The Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter

AUTUMN 1958

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Articles published in the "News-Letter" do not necessarily represent the views of the Editors.

NOTICES

A DISCUSSION ON "THE SHAKESPEARE MYSTERY", organized by the Old Vic Club, will take place at the Old Vic Theatre, Waterloo Road, at 7.15 p.m. on Sunday, 21st September. The speakers will be Mr. Calvin Hoffman, author of *The Man Who Was Shakespeare* (Marlowe), and Mr. T. L. Adamson, Chairman of the Shakespeare Fellowship, who will expound the case for the Earl of Oxford. The Chair will be taken by Sir John Russell.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP will be held at the Alpine Club, 74 South Audley Street, at 3 p.m. on Saturday, 4th October, and the Chair will be taken by the President.

THE NEXT MEETING will take place at the Poetry Society's Rooms, 33 Portman Square, at 3 p.m. on Saturday, 8th November, when Miss Gwynneth Bowen will give a lecture on "*Hamlet*—A Mirror of the Time".

NEWS AND NOTES

THE SHAKESPEARE FELLOWSHIP STUDY GROUP

We have received the following report from the Secretary of the Study Group, Miss Hilda Amphlett:

"There have been eight meetings of the Study Group since Miss Wainewright resigned the Secretaryship after five years of untiring organizing and preparing papers for the meetings.

"Without a break the activities of the Group have continued, with Miss Wainewright still contributing much lively information and the discussions being vigorous and enlightening.

"A new formula has been introduced by the reading of a couple or more scenes from a play, the theme of which has some bearing on the discussion, each member reading the part of one character. This was done for the first time when Mrs. Sheila Atkinson, an interested guest, came to discuss Shakespeare's Musical Terms, of which she had made a study, and read from *Romeo and Juliet* and other plays, so showing the author to have been a consummate musician. Again, a reading of *A Winter's Tale* was made to discuss rural matters as delineated by Shakespeare. At Sir John Russell's the subject chosen was family influences on the author, and particularly the dominance of a mother, and scenes from *Coriolanus* were read, Mrs. T. L. Adamson reading the part of the hero's mother with great effect. Very seldom does a meeting pass without some new angle on Shakespeare's words, or new information about the Earl of Oxford being brought before the members by one of their number, as when Miss Bright-Ashford discovered that contrary to the accepted opinion that de Vere had only become a Privy Councillor under James I he did indeed hold that position much earlier, in the reign of Elizabeth."

NEWS FROM AMERICA

We hear from the Pageant Press, 101 Fifth Avenue, New York 3*, that they have recently published a book by a distinguished Oxfordian, Dr. Louis P. Benezet, entitled *The Six Loves of "Shakespeare"* (price $3.00). The following paragraph is quoted from the jacket:

"The focal point of Dr. Benezet's study is that the sonnets are largely the private correspondence of de Vere and pages from his diary. He proves that the verses were written, not to two persons but six. De Vere's experiences with Queen Elizabeth, with his two wives, Anne Cecil and Elizabeth Trentham, with his mistress, Anne Vavasor and their son, Edward, and with the Earl of Southampton, his prospective son-in-law, are plainly revealed to the reader as the key to the mystery."

*British Representative: Pearn, Pollinger & Higham Ltd., London.

REPORTS OF MEETINGS

ALL'S WELL AND THE AUTHORSHIP QUESTION

By Ruth Wainewright

18th March, 1958

Besides enumerating the many parallels between the story of Bertram, as told by Shakespeare, and the circumstances and events of the early life of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, Miss Wainewright gave us a penetrating criticism of this seldom-acted play.

Shakespeare, of course, found the main outline of his plot in the *Decameron* of Boccaccio, or Painter's English translation in *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566). But "Oxfordians believe, as most of you know, that the reason for Shakespeare's interest in Boccaccio's story was because of the startling likeness between the characters and events in it and those of his own life. This is true not only of the main outlines, but in many details, as Mrs. Le Riche has pointed out in her pamphlet, *Shakespeare in Essex*." Miss Wainewright quoted the summary given in *Lord Oxford As Shakespeare* by Montagu W. Douglas, but the resemblances were, of course, first discovered by J. T. Looney, and Miss Wainewright referred to his "astonishment" when he found that the trick of the "substitute wife" was supposed to have been played on Lord Oxford, for Wright tells us in his *History of Essex*, that "He [Oxford] forsook his lady's bed, but the father of Lady Anne by stratagem, contrived that her husband should unknowingly sleep with her, believing her to be another woman, and she bore him a son in consequence of this meeting".

Miss Wainewright then referred to Professor Lambin's discovery that "Shakespeare" has set the scene of *All's Well*, not in Boccaccio's *Province* of Roussillon, in the South of France, but in the *Castle* of Roussillon in Dauphiny, twenty miles from Tournon, and not far from Lyons, which was occupied in Shakespeare's day by the Dowager Countess of Rousillon, mother of Helène of Tournon, whose tragic death in 1577, is reflected in that of Ophelia. Oxford passed through Lyons on his return journey from Italy in 1576, and probably paid a visit to the Castle, where Helène was at that time living with her mother. Professor Lambin, of course, believes that the Earl of Derby was the author of the plays, but Derby did not start on his travels till 1582 and could not have met the ill-fated Helène. Miss Wainewright thought that other dates given by Lambin fitted Oxford better than Derby.

Would Oxford have dramatized himself in such an unpleasant character as Bertram? This question led on to a discussion of the conflicting opinions of critics with regard to the characters of Bertram and Helena, and Miss Wainewright truly said: "What we think of him will depend a good deal on what we think of her". G.M.B.

CLASSICAL CLUES IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

By H. S. Shield

12th April, 1958

The sonnets and the plays of William Shakespeare were written, our lecturer told us, by an educated gentleman, hereinafter called the Author, steeped in the Latin language and literature. Nothing odd about that. Education in those days meant education in Latin. What was odd about the Author was the way he used the Latin. Bacon, Ben Jonson, Marlowe, Greene, and all the rest interlarded their works with "chunks of Latin" to use the Lecturer's own vigorous language. Usually they translated the "chunks" fairly literally, presumably to prove to their rivals that they could construe. Not so the Author. He did not translate Latin. He transmuted it. It suffered a sea change into something new—and English. Often a profound knowledge of the original was needed to recognise the Latin thought re-cast into English mould. There were no classical clues, said Mr. Shield, proving that the Author was Edward de Vere. The "curious" thing was that this type of evidence pointed away from all the others, and in its negative way strengthened the case for de Vere.

