

SHAKESPEARE OXFORD SOCIETY
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Verò Nihil Verius

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Mail Bag
by
Warren Hope

I regret the necessity of producing this double issue of the Newsletter. But my job, family, and work on the doctoral dissertation forced me to put the Newsletter aside during the Winter. It will be impossible for me to continue as editor much longer and I hope members will give a replacement some thought for the fall.

A number of brief items have come to me from members through the mail and they may best be dealt with here.

Robert Meyers of Alexandria, Virginia writes to let us know that his new book, D.E.S. The Bitter Pill, has recently been published by Putnam's.

Charlton Ogburn of Beaufort, S.C., whose new book on the authorship question should appear in the Fall, writes to comment on an article by Hilda Amphlett which appeared in a previous issue. Charlton writes: "Incidentally, Hilda Amphlett's article is predicated on Oxford's being the subject of the Hilliard miniature. But the age of the sitter is wrong by eight years from Oxford's at the time of the painting and Roy Strong, the leading expert on Elizabethan portraiture says it is not of Oxford." Charlton also would like members to know that a new guide book to Castle Hedingham is now available from M.D. Moles, Spencers, 30 St. James's St., Castle Hedingham, Halstead, Essex CO9 3EN, England.

Any mention of Essex necessarily brings to mind our indefatigable Oxfordian researcher there, Harold Patience. Harold writes that he has had a number of visits from American Oxfordians in the past year and looks forward to more. Be sure to look him up if in the area. Harold also informs us of the death of an Essex editor who was hospitable to articles on the authorship question and the history of the De Veres. Harold's obituary on him will appear in a future issue.

We were very happy to hear from Rhoda Messner, now settled into her new home at 2181 Ambleside Rd., Apt. 706, Cleveland, Ohio 44106 and as ardent an Oxfordian as ever. Mrs. Messner comments, "I hope SOS is alive and well and getting many new members. It was interesting to read someone else's How I Became an Oxfordian. Do you have more to come?" Indeed we do. The prolