deliberately designed to mislead, as is clear enough from a full reading of the First Folio itself, and that it is contradicted by abundant contemporary evidence must, we may believe, be unmistakable to anyone who will review the evidence with open-minded objectivity. But why should anyone review it when authority has pronounced so emphatically that the case is closed? It is the central purpose of many Stratfordian writers to discourage the reappraisal of the evidence we seek by portraying dissent in the pejorative terms with which we are only too familiar, above all as being irresponsible. They themselves may, and do, violate Dr. Sagan's precept at every turn, but it does not matter, at least at this stage; they are not on trial. But if our own credibility suffers, so also does the prospect of our obtaining that reappraisal of the evidence as to the authorship before the court of public opinion that must be our overriding objective.

Meanwhile, Oxfordians can take a piece of advice from the opposition, if we can include in that camp the chief purveyor of that misleading evidence

described in the preceding paragraph: Ben Jonson. If we keep in mind the comforting (and highly significant) fact that all of the variously proposed "portraits of Shakespeare" -- including the one under discussion -- have proven to be spurious (except the decidedly posthumous "likeness" of the

Droeshout engraving or two versions of the Stratford bust, none of which resembles the other!), old "honest Ben," as he has been dubiously characterized, advised the First Folio reader that if one were to seek the "real Shakespeare," he or she should "look not on his picture, but his book."

Notes

- 1 Vol II, "Oxfordian Vistas." Minos Publishing Co., 1975, p. 417.
- 2 "The Ashbourne Portrait of Shakespeare." The Connoisseur Magazine, Jan-April, May-Aug., 1910. See Miller, op. cit., pp. 411-415, where Spielmann's article is substantially reprinted.
- 3 Ibid., p. 414.
- 4 Rendall, Gerald H. "Ashbourne" Portrait of Shakespeare. Colchester, 1940, p. 10.
- 5 "The Ashbourne Portrait," letter by W. Stechow. The Shakespeare Fellowship Newsletter (England). April 1941, p. 4.
- 6 Miller, op. cit., p. 426.
- 7 Ibid., p. 429.
- 8 Sagan, Carl. Broca's Brain: Reflections on the Romance of Science. Random House, 1979, p. 62.

POSTSCRIPT ON THE "ASHBOURNE"

As we go to press, a recent visit to Conservator Peter Michaels's Baltimore studio to see the newly-cleaned "Ashbourne" portrait has yielded the following:

- 1) C.W. Barrell was correct in deducing that the subject originally had a full head of hair. The overpainter attempted to rub some of this out before painting in the higher forehead, and this fact misled Michaels, before cleaning that area, to assume the subject was "almost bald," as quoted earlier. A contemporary line drawing of Sir Hugh Hammersley shows a full head of hair, as do the late known portraits of the 17th earl of Oxford.
- 2) The so-called "C.K." monogram -- the subject of much contention among art experts -- does not show on either the Folger Library's x-ray or the newly-cleaned "Ashbourne's" surface. Peter Michaels says, "this is apparently an illusion, since it does not exist." Ketel specialist W. Stechow had said in his 1941 letter (referred to in the article) that no painter was likely to have

signed a portrait in that particular place (adjoining the shield). The only apparent explanation, according to Michaels, is that Barrell's camera picked up a defect or a worn stripping on the canvas. Since Mr. Barrell's original x-rays no longer exist, and since there is much other evidence against the portrait's attribution to Ketel, we have no choice but to discount Barrell's findings in this instance.

The identity of the "Ashbourne" sitter now having been definitely established as Sir Hugh Hammersley (and doubts about its authenticity as a "Shakespeare" portrait thus resolved), the Folger Shakespeare Library has removed this painting from its travelling exhibition.

Gordon C. Cyr.

OXFORDIAN THEORY GETS COVERAGE
IN STRATFORDIAN PERIODICAL

The Shakespeare Oxford Society extends its warm gratitude to Trustee Russell des Cognets, Jr., for his efforts toward "detente" with Stratfordians of good will -- or at least with those Shakespeare scholars of Stratfordian leanings who seem willing to treat the authorship issue with the respect it deserves. Following a meeting in 1976 with Dr. Louis Marder, editor of The Shakespeare Newsletter (hereinafter referred to as SNL -- (Marder's own abbreviation), Russell initially placed an advertisement of the Shakespeare Oxford Society in each issue of SNL. Subsequent negotiations between Russell and Dr. Marder led to an agreement by the latter to devote a two-column space in SNL devoted to news of S.O.S. and of what Dr. Marder terms "The Oxfordian Movement."

The first such column has appeared on the second page of SNL's April 1979 issue. There, appearing in bold type astride the top of the allotted two columns, is the title, "The Oxfordian Movement: News and Scholarship in the Oxfordian Periodicals." Above this, in much smaller print, is the information that the column is "sponsored by the Russell des Cognets Fund, Shakespeare Oxford Society." The adjoining column is entirely devoted to an editorial commentary (initialed "LM" like the des Cognets-sponsored column itself) announcing SNL's policy vis-a-vis this new column. In this editorial Mr. Marder summarizes the authorship controversy, with a nod to the various candidates for Shakespearean authorial honors. Dr. Marder adds, "I am content that SNL become a forum for ideas pro, knowing that orthodox readers will submit their ideas con whenever they feel moved to dispute the submitted materials. Space is limited, conciseness is imperative. If the arguments become to [sic] verbose or heated, SNL will ask the respondents to argue with each other personally and SNL will print only the conclusions. If

the arguments remain intellectual and factual rather than emotional, the orthodox and the unorthodox will have seen the truth in public where it is accessible to all."

The Shakespeare Oxford Society welcomes this gesture from Dr. Marder, and we hope for our own part that this "Era of Good Feelings" may continue. Certainly, Shakespeare enthusiasts of all persuasions have everything to gain by an open exchange of both ideas and information. Dr. Marder has given this enterprise an auspicious beginning with his generous treatment of material from the English publication, the bard, and from our own S.O.S. Newsletter of Fall 1978, from which Dr. Marder extracts news about Craig Huston's death and about our Philadelphia conference last October. Marder praises the "compendious scholarship of Ruth Loyd Miller, and adds, "I would certainly admire orthodox scholars if they would produce similar compendia on the problems that beset orthodox Shakespeareans." At the conclusion, Marder also praises Oxfordians as a whole, whom he describes as "an active and scholarly group."

Although this page of SNL is occasionally disfigured by a few errors both typographical and factual, we certainly cannot complain of the general fair-minded exposure accorded our views. (The factual errors should disappear once the Society furnishes pre-edited material for the des Cognets column -- at least they will be our own mistakes if any do appear!)

Again, three cheers to Russ des Cognets, who early on had the vision to see the advantages for our own cause from cooperation with certain of the "orthodox."

Gordon C. Cyr.

In the article on Shakespeare on Television in the winter Newsletter, owing to a small mental short-circuit, we represented Dr. Marder as of the University of Chicago instead of, as of course it should have been, of the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle. We regret the lapse. Dr. Marder informs us that he did not see the Associated British Television films on "Shakespeare's life in a studio, as we surmised, but read the scripts.

Editor

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THE HOW MANY GUISES OF EDWARD DE VERE

Anticipating that the pseudonym "William Shakespeare" would be generally recognized for what it was and de Vere's authorship of the plays be exposed unless a flesh-and-blood Shakespeare could be produced as a stand-in for the author, the authorities decided to take advantage of a similarity of names and book William Shakspere for the part, taking care at the same time to hustle him back to the obscurity of Warwickshire with a good pay-off lest his gross implausibility in the part queer the game: such - if we may trust a reconstruction that has the virtue of accommodating all the known facts - was the origin of the conventional story of the Shakespeare authorship and of the prodigious fame that came to the Stratfordian, a man of little consequence to those who knew him, in the century following his death. (We may remember that his first biographer, Nicholas Rowe, toward the end of that century, inquiring into "what sort of parts he used to play," evidently fell into the hands of a wit, for he reported that he "could never meet with any further account of him this way, than that the top of his performance was the Ghost in his own Hamlet"--meaning surely, the shade of the author in his own village.) While the name William Shakespeare appeared in 1593 under the dedication of Venus and Adonis (identified as an "invention") the resolution to give a minimal and ambiguous nod to the Stratford man as Shakespeare seems to have been summoned up only four or five years later. It was signaled in 1598 with the publication of Francis Meres's Palladis Tamia in which the first known mention was made of Shakespeare (without a first name as a dramatist--already as the author of a dozen listed plays and the best for both comedy and tragedy. Thus the question arises as to whether, before the cover of the Stratford man was adopted, or imposed, de Vere had appeared in any other guise--that is to say, as other than a nameless and disbodied author. (Sixteen of the plays later known as Shakespeare's had been presented by 1598, according to Sir Edmund K. Chambers, without the name of a writer having been associated with them.)

The question has already been answered in the affirmative to the satisfaction of Oxfordians with one example. As was long ago remarked, John Lyly sprang into fame in 1579 after entering into orbit around de Vere, and the twelve year period of his play-writing was exactly congruent with his employment as de Vere's "minion secretary," as Gabriel Harvey put it, after which he wrote nothing of consequence. (When Harvey in 1593 said that Lyly was "sometime the fiddlestick of Oxford, now the very babble of London," he was ostensibly talking about the university, but that would have made the "sometime" eighteen years earlier; it is much likelier that he meant the Earl.) One may fairly deduce that Lyly's hand was not the only one on his quill. No poetry of Lyly's has ever come down to us except the lyrics in his plays, none of which appeared in the printed texts of his plays until 1632; and it is hardly to be doubted by anyone who reads them that the lyrics were by de Vere. For more on the subject the reader is referred to J. Thomas Looney's "Shakespeare Identified" and B. M. Ward's The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford.

"O! 'tis the sun that maketh all things shine," says Berowne in Love's Labor's Lost--or, as we might rewrite it, "Oxford 'tis that maketh others shine." If Lyly glowed while and only while writing in the beams of de Vere, there was another writer who is remembered for, and only for, his refulgence during his couple of years' association with a younger de Vere. He is Arthur Golding, half brother of Edward's mother, the second wife of the 16th Earl of Oxford. The English version of Ovid's Metamorphoses of 1567-- a book generally acknowledged to have had more influence on Shakespeare's poetry than any other--was the product of the term of their proximity, chiefly as joint residents in Cecil House. Writing an introduction to the edition brought out by Macmillan in 1964, John Frederick Nims of the University of Illinois at Chicago calls it "still more enjoyable, more plain fun to read, than any other 'Metamorphoses' in English." Nothing that Golding wrote in his remaining forty-one years could by any stretch of the imagination be called enjoyable or fun to read, if found readable at all. What still gives the Metamorphoses of 1567 its appeal is, as Professor Nims says, "its racy verve, its quirks and oddities, its rugged English gusto," and one who reads it will see that this is so--and find it as unlike Golding's proper works as any two examples of writing could well be.

The "collaboration" between Ovid and Golding, "between the sophisticated darling of a dissolute society, the author of a scandalous book of seduction, and the respectable country gentleman and convinced Puritan who spent much of his life translating the sermons and commentaries of Calvin," Professor Nims finds "odd": "hardly less striking than the metamorphoses the work dealt with," which transformed men and women into four footed beasts, plants, rocks and even celestial bodies. "Strange," the Encyclopedia Britannica calls it; Golding's only original work, it points out, "is a prose Discourse

on the earthquake of 1580, in which he saw a judgment of God on the wickedness of his time."

Were a professional Latinist and translator like Golding would surely have aimed at fidelity to the original, the author of the English Metamorphoses is far too breezy for any such inhibition. While guilty of "wordiness, ostentatious parade of adjectives and outlandish inversions of language," the author of the so-called translation has, says Professor Nims, "something very engaging of his own to give us. He begins by metamorphosing Ovid: by turning the sophisticated Roman into a ruddy country gentleman with tremendous gusto, a sharp eye on the life around him, an ear for racy speech, and a gift for doggerel" and he "is at his best in describing places and people."

Writing in 1936, Louis Thorn Golding concedes that "it has been a surprise to many that so stern a Puritan [as his ancestor] should have translated the Metamorphoses of Ovid," of which "the morals or lack of morals must have come as a shock." He ascribes the aberration to "the new spirit in the country" that Arthur Golding would have imbibed among the nobility, even royalty, perhaps, at Castle Hedingham, ancestral seat of the de Veres-- a spirit that breathed in him only so long as it took to translate the Metamorphoses.

It won't do. There may be those who can believe that a writer is able to give his personality a 180-degree turn to produce a piece of work, then give it a 180-degree turn for the rest of his life, but they will not include anyone who knows anything about writers and writing and is willing to apply his knowledge. Yes, there is Lewis Carroll, but the "Alice" books are very much a carryover from the life of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, mathematician though he was. There is a basic, inescapable consistency in the personalities of human beings and among writers it inevitably governs their work. And no writer, we might interject, who had never produced any verse, is going to compose a poem longer than Paradise Lost--over 400 page

in all--and then never put his hand to verse again. The man who gambols with outgoing delight all over the green of Ovid's amoral fables, disporting himself in blithe irreverence of the enshrined original, evoking classical scenes and personages with impish vivacity and in impudent diminutives is not the kind of man who will find his temperamental affinity in a translation of Calvin's sermons on Job running to 751 royal folio pages and 1,200,000 words, such being the monument Arthur Golding erected to himself, his biographer tells us. Comparing the style of the English Metamorphoses with a passage of Golding's prose, Professor Nims can only marvel. If, for our part, we cannot conceive of the strict moralist as having had anything to do with the Metamorphoses of 1567 beyond helping in the translation of the Latin original, we find it easy to imagine the poem as evolving from the fancy of a teen-aged Berowne, Benedick or Touchstone and being fobbed upon the public as the youngster's uncle's because acknowledgment of a young Earl's authorship would have been unthinkable.

The Stratford man's dates force his proponents to make Shakespeare a comparative late-comer to the Elizabethan stage. Since the beginning of Shakspeare's hypothetical writing life cannot be pushed back beyond 1590 or 1591, then where similarities exist between Shakespeare and other playwrights--Lyly, Marlowe, Greene, Lodge, Munday--Shakespeare would have had to be the borrower. The exigencies of the case would also make of him a "cobbler" of the inferior plays of others. Orthodoxy's misunderstanding of the nature and greatness of Shakespeare's genius is nowhere more glaringly revealed than in these tenets. The merest common sense would surely tell us that in the absence of proof to the contrary Shakespeare must be adjudged to have come earlier than the Stratfordians allow; that his vastly greater genius

can only have led the way for others, not have followed in their footsteps; that the inferior plays he is said to have reworked must have been his own immature creations or plays of his first known to us in highly corrupt texts pieced together by piratical publishers from the memories of actors.. "stoln, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of iniurious impostors," in the language of the First Folio's editors. It is one of the strengths of the Oxford case that it provides for Shakespeare's priority, as does no rival theory of the authorship, with the possible exception of the case for the 6th Earl of Derby, which fails on other grounds.

If our conviction is that Shakespeare did not crib from the works of contemporary playwrights, it meets a supreme test in Romeo and Juliet. In 1562, during Edward de Vere's thirteenth year, there came off the press a play called The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet by one Arthur Brooke. Clearly it had its roots in an Italian romance which had evolved into two versions published in the previous decade and no less clearly it was to give rise to Shakespeare's play. It was, says E. K. Chambers, "substantially his source," and A. L. Rowse terms it an example of "the borrowing characteristic of Shakespeare" and the "basis of Romeo and Juliet." Here let us call upon the testimony of Marchette Chute, writing in her Shakespeare of London, which for truth's sake, might better have been called The London of Shakespeare:

"It is no easy thing to read Brooke's version seriously, for his style is strongly reminiscent of Bottom's immortal production of Pyramus and Thisbe. [Examples of the style follow.] Shakespeare could read this sort of thing and believe in the story wholeheartedly without being affected in the least by the childish narrator. Brooke's stupidity as a poet did not irritate him in the least, as it might very well a lesser man. Shakespeare's spirit accepted the whole of Brooke's with the same steady patient courtesy that made it possible for him, as an

actor, to appear in so many bad plays in the course of his life without ever becoming discouraged with his profession."

Setting aside Ms. Chute's fantasies about human nature and Shakespeare's character and career, we have a residuum of sound observation. If the narrator of Romeus and Juliet seems childish, what better reason could there be than that he was a child? If "Shakespeare" was not put off by the play's childish clumsiness, which other commentators than Ms. Chute deride, and if he would wholeheartedly accept a story from such a source and overlook its stupidity, the natural explanation is that he had written it himself in his boyhood and, probably touched by it, regarded it with parental indulgence. Would the reader not have felt in his place that in turning it into the undying drama of the star-crossed lovers we know today he was repaying a debt to the earnest, striving boy he had been?

Such is Dorothy S. Ogburn's interpretation, and it is one that your editor (who, in these speculations about Arthur Brooke's play and Arthur Goldings versification, is speaking only for D. S. Ogburn and himself) believes is the only one possible if Shakespeare's genius was of the kind it would appear to have been.

But what about Arthur Brooke? Apart from writing the play the only thing he seems to have done in life is die. George Turberville in his Epitaphs of 1567 has him drowned in crossing the Channel. It is the only report we have of him. I think that, having served his purpose, he was disposed of like an unwanted kitten in order to account for his non-existence, dispatched as a favor to de Vere by a poetical disciple of the Earl of Surrey, his uncle. If the reader will permit, the sound of the first two letters in Arthur may be transposed to give us Rother (the "o" as in "bother"), "an animal of the ox kind," which

makes Rother Brooke, a pun on de Vere's titles both as Oxford and as Bulbeck.

A. L. Rowse, who finds in the play not only the source of Romeo and Juliet but of "various motifs and incidents in Two Gentlemen of Verona," disparages "Brooke's lumbering fourteeners" in showing how Shakespeare improved on them. That recalls C. S. Lewis's similar condemnation of the "ugly fourteeners" of the Metamorphoses. And it reminds us that de Vere's early Echo Verses--a highly significant poem of which the next Newsletter will have something to say--are also in iambic septameter. As for the shortcomings of Romeus and Juliet--which would not be so short for a twelve-year-old--well, "Brooke" himself recognized them. Introducing the play with a kind of apology more likely to come from a diffident boy expecting to do better in the future than from an adult standing on the merits of the offering, he wrote, "I saw the same argument lately set forth on stage with more commendation, then I can looke for: (being there much better set forth then I haue or can dooe)." No earlier play on the theme has been heard of, incidentally. Perhaps there had been some kind of presentation of "the same argument," derived from the Italian sources, on the stage at Castle Hedingham, where the 16th Earl of Oxford's own players performed; and it would be pleasant to think that it might have been arranged for Queen Elizabeth during her visit to the Earl and his Countess in 1561 as a compliment to her fluency in Italian. We should not forget that Edward's tutor at this time, Thomas Smith, had been a student in Italy.

Certainly it would greatly expand our conception of the boy Edward if we are warranted in picturing him as moved to try his wings under Melpomene's inspiration at twelve, three years after he had matriculated as an "impubes" fellow-commoner of Queen's College, Cambridge, and, already impelled by the born writer's urge to get his product into print, having his manuscript delivered to a stationer. Specialists in the Elizabethan period like Professor Rowse and Ms. Chute would doubtless tell us that no one in the publishing business would have brought out such a contemptible play as Romeus and Juliet except for a substantial consideration.

In our next issue we shall further explore the matter of Oxford's possible different guises in "An Hundreth Sundrie Flowres" Revisited. Meanwhile we should welcome views of readers on the subject under discussion.

The Editor

MORE ON THE PORTRAIT

Some of our members have expressed distress over what they consider the precipitate speed with which Gordon C. Cyr's article on the new identification of the subject of the Ashbourne portrait was disseminated in the Newsletter. The objection appears to be based chiefly on the failure of the staff of the Shakespeare-Oxford Society to seek a "meeting of minds" on the issue.

Such a meeting would certainly have been called for had there been any uncertainty about the validity and force of Peter Michaels's discoveries--that is, if there had been some possibility remaining that the subject of the portrait was Oxford. Clearly, there was none. Helen Cyr, acting independently, and the Folger Library had both identified the coat-of-arms in the corner of the portrait, revealed by the stripping off of the over-painting, as that of Hugh Hammersley. The date of the painting, as established by the same process, was palpably 1612, when the subject was stated to have been forty-seven, putting his birth in the year 1565. None of the seeming indicators on which Charles W. Barrell had based his identification of the subject as Oxford had withstood Mr. Michaels's discoveries, employing methods denied to Mr. Barrell. There was, then, nothing to be resolved by discussion so far as concerned the identity of the man who sat for the portrait.

Such being the case, it appears to us that an obligation rested upon us to get

out the news of the discoveries as soon as possible after they were seen to be decisive. For one thing we did not know what public announcement by another body might be in the works, and we did not wish the Society to be in the position of having an acknowledgment of the truth seeming to be dragged out of it or of making it grudgingly. After all, the Society's purpose is not to make a case for Oxford as Shakespeare but to bring out facts bearing on the authorship and establish logical and reasonable inferences; such facts and inferences, unless we are much mistaken, are all that is required to make that case. At the same time it seemed very important to us to forestall any further citation of the Ashbourne portrait by our members as an element in the case for Oxford, which could only lead to their subsequent discomfiture and embarrassment.

Several substantive points have, however, been raised in correspondence which should be recognized.

First, the date of the portrait is given as 1612 whereas Hugh Hammersley was not granted his coat-of-arms until 1613. Professor Cyr's comment is that "The discrepancy can be explained in two ways. One is that the arms could have been added later (Michaels's view), the evidence for which lies in the many layers of over-painting Michaels uncovered. The other (the Folger's view) is that Sir Hugh allowed them to be included with the portrait when it was painted with full confidence that the College of Arms would not refuse to grant them. After all, the heralds were notoriously complaisant, as anti-Stratfordians have been arguing for decades and as the contemporary controversy surrounding Shakespeare's own coat warrants our believing."

Secondly, there is the book held by the subject of the Ashbourne portrait and the skull on which his forearm rests, so appropriate to the author of Hamlet. But, as Professor Cyr says, "The skull was a common memento mori in literally hundreds of Elizabethan and Jacobean portraits, as Wolf Stechow noted in the letter I cited in my article. And I know nothing in Hammersley's background precluding literary

or 'philosophical' interests on his part, no matter what his trade may have been."

Thirdly, there is the singular circumstances of the monogram CK reported by Mr. Barrell of which Mr. Michaels found no trace. Here we turn to a letter received from Fred D. McHugh, who in 1939 accepted Mr. Barrell's analysis of the Ashbourne portrait for publication in Scientific American. Mr. McHugh says that his shock at the disclosures transmitted in the last Newsletter was "tempered by the knowledge that...the late C.W. Barrell did prove the portrait a Shakespeare fraud!" And he adds that Mr. Barrell's one error was in not "awaiting the verdict of further, intense scrutiny." and that this should be understood "lest there be condemnation of a man who made many contributions to our evidence for Oxford, and only one bad guess." These are both points made in Professor Cyr's article, but having in the past year reread the files of our Newsletter's predecessors we feel that Mr. Barrell's contribution to the case for Oxford deserves reiteration: it was immense.

McHugh's chief concern is with Mr. Michaels's judgment that in detecting the initials CK on the portrait Mr. Barrell's camera must have picked up a defect or a worn stripping on the canvas and that the monogram "is apparently an illusion, since it does not exist." He writes:

"An illusion? A defect in the canvas? It is neither. The hard fact is that the monogram did show at the point Barrell said it did, adjoining the shield, as our Scientific American reproductions clearly prove.

"Further, it could not possibly have been an accidental 'show up' of flaws in the canvas, for no one, seeing the original pictures as I did and studying them at close range during a three-hour presentation by Barrell as I did, could

conceive of such a juxtaposition of atoms, molecules, of whole canvas fibers as would make an 'accidental,' perfectly outlined, artistically designed CK monogram as reproduced in the Scientific American half-tones.

"What, then? Did someone slip this false monogram onto one of the early layers of varnish? Endeavoring to make the Shaksper hoax look more plausible? And Mr. Michaels' restorer solvent smudged it out before he had a chance to study the area under different types and angles of light? Or indeed, did he have instructions to make such in-process studies?

"Then there is the absence of the monogram from the Folger Library's X-ray pictures. Was that due simply to the fact that the plane of the monogram--just the monogram--was out of focus? Could have been, especially if it were on one of the layers of varnish. And now, with the varnish layers removed, there is no way to prove or disprove anything.

"Nevertheless, no conjectures or assumptions can write off C. W. Barrell's original monogram CK, for I saw it clearly in the original x-ray pictures, and it was not--repeat not--a re-touch job!

"It appears that some have not seen the original reproductions of this monogram, so I am enclosing a xerox of the page showing it."



There is clearly no question about the

presence of the CK on Mr. Barrell's plate. Professor Cyr, in his reply to Mr. McHugh, advanced a most astute hypothesis to account for it.

However, he wishes to undertake some further investigations before giving it wider circulation.

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