Mr. Shield's lecture was an amusing essay in the esoteric, and he will probably think this outline a shocking simplification of his theme, which if he will permit the liberty, he did his mischievous best to conceal. The lecture itself was a delightful ramble through the meadows of his erudition. Thus,

"From her fair and unpolluted flesh
may Violets spring",

was an unsuspected echo from Perseus. We had Ovid, of course. And also Seneca, Terence, Catullus and Vergil. Mr. Shield himself moved with confidence through his subject to illustrate the mastery with which the Author used the classics. The Author was no pedant. Thus the Adonis of classical literature, unlike Shakespeare's Adonis, never went near a brook. Indeed, said Mr. Shield, there is no evidence that the classical Adonis ever had a bath. Caesar never really said "Et tu Brute". And so on. Mr. Shield's picture was of a great gentleman, sure of himself, with no patience for detail.

The lecturer was fascinated by L. L. L., in which the Author ridiculed the pedantry of which he himself was free. De Vere he identified not with Biron, but, perhaps oddly, with the fantastic Don Adriano. Holofernes he made to be Gabriel Harvey.

Questions after the lecture tested the lecturer's scholarship, and it rang true. He challenged the audience for evidence that De Vere, though he of course had a Cambridge degree, had ever resided at Cambridge as a working scholar, and, rather to its own surprise, the audience could produce none.

J.W.R.

LORD OXFORD AND PLUTARCH

T. L. ADAMSON. 17th May, 1958

Before giving us his most striking examples of Shakespeare's familiarity with Lord North's English translation—published in 1575—of Plutarch's *Lives of Noble Greeks and Romans*, the Lecturer reminded us that Lord Oxford's personal accounts show that among books already purchased for him in 1569/70—the year before young de Vere's first military experiences—was Amyot's 1559 French translation of Plutarch's Greek.

With regard to the writing of the three Roman Plays, Mr. Adamson thought that *Coriolanus*, "largely pure Plutarch", was written by Oxford about the same time as *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, but that it was "finished by some other hand". Going through each play in turn, he drew attention to the dramatist's personal touches, again and again vitalising the Plutarchian narrative with some telling addition, or making some masterly abbreviation, as for instance the three lines in *Coriolanus* I, ix, when at a moment of glory he remembers to beg for the freedom of a poor prisoner but has "forgot" his name: "I am weary: Yea, my memory is tired". Or again in *Julius Caesar*, his condensation of the two-day quarrel between Brutus and Cassius to the one unforgettable scene; his sensitiveness to the eeriness of the ghost which in the original account causes no disturbance to the stolid Roman; his delicacy in treating Portia's own account of her self-inflicted wound which makes Brutus' self-control with Cassius, before telling him the tragic news which he had been concealing, so moving. How telling too is Oxford's addition to North's men with "smooth-combed heads" and those with "pale visages and carrion" countenances, of "Yon Cassius hath a lean and hungry look—would he were fatter".

Mr. Adamson thought that one reason why Oxford had chosen the five particular *Lives* from Plutarch's to work from (Coriolanus, M. Anthony, Cleopatra, Brutus, Julius Caesar) was that no others would have given him such a remarkable gallery of female characters as these do, ranging from the dominating Volumnia and the seductive Cleopatra to the noble Portia, and allowing him to add the futile Virgilia and the chattering gossip, Valeria.

It is clear that "the deterioration and collapse of a great man through his ungovernable passion for a seductive woman was a story that made a great appeal to Plutarch. He tells it brilliantly: his language seems more vivid than in the other Lives, his feeling for the protagonist deeper". Oxford, too, found he must give the *two* Anthonys, and, said Mr. Adamson, "rose nobly to the challenge of North's inspiring translation, giving us some of the most superb blank verse in the English language".

K.E.E.

THE ANNUAL DINNER

The Annual Dinner was held at the Commonwealth Headquarters of the English-Speaking Union on Wednesday, 23rd April, and the Chair was taken by the President, who read a telegram of good wishes from Dr. John R. Mez of Lugano, Switzerland.

The Toast to the Ever-Living Memory of Edward de Vere Earl of Oxford, was proposed by Sir John Russell who, in the intervals of law and politics, enjoys the double distinction of being a Governor of the Old Vic and a Vice-President of the Shakespeare Fellowship. Sir John referred to his audience as a "Neapolitan Ice" or a "Gateau Mille Feuilles", consisting of Scoffers, Sceptics and Scholars. His task was to "Scuttle the Scoffers, Shake the Sceptics and—" but I forgot what he was going to do to the Scholars; nothing perhaps, for the scholars referred to were not the orthodox scholars. For himself, he claimed to be no more than an enthusiastic amateur with an "ear for music", which told him that Burns, though a great poet, was a man of the people, but Shakespeare was not. Recalling the old joke, "They're all out of step but our Tommy", he said that *could* be true, if Tommy was the only man in the regiment with an ear for music and the rest were all marching obediently to the "left, right" of the officer in command, who, of course, was out of step himself. Over and over again, the dissentient had been proved right. By the time he had finished, the Neapolitan Ice had thawed considerably and some of the colours were getting rather blurred at the edges.

The Toast to the Fellowship was proposed by Mr. H. L. Bryant Peers, F.R.G.S., Secretary of the London Appreciation Society. Mr. Peers, though interested in our theories, was not yet a convert, and confessed that he was sometimes guilty of taking parties of sightseers to Stratford-on-Avon.

The President, in replying for the Fellowship, said: "We are winning our battle by making those who thought they knew reconsider whether they did know". He believed that scepticism about the Stratfordian Shakespeare was fairly widespread among the younger generation, and members would be interested to hear that we had acquired an influential ally in the Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, H. R. Trevor-Roper. He had recently met Professor Trevor-Roper, and had expressed his own opinion that Shakespeare of Stratford did not write the plays. The Professor had replied that no reasonable person could believe that he did. Professor Trevor-Roper specializes in the Elizabethan era.

Mr. Kenneth D. Browning proposed the Toast to the Guests, and speakers on behalf of the Guests were Judge Gordon Clark ("Cyril Hare" of detective story fame) and the Earl of Lucan.

G.

SHAKESPEARE'S EARLY STYLE

Shakespeare and his Betters, by R. C. Churchill, the first attempt to summarize and answer the whole case against William Shakespeare of Stratford, is reviewed by Mr. Kent on page 9, but one of Mr. Churchill's arguments calls for a more detailed reply than is possible in a review. Referring to the cross-examination by Mr. Humphreys of a panel of Oxfordians, which took place at a meeting of the Fellowship on 8th November, 1955, Mr. Churchill comments that he read the account in the *Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter*, "hoping to be informed how the Oxfordians get around the embarrassing fact that Edward de Vere died in 1604, before some of Shakespeare's greatest plays were written". (p. 196). "But," he adds, "Mr. Humphreys did not ask this question, and so no answer was forthcoming".

So Mr. Churchill had to look farther afield for his answer. After devoting several pages to refuting J. T. Looney's explanation—that *The Tempest* was wholly, and some of the other late plays partly, "unShakespearean"—he says:

> "The other argument, made by more recent Oxfordians, seems on the surface to have much more to commend it. It does not involve any drastic curtailment of Shakespeare's stylistic development, or any putting of a late play like *Antony* before a middle play like *Hamlet*, since it recommends a bodily removal of the entire development to an earlier period: the same plays, even *The Tempest*, with the same slow development of style . . . but simply transferred in a body to about twelve years earlier. It is an attractive theory; can it therefore be accepted?" (p. 203).

Mr. Churchill, of course, gives a negative answer, but for one reason only: that you cannot treat Shakespeare's plays in isolation.

> "The Oxfordian date for *Hamlet* is now 1588, Oxford-Shakespeare's first plays having been written around 1580. The accepted date of the first part of Marlowe's Tamburlaine is about 1587; the accepted date for *The Spanish Tragedy* about 1588-9. This means that when Oxford-Shakespeare had completed his middle period, and had progressed far beyond the sentry-go style of his first plays, Marlowe and Kyd were still on sentry-go. The accepted chronology, which dates *Tamburlaine*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Henry the Sixth* within a few years of each other, is surely more reasonable."

If we accept the premisses, we must, I think, admit that it is, but Mr. Churchill is wrong in supposing that any Oxfordian has ever recommended a *bodily* removal of the entire development, though I plead guilty, myself, to the guarded statement that the order of composition "*might even* be retained intact at an earlier period". (*Shakespeare's Farewell*, p. 4). If the order was fixed and immutable there could of course be no exceptions to the general rule, but no-one pretends that it is. There is really no such thing as *the* orthodox chronology or, for that matter, *the* Oxfordian chronology. Mr. Churchill has, however, called attention to the important fact that style may be an indication of date, provided we have some fixed standard of comparison. What, then, was Shakespeare's early style?

We have been brought up to think of it as the "sentry-go" style of the plays on Henry VI and Richard III—collectively known as the First Tetralogy—with *Titus Andronicus* thrown in. It is from these five plays alone that our notions of Shakespeare's earliest style are derived and if we say that they were his first plays *because* they are in his earliest style we are simply arguing in a circle. Are they believed to be the first because, as Shakespeare's plays go, they are bad? A writer does not necessarily progress in a straight line from "bad" to "good", he has his ups and downs. He may reach something very near perfection in one genre before going back to the beginning in another, or he may persevere in the same genre after his inspiration has flickered out, and this means inevitable retrogression. Besides, the authenticity of each of these five plays (as a whole or in part) is open to question and you cannot judge a man's style by verse he did not write!

The fact is that the Henry VI plays are among the very few which have been dated (rightly or wrongly) by *external* evidence. They are "early" because they are known to have been on the stage by 1592 and, for the orthodox, they form the starting-point to which everything else must be related. If 1592 is not so early after all, this line of reasoning is invalid and the only evidence that Shakespeare began his career with these plays ceases to exist. In any case, people are apt to overlook Shakespeare's early Comedies. Marlowe's sudden death occurred in June, 1593, and, to quote Professor F. P. Wilson:

> "Before Marlowe's death Shakespeare had certainly written *Henry VI*, *Richard III*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and had probably written *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, if not *Titus Andronicus*. A rapid glance over the shoulder at *The Comedy of Errors* may, perhaps, be allowed for the purpose of reminding ourselves that already in his youth Shakespeare moved in a world in which Marlowe was not at home and showed no signs of ever wishing to be at home."*

To Wilson's list may be added *The Taming of The Shrew*, on the assumption that Shakespeare's version—as many orthodox scholars now believe—was earlier than the supposed source-play, *The Taming of A Shrew*, which was published anonymously in 1594, and performed in the same year.

Chambers puts *Comedy of Errors* between the First Tetralogy and *Titus Andronicus*. Next on

* *Marlowe and The Early Shakespeare.*

his list come *Taming of The Shrew* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, followed by another comedy, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and then one tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, after which Shakespeare is supposed to have reverted to the subject of English history, going back to the reign of Richard II. He had now embarked upon the Second Tetralogy and, apart from a momentary flash-back to the time of King John, continued to write Histories in a forward direction, interspersed with Comedies, till with *Henry V* (1599), he had joined up his great sequence in the middle. By this time (according to Chambers), he had added to the Comedies: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *Merchant of Venice*; and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Now, there is a considerable difference in style as well as subject-matter between the Histories and the Comedies. This would be natural enough on any hypothesis, but the point is that in the first decade of his supposed career, Shakespeare's development did not apparently proceed along one line, but two parallel lines, one for History and the other for Comedy. To this we must add that, judged by external standards, the style of the Comedies appears to belong to an *earlier* period than that of the Histories. How do the orthodox get around this embarrassing fact?

"It is reasonable to suppose," says Chambers, "that at some date Shakespeare decided to make a deliberate experiment in lyrical drama . . . The actual percentage of *rhyme* in the plays affected by such an experiment is of no importance. There seems to have been a notion that rhyme was a characteristic of the *pre-Shakespearean* drama, which Shakespeare gradually discarded. It is true that mid-Elizabethan popular plays were written in various forms of *doggerel*. These, and not heroic couplets were the 'jygging vaines of riming mother wits', which Marlowe *repudiated*. There is little use of the heroic metre in the plays of Shakespeare's immediate predecessors . . . Substantially, the medium of Shakespeare's models was blank verse. The rhyme of the lyric plays represents a fresh start and not a *looking backwards*. And it seems to bear some relation to his use of double endings. The growth of these does not follow a very smooth curve at any point, but it is particularly noticeable that, *while he begins with a fairly high proportion* [in the First Tetralogy] *there is a marked drop, not only for the* lyric plays, but for *King John* and *I Henry IV*, which must follow them pretty closely".

(*William Shakespeare*, Part I, p. 267. Italics mine.)

The general tendency right through Shakespeare's career is for double endings to increase and it is odd that the First Tetralogy should have so many. Chambers is, in fact, hard put to it to explain certain deviations in Shakespeare's development which would not be deviations at all if the lyric plays were written before the First Tetralogy and before the time of Marlowe. I must refrain from following up the implications with regard to the order of the History Plays themselves, and turn to Shakespeare's first Comedies.

How many people, familiar with such plays as *Twelfth Night*, *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Merchant of Venice*, have not experienced some kind of shock on seeing or reading, for the first time, *Comedy of Errors* or *The Shrew*? If they usually enjoy Shakespeare, they will probably be disappointed; if, on the other hand, they "did" him unwillingly at school and left it at that, they may be relieved to find him writing *farce* and, what is more, in simple, straightforward language that anybody could understand. They may have been under the impression that Shakespeare was "difficult" because his language was archaic, but if they went back a quarter of a century or more they would find a few surviving examples of plays which are quite easy to understand, but intolerably dull, stemming from the first regular English Comedy, *Ralph Roister Doister*, by Nicholas Udall (c. 1550) and the first regular English Tragedy, *Gorboduc*, by Norton and Sackville (performed before the Queen in 1562). *Ralph Roister Doister* is written in rhymed doggerel and *Gorboduc* in blank verse, but both are distinguished by a simplicity of vocabulary and syntax which is quite foreign to the great age of Elizabethan Drama. Most of the plays of the seventies have disappeared, but it is this inherited simplicity of style, as well as an inherited vogue for farce, which differentiates *Comedy of Errors* and *The Shrew* from the other plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

In these two early comedies Shakespeare's blank verse is not yet fully developed. On the other hand, there is plenty of rhyme and a good deal of doggerel. In the case of *Comedy of Errors*, some critics have tried to explain this by suggesting that Shakespeare was revising an old lost play and retained some of it unaltered. Chambers does not agree with them, but says:

"I will present the advocates of the retention theory with the fact that the word 'mome' (iii.I.32), not used elsewhere in Shakespeare, is a common vituperative term of the drama of Udall's time, and add that it seems to me just as easy to suppose that here and in *Taming of the Shrew* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, where there is a substantial use of doggerel, Shakespeare was consciously experimenting with an archaistic form for comic effect."

However, once the time-barrier is broken, it is easier still to suppose that Shakespeare was writing in an "archaistic form" because he was only just emerging from archaism. The blank verse in the serious parts of *Comedy of Errors* is closer to *Gorboduc* than *Tamburlaine*.

If Marlowe and Kyd were Shakespeare's models for Tragedy and History (and the influence may well have been the other way round), who are supposed to have been his models in English

Comedy? For these we must go back behind Marlowe and Kyd to George Gascoigne, whose one comedy, *Supposes* (1566), provided the sub-plot for *The Shrew*; George Whetstone, whose one play, *Promos and Cassandra* (1578) is believed to be the main source for *Measure for Measure*; and, of course, John Lyly, the fashionable dramatist of the eighties.

The far-reaching influence on Shakespeare of Lyly's novel, *Euphues*, as well as his plays, is a commonplace of criticism, yet in his chapter on *Comedy of Errors* in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (1957), Professor Geoffrey Bullough says:

"Euphuistic wit is noticeably absent from this plain-styled comedy."

It is also absent from *The Shrew*, but present in a highly developed form in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Merchant of Venice*. Why this sudden change? The orthodox cannot produce an answer to that question, but perhaps the Oxfordians can.

Euphues the Anatomy of Wit was published in 1578 and euphuism immediately became the fashionable language of the Court, from whence it spread to all grades of society. On 1st January, 1577—over a year before the publication of *Euphues*—a play was performed at Court under the title "A Historie of Error". There is, of course, no proof that this was the same play as *Comedy of Errors*, but if it was, as Mr. Percy Allen and the late Mrs. Eva Turner Clark have suggested, the absence of euphuism from the *Comedy* is just what we should expect. In 1579—the year after the publication of Euphues—Stephen Gosson, in the *School of Abuse*, condemned stage plays as immoral but mentioned four exceptions, among them *The Jew*, "showne at the Bull in Bishopsgate representing the greedinesse of worldly chusers, and the bloody mindes of usurers". This would certainly have been hailed by the orthodox as an allusion to *Merchant of Venice*, were it not for the "impossibility" of the date. In 1580, Lyly dedicated his second book, *Euphues His England*, to his "very good Lord and Master Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxenford"; and from that time on, the Earl of Oxford was the acknowledged patron of the "euphuists", with John Lyly as his secretary and supervisor of his Boy Players. The Oxfordian theory of Shakespearean authorship raises the question of how much Lyly influenced "Shakespeare" and how much "Shakespeare" influenced Lyly. But if William Shakespeare (Shaksper) of Stratford suddenly took up euphuism in the middle nineties, having managed without it for *Comedy of Errors* and *The Shrew*, he was *more* than twelve years behind the times.

Euphuism became a habit with "Shakespeare", but there is no doubt that it is most marked in the Comedies—excluding *Comedy of Errors* and *The Shrew*. I suggest, then, in accordance with Mr. Churchill's principle of the mutual influence of contemporary writers, that the two main lines of Shakespeare's early development were not parallel after all, but consecutive, and that the Comedies came first. The "sentry-go" style of the Histories, though tedious when carried to excess, was in its day a great achievement, and it had a purpose. Mr. Churchill has named it well, for it is martial music and ebbs and flows with the tide of war. It was in the process of writing the Histories that Shakespeare learnt to handle tragic situations, not without making some mistakes. Incidentally, the play which is supposed to have been most influenced by Kyd—whether or not he wrote an earlier "lost" play on the same subject —is *Hamlet*. As Mr. Churchill, himself, reminds us, the accepted date for *The Spanish Tragedy* is about 1588-9 (which coincides with the Oxfordian date for *Hamlet*). The accepted date for *Hamlet* is about 1600-1. How does Mr. Churchill get around this time-lag of twelve years?

G.M.B.

THE BELLS OF ST. BENNET

By The Late Rear Admiral H. H. Holland

It is many years since I first puzzled over this very mysterious Church; in fact I think it must be nearly ten years since I put forward my own suggestion about it to a member of the Fellowship but aroused no interest.

And yet there is something very curious about it. "One, two, three" says the clown "may put you in mind". Did any Church ever have a peal of three bells? I doubt it.

What would such a peal sound like? The only thing I can think of is the first three notes of "Three blind mice".

A possible solution is that St. Bennet had four bells but that one got cracked so that it could not be heard at some distance off. This might occasion remarks. Anyhow, where was this Church?

According to orthodox views it was St. Bennet Hythe Pauls Wharf just opposite the Globe Theatre. But this won't suit 1587 and the Queen's Company when the Globe was not built and the Queen's acted at the Bell in Gracechurch Street and at the Bull in Bishopsgate.

There is a picture of a Sunday afternoon in London given in Chambers' "Elizabethan Stage".

"During the early part of Elizabeth's reign Sunday was the usual day for plays. The trumpets blew for the performances just as the bells were *tolling* in afternoon prayers". This still occurred in 1587 for in October of that year the Privy Council wrote to the Justices of Middlesex directing them that restraining of plays on Sunday was to be observed. [*Elizabethan Stage.*]

So I proceeded to search Stow's *Survey of London* (Everyman's Library) for any Church of

S. Bennet in the vicinity of Gracechurch Street or Bishopsgate. In a list of Parish Churches (Page 434) I found in Brode Street Ward, St. Benet Fynke.

But then I noticed on the next page in Bridge Ward within, St. Benet Grasse Church.

Two St. Benets! that set me thinking, and a wild idea occurred to me. I turned the next page and there I found—

in Cheap Ward St. Benet Sorhoge or Syth.

Three Churches of St. Bennet, but how close were they together?

To give the reader, without a map, any idea of their position I can only quote exactly what Stow says about them.

"(1) Out of Brode Street runneth up Bartholomews Lane South to the north side of the Exchange, then more East out of the former Street from over against the Friars Augustine's Church runneth up another part of Brode Street south to a pump over against St. Bennets Church.

(2) Then higher on Grasse Street is the parish church of St. Bennet, called Grasse Church, of the herb market there kept: this Church also is of the Bridge Ward and the farthest north end thereof.

(3) This whole street called Bucklesbury: on the south side breaketh out one other short lane called Peneritch Street; it reacheth but to St. Sythes lane and St. Sythes Church is the farthest part thereof, for by the west end of the said Church, beginneth Needlars Lane which reacheth to Sopar's lane. This Church hath also an addition of Bennet Shoore (or Shrog or Shorehog) for by all these names I have read it."

From these three accounts I gather that the three Churches of St. Bennet formed an approximately equilateral triangle of which the sides were about 500 yards in length and that within the triangle was at least one of the Inns where the Queen's Company were in the habit of acting and from which the bells would be clearly audible. And so I come to my own explanation of this curious passage.

I think that the Bells of St. Bennet refer not to the peal of three bells of one Church but to the one individual bell of three Churches as they tolled together on a Sunday for afternoon prayers.

The Bells of St. Bennet may put you in mind, One, two, three!*

* See *Twelfth Night* V. I. 42.

The above article, sent to us by his daughter, was written for the *News-Letter* very shortly before the author's death.

ON THE POEM SIGNED I.M.S. (SECOND FOLIO)

By A. W. TITHERLEY, Author of *Shakespeare's Identity: William Stanley, 6th. Earl of Derby*,

This beautiful eulogy of Shakespeare, newly appearing in F.2 (1632), was signed "The friendly admirer of his Endowments. I.M.S.", but in *Shakespeare's Identity* (1952), it was shown by frequency tests as well as other criteria that the poem was really composite. This was explained by supposing that it had been written by Ben Jonson at different times and only put together in 1632. Deeper reflection on the problem leads to the modified view that only the second half of the poem commencing at line 40 was by him, and it is undeniable that this part, which is singularly Jonsonese, differs markedly from the first half. No poet of initials I.M.S. is known who could have composed this noble eulogism, not even John Milton Student for example, and though the letters might have meant *In Memoriam Scriptoris*, a better suggestion was offered by R. M. Lucas who on the external facts concluded that the initials simply meant *JAMES* (omitting the *a* and *e* in order to remain incognito); that is the son (then aged 26) of the Earl of Derby writing in praise of his father, then still living. But, as pointed out in 1952, the y-spelling frequency (a most reliable criterion) rules out young men like James, Lord Strange (who in any case had no great poetic ability) or Milton (who at that time lacked the mature genius implicit on the poem).

It is significant that the first half, but not the second, palpably betrays the peculiarities of Shakespeare himself. They are recognisable in the smooth overflowing periods, the unusual vocabulary, the bold imagery, the deep philosophic rumination, the characteristic word play (e.g. line 31), the antithesis (e.g. line 10) and typical alliteration (e.g. line 15); also by what is more convincing than any personal judgment, the abnormally low S-number which is only 5.32. No-one but Shakespeare ever attained this low figure: Milton's at that time was over 30 (though much lower later) and Jonson's 6 to 7 (it is 9 in the second half of the I.M.S. poem).

On the face of it this seems an absurd conclusion about a poem which so generously praises Shakespeare, because no-one had greater literary modesty than he; and self-praise was not in him. Yet it must be observed that there is no specific allusion to the poet in this first half, so that having regard to the decisive evidence of heterogeneity, it is conceivable that this part originated from earlier irrelevant couplets by Shakespeare, dilating in the abstract upon the proper function of any true dramatist, in fact the broken continuity of this first half suggests that it had been put together from "bits and pieces", with fairly obvious bre[illegible] at the word *Live* (line 12) and *age* (line 16), o[illegible]

the seven-line passage commencing at line 34. This passage is most interesting because it is separated off in F.2 by long dotted-line hyphens at the beginning and end, a sign-post which is in keeping with the inconsequential nature of its first three lines :—

> While the Plebeian Imp, from lofty throne
> Creates and rules a world, and works upon
> Mankind by secret engines, now to move . . .

For, while the second *and* should of course be *he* to detach the sense intended from *Imp* (gallery-ite), the verb *works* being in the present tense is incongruous to a defunct Shaksper who is the ostensible object of the praise. Such inconsistency could have arisen by manipulation of some unknown poem, where the seven-line passage, originally congruous, was preceded by two or more lines now missing. Similar editorial laxity will be noticed in line 2 where the words *can make* have been permitted to remain without altering to *could make*.

The whole I.M.S. poem is too long to quote here but the first ten lines are given to illustrate the unmistakable Shakespearean quality (modern spelling and punctuation) :—

> A mind reflecting ages past, whose clear
> And equal surface can make things appear
> Distant a thousand years and represent
> Them in their lively colours' just extent ;
> To outrun hasty time, retrieve the fates
> Roll back the heavens, blow ope the iron gates
> Of death and Lethe, where confused lie
> Great heaps of ruinous mortality.
> In that deep dusky dungeon to discern
> A royal Ghost from churles; by art to learn . . .*

A reasonable solution of the mystery surrounding the I.M.S. poem is feasible on Lucas's interpretation of the initials, but only if it is assumed that James was its editor, not its actual writer. Thus he might well have found among his father's papers in "cold storage" something which, dissected out with Jonson's assistance, could have given birth to the first 39 lines. For example, the rhyming couplets might have been a belated interpolation in *Hamlet*, never published ; for as is well known *Hamlet* was a play to which Shakespeare lovingly came back in revision more than once prior to 1604. If so, this hypothetical addition, with a suitable preamble (excised) introducing the subject of authors as distinct from actors, could have been a speech by Hamlet following his pungent criticism of players in III, 2 ; that is after "exeunt players" ; and it would end at the words "stol'n from ourselves" (line 39), when the soliloquy expressing Hamlet's ideals for a playwright was interrupted by the entrance of Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The date of this interpolation however could not have been much prior to 1613 (because of the S-number), and when James cut it down in 1632 he made the joins at lines 12, 17 and 32. In getting Jonson to tack on his own praise (second half), James also might have asked him, as an extra safeguard to secrecy, to insinuate a few ambiguities at the end comparable to those in his 1623 1st Folio ode ; which would explain the four lines "Now when . . . rich and neat", since these are equally applicable to a dead or living Shakespeare.

* The whole poem is printed in *The Shakespeare Allusion Book*.

MEMOIR OF
MR. J. SHERA ATKINSON, LL.B., LONDON
DIED 10th MARCH, 1958

I first met Mr. Atkinson at a Fellowship committee 21 years ago. A rather heated discussion had arisen on some controversial point. Most of the committee had spoken, but not Atkinson. So Col. Douglas, the Chairman, turned to him with "and what says Solon ?" And what "Solon" said closed the discussion. That was typically Atkinson. In all the years it was my privilege to work with him on committee he seldom spoke first in any debate. He would listen quietly to others and then with a sure judgment and legal clarity give his reasoned opinion. I know that his presence at the table was comforting to all Fellowship Chairmen, for among his other qualities he was a great peacemaker, with a disarming old-world courtesy.

For many years he was our honorary treasurer. When I succeeded him in that office in 1952 he handed over copies of years of correspondence which showed how unwavering had been his own efforts, often successful, to extend the influence of the Fellowship by enlisting new members from circles that would not normally come in contact with us.

His legal knowledge was most helpful. Among other services we are indebted to him for the establishment of the Fellowship Trust for the Douglas Bequest of books and for our extensive library.

His sudden death is a great blow to the Fellowship and to all who knew him personally. He was a kindly man, of wide and generous sympathies often practically expressed. I treasure happy memories of years of intimate companionship with him.

T. L. Adamson

JUDGE GORDON CLARK

All those who shared with us the privilege of hearing his brilliantly witty speech at the Annual Dinner, will share our regret at the death of Judge Gordon Clark, alias Cyril Hare, which occurred on 25th August.

BOOK REVIEWS

SHAKESPEARE AND HIS BETTERS. BY R. C. CHURCHILL. Max Reinhardt Ltd., 21s.

The author of this book explains the title thus: "The title of the present work reflects the urge of most unorthodox theorists to give the plays and poems commonly attributed to Shakespeare to some member or group of members of the Elizabethan nobility". This point is rubbed in in several other places. The author does not seem capable of appreciating that it is not rank but evidence that counts with us. It is curious that whilst there are chapters on the Bacon, Oxford, Marlowe, Derby and Rutland theories there is not one on the Stratfordian case, although Professor Gilbert Slater included one in his valuable *Seven Shakespeares*. Perhaps the explanation is to be found in the following remarkable passage:

> "That William Shakespeare of Stratford wrote the plays and poems commonly attributed to him is not a *theory* at the present time, it is a *fact* at the present time and will continue to be a fact until it is definitely proved wrong."

This is an animadversion on Slater's reference to a "Stratfordian theory". This our author says is "a misuse of language". It would be interesting, say, by a Gallop Poll—to ascertain how many of the orthodox per thousand could justify the "fact" by anything that could be called an argument. I once suggested to a schoolmaster that the reason he believed in the Stratford Shakespeare was that his master had so taught him and that master's opinion was simply due to the fact that his master had said the same thing. My opponent had the audacity to say that this was a very good reason!

We are told that Shakespeare was a professional dramatist—once that he was the leading professional dramatist of his time. How does Mr. Churchill know this? How came it that Philip Henslowe paid the professional dramatist nothing for producing his plays? He is disingenuous in dealing with this. "He was not dependent on his writing for his living." The plays, we are told, belonged to the company not to the author, so the man who sued his neighbours for small debts gave his plays away!

Reference is made more than once to the Earl of Southampton. The connection of Southampton with Shakespeare is well known, though when Mrs. Stopes wrote his biography, in the hope of discovering more about their relationship, she was forced to confess that her researches had found out little new. This is misleading. Mrs. Stopes candidly confessed she had found nothing at all.

Mr. Churchill is equally odd about the performance of *Richard the Second* on the eve of the Essex rebellion.

> "The reason why Shakespeare did not share the imprisonment of Sir John Hayward was, presumably, because the investigators found convincing proof that the supposed author of *Richard the Second* was in fact the real author. If there had been any doubt about it, Shakespeare would have been imprisoned until he revealed the identity of the nobleman they assumed to be behind him."

If there had not been any doubt that Shakespeare had written the play surely he would have been imprisoned.

As to the Oxford theory, we are told that it does not fit the chronology of the plays. We are not told what the chronology is or who fixed it, but "Oxford died in 1604 before many of Shakespeare's best plays were written". Yet elsewhere we are told that "only when a play was losing its popularity did the theatre company allow it to be printed". So the question of chronology is a bit foggy.

It may surprise Mr. Churchill to know that he does not touch one of the arguments that I have used in my six debates on the authorship question. Here are some. The extraordinary fact that an American writer found fifty references to the death of Ben Jonson and none has been found to the death of Shakespeare. This made the orthodox Dr. F. S. Boas exclaim "amazing". There is no reference to the phrase the "ever-living poet" in the introduction to the sonnets. I heard Sybil Thorndike refer to Bernard Shaw as "ever-living" when he was dead. There is no mention of the line in the sonnets—"Every word doth almost tell my name". We read nothing of the petition of the players to the Earl of Pembroke nineteen years after the Stratfordian's death referring to him as "a deserving man". This was indeed damning with faint praise, if he was the dramatist. His son-in-law, Dr. Hall, kept a diary. He records the death of his father-in-law, but there is nothing to suggest he was an extraordinary man. Dr. Hall's widow was visited by a Doctor Cooke in 1642. A report of this visit has come down to us. She produced her husband's papers and there was much talk of him, but nothing seems to have been said about her father!

Dr. Hall left books in his will. Shakespeare did not mention any. Mr. Churchill makes a plausible point that Bacon did not mention books. One would like to know how Bacon's signature compares with Shakespeare's.

Mr. Ivor Brown has written an interesting Foreword to this book. He says: "If Shakespeare the actor was known to be the ignoramus suggested by many of the heretics, the playgoers would have ridiculed the idea of his authorship. How does Mr. Brown know that any playgoer accepted it? In Elizabethan times there was far less curiosity and discussion about literary subjects than there is now.

However, Mr. Brown does not rise to the absurdity of Mr. Churchill who has produced a

sentence hardly equalled by any other Stratfordian. "The case for the Queen's authorship of Shakespeare is, of course, as fundamentally sound —or as fundamentally unsound—as any of the previous cases that have been advanced." We are told too that "the case for Sir William Alexander (in 1633 made Earl of Stirling) appears every bit as sound as the Oxfordian". This book emanated from Germany in 1930. "Appears" is a good word. It does not appear that Mr. Churchill knows the Oxford case very well. It is remarkable that there is no reference to Meres praise of De Vere in *Palladis Tamia* or to Webbe and Puttenham's allusions.

"If the unorthodox have quarrelled amongst themselves to such an alarming extent, then the thought must arise that perhaps Shakespeare wrote his own plays after all." So Mr. Churchill. It may occur to some that if there have been such an alarming number of sceptics there must be some good grounds for scepticism. For Mr. Churchill finds far more than "Seven Shakespeares". He has found over twenty!

"The difficulty is to find a neutral angle—or any authority who is truly impartial." I am glad Mr. Churchill does not claim to be such. "Shakespeare wrote his own plays." When will the orthodox drop this silly cliché? Of course Shakespeare wrote *his own* plays, but the question is "who was Shakespeare?"

The frontispiece of the book presents portraits of Bacon, Raleigh, Shakespeare, De Vere, the Earl of Derby. It is difficult to understand why the "Chandos" portrait of Shakespeare (in the National Portrait Gallery) is selected. Why not the Droeshout portrait or the Stratford bust? They have far more claims to authenticity. I can only suggest that the "Chandos" portrait is preferred because it presents a pretty fellow—one distinctly high-browed! The date of the Earl of Oxford's birth is wrongly given as 1540.

With all its faults the book is fascinating and should stand in a Shakespeare library next to Gilbert Slater's. It claims to be "a history" as well as a criticism and this claim is justified. In this connection it will do no good to the orthodox for it introduces sceptics of whom many will never previously have heard.

Perhaps the most amazing thing in the book is the discovery that there is at least one Baconian who believes Bacon is still alive (*Bacon is Alive.* 1911). Mr. Churchill not surprisingly waxes facetious about this "Whether he now draws his old age pension under the National Insurance Scheme, is one of the points on which I have not been able to get any precise information". This puts in the shade 'Old Parr" whose incredible inscription in Westminster Abbey credits him with 152 years of life, but Bacon is still a long way behind Methuselah with his 969!

WILLIAM KENT.

A PICTORIAL BIOGRAPHY (1956) AND **THE CULT OF SHAKESPEARE** (1957). BY F. E. HALLIDAY. Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd. London. 25s. net.

Mr. Halliday is an indefatigable and copious writer on Shakespeare for, besides the books named above, he has written *Shakespeare in His Age, Shakespeare and His Critics*, among others. He is completely "orthodox", and the Biography is not only excellently produced, but is packed with illustrations of great interest to orthodox and unorthodox alike. After all, whether we like it or not, most of the names associated in the current biographies of Shakespeare (of Stratford) must have been also associated with Edward de Vere and his "Oxford Boys"—Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Chapman, Alleyn, Burbage, Drayton, Essex, Sydney, Southampton, Pembroke, and many others, including of course Queen Elizabeth, at some time or other. Mr. Halliday gives us some splendid reproductions of portraits of these and many other famous people of the day, as well as photographs of places and buildings which the name of Shakespeare has made so familiar to us. In addition, there are many interesting facsimiles of title pages and books—the whole forming a most interesting collection of pictures.

Whether it can be called a "biography" of William Shakespeare, pictorial or not, is a matter of opinion. We know very little indeed of Will of Stratford, but some of Mr. Halliday's statements about him are mere speculations.

Like the late Sir Sidney Lee, Mr. Halliday is full of "it is probable" and other similar statements which can be read, "it happened" or "it didn't", whichever is preferred. We are told quite positively, however, that Shakespeare's father was "an exceptionally able man of business", and his mother "a member of a great family". This last will no doubt be violently opposed by those of *our* critics who unceasingly claim that the great playwright and poet belongs to the "working classes", and not to the aristocracy, as the supporters of Oxford as the veritable author of "Shakespeare" impudently insist.

Not being able to account for the mass of genuine learning in the plays in any other way, Mr. Halliday tells us that "we must imagine" William going to the Stratford Grammar School which was "one of the best schools in the country"; and we are given a picture of Lily's *Latin Grammar* "as used by Shakespeare", so that now we know why he was so familiar with Ovid. Later, of course, Mr. Halliday tells us that "we must imagine" William in London "re-writing plays". And he soon "was at ease in the intellectual and courtly life of the capital". All Mr. Halliday appeared to know about Oxford in this book is that it is a town—for he never mentions the Earl, though he does hint that a Miss Delia Bacon wrote a book in which she gave most of the credit

of writing the Plays to her namesake Francis Bacon. And he adds that there are some people who actually want to give the credit to Marlowe.

So much for this "Pictorial" biography. But in the *Cult of Shakespeare*, we get a far more thorough study, and he has one chapter dealing in detail with some of the Oxfordian claims. Indeed, it is altogether an engrossing work, urbanely written, and packed with information of the greatest interest to all lovers of "Shakespeare". The reason is quite simple. Mr. Halliday says as little about "Shakespeare" as he can. When he heads his chapters, "Shakespeare Eclipsed", "Shakespeare Reformed", "Shakespeare Fabricated", "Shakespeare Unmasked", "Shakespeare Identified" and so on, he is *not* dealing with "Shakespeare" at all, but with his *Plays*. Like the late John M. Robertson who wrote a number of brilliant works analysing the Plays from the point of view of authorship, while still maintaining that Will of Stratford wrote the most important parts, Mr. Halliday tells us of the part William Davenant, Nahum Tate, John Dryden, David Garrick, and other eminent men played in altering the Plays (or not as the case may be) and he keeps our interest unflaggingly.

There is an excellent chapter on William Henry Ireland as the author of *Vortigern*—that great Shakespearean "discovery"—and another on J. P. Collier, famous for his discovery of many "contemporary" and learned notes in a copy of the Second Folio. Other chapters deal with some of the many editions of Shakespeare like those of Rowe, Pope, and Theobald. And Mr. Halliday has much also to say of the egregious Mr. Bowdler—the Rev. Thomas Bowdler—who was so painfully shocked at some of the "free" expressions in the plays that he produced an edition in which they were all shorn, and thereby enriched our vocabulary with a delightfully contemptuous word.

In the *Pictorial Biography*, Mr. Halliday deals with Chettle and gives us a picture of his *Apology* (1592) in which we are told "the first description of Shakespeare" appears. There certainly is *no* description of Shakespeare in the facsimile shown; but of course, Mr. Halliday was following Lee who insists that when Chettle wrote, "I am as sorry as if the originall fault had been my fault, because myselfe have seene his demeanour"—"his" referred to Will of Stratford. Greenwood calls this utterly "dishonest", and shows as clearly as can be shown, that Chettle was *not* referring to Shakespeare. But there would be few "orthodox" Shakespearean scholars if there was no mythology to perpetuate.

The chapters which will intrigue Oxfordians are those in which Mr. Halliday deals with the Oxford, Bacon, Marlowe, Derby, and Rutland theories. They are not ferociously attacked as if those of us who followed one of these theories were lunatics or scoundrels. Mr. Halliday keeps an even key right through the book, but he carefully and cheerfully selects his material. If you read one unorthodox work and "remained unconvinced say by the claims of Dyer, Bacon, Derby and the rest, there was Sir Walter Raleigh, or Ann Whateley, or John Florio's father . . . There was no end to exciting possibilities and 'true Shakespeares' became almost as abundant as authentic likenesses." Mr. Halliday mentions of course Thomas Looney, as well as Percy Allen, and comments, "The case for Oxford is as enthralling as those for Derby, Bacon and the rest". This kind of comment would have had more weight if Looney's arguments were met and defeated, but such criticism is not Mr. Halliday's "cup of tea". Rather he prefers to poke as much fun as he can out of Mr. Allen's excursions into Spiritualism—the "talks" he had with Elizabethans in which he was "encouraged through his medium by Walt Whitman, William Archer and Marie Lloyd", as Mr. Halliday notes. And naturally he noted also that the same medium assured Mr. Alfred Dodd that it was Bacon who was the veritable author of the Plays.

But from the spirit world, Mr. Allen received the "staggering revelation" that Oxford "always collaborated with William Shakespeare" (of Stratford) the actor; and in his bantering way, Mr. Halliday has little difficulty in demolishing many of the "unorthodox" arguments which, in the opinion of some of us at least, leave Will of Stratford (to use a homely phrase) without a leg to stand on—though Mr. Halliday dismisses us with, "But for the great majority of professed anti-Stratfordians the whole business can be no more than a joke; they cannot seriously believe the frivolous fantasies that they write and read in their peculiar publications". We are not quite as "peculiar" as some of the orthodox.

And it is here that those of us who have made a genuine study of the case for Oxford must part company with Mr. Halliday. I can only add that his book, dealing as it does with the Plays and *not* with the Man who wrote them, always makes absorbing reading, and I heartily recommend it.

H. CUTNER

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

On Speculating

Sir,

It is a pity that Mr. H. L. Senior, whose article in the Autumn 1957 *News-Letter* I read with interest, should be so very certain about things for which we have literally no evidence. For example, he tells us of the father of Milton that "it is quite certain that John Milton senior knew Edward de Vere". It is quite certain that we know nothing of the kind. It may well be that they met, but there is no record of such a meeting as far as I am aware.

And I am by no means clear why Milton senior was

dragged in at all. Supposing that they had met, does this mean that "it is quite certain" that he knew Lord Oxford had written the plays under the pseudonym of "William Shakespeare" of Stratford, and had told his son John? If so, then all I can say is, after re-reading Milton's famous sonnet to Shakespeare, that there is not a scrap of evidence in it that Milton had anybody else in mind but Will of Stratford as the author of the Plays. I do not agree that the first two lines quoted by Mr. Senior refer to the "mystery" of the burial place of Oxford. At all events, Ward thought so little of Milton that he does not mention him in connection with Oxford—nor for that matter does he mention John Milton senior.

Whatever was the reason which made Edward de Vere take the pseudonym of "Shakespeare", what evidence can Mr. Senior produce for telling us that the secret "could not have remained a secret very long at the Mermaid" and the other taverns he names? Does he mean that the drinkers there all knew that it was *Oxford* who wrote the Plays? If so, would he give us some evidence—or at least, on what he bases his "speculation" just a little stronger than that the dramatists frequenting the Mermaid did not write anything about Will of Stratford when he died because they knew he had not written the Plays?

In the first place, there is not a scrap of evidence that either Will or Oxford ever went to the Mermaid. They may have done, of course, but it is just pure speculation. Secondly, out of his list of contemporary "men of genius" who were alive at the time of the Stratford man's death—how many of them got tributes when *they* died? Did Tourneur or Heywood or Ford?

But there is a deadlier reason why we Oxfordians should not press this "strange omission" too far. If the secret of the true authorship of the plays had really been known to all or most of the "men of genius" Mr. Senior names, and to all who caroused at the Mermaid and other well-known taverns, how is it that they were all so deadly silent when the Earl of Oxford himself died in 1604? Where were "the demonstrations of grief" and the tributes to his genius? Why did not John Milton senior, as a composer of repute, give us a musical tribute to the noble Earl whom he knew so well and who was the famous author of the Plays of Shakespeare? As far as I know the death of the Earl of Oxford was no more noticed than that of any nobleman. And the surprising thing is that this goes also for the Earl of Derby and the Earl of Rutland. There were no tributes to any of them extolling their "playwriting" when they died—not any at least from the dozen or so men of genius whose names Mr. Senior gives.

Tributes at the death of Ben Jonson—yes; and tributes at the death of Francis Bacon—yes. Indeed, the *Manes Verulamiani* which contained 32 Latin elegies by 27 of Bacon's University contemporaries published in 1626 when Bacon died, make a magnificent tribute "To the Memory and Merits of the Most Honoured Francis, Lord Verulam, Viscount St. Alban". But—I am very sorry to note—Oxford's death produced nothing whatever.

It is true that we are not certain who it was who authorised the publication of the First Folio—though here I am inclined to "speculate" that it might well have been Derby (Oxford's son-in-law) with Bacon as the Editor. I do not for a moment agree that Derby "entrusted to Jonson the secret of the authorship of the plays". If Jonson knew that Oxford was their author, how comes it that he wrote the famous verses on the title page of the First Folio beginning "This Figure, that thou here seest put", etc., which are packed with Baconian ciphers? If this is considered pure "speculation", I can only answer that the ciphers are *mathematical* and I have come across *no answer yet* to the Baconian claim that they were deliberately inserted. And may I here make it clear that because these lines are certainly "Baconian", this does not mean that I consider Bacon wrote the Plays. I do not.

In trying to settle the vexed question as to the authorship of the Plays I am, like all Oxfordians, ready to examine any theory, any speculation in fact; but I am indeed sorry to see very little in Mr. Senior's article to help us in our search. The one vital thing we need is evidence. And there is none in "Strange Omissions".

H. CUTNER

Sir,

I am obliged to Mr. Cutner, even for his severest criticisms. He calls my essay just "Speculation", but what are all our theories about Oxford but speculation? I never expected my little essay to draw forth any criticism whatever. It was merely a little journey down one of the life lanes from the main Shakespearean road. A sort of retreat where the Pilgrims could rest from the lastings and brow-beatings of the line-by-line Barbarians.

I quite admit I was wrong to be so "certain"; because as an Agnostic I am certain of nothing. I would just ask Mr. Cutner one question. How does he explain the silence of Herrick?

I am not in the least interested in what Ward said or thought of Milton (see my book on Milton).*

As the *News-Letter* is strictly limited for space I am afraid I have already written too much, as Mr. Cutner says my essay covers two pages and teaches nobody anything.

H. L. SENIOR

* 'Milton "The Supreme Englishman". W. H. Allen and Co. Ltd. 3/6.

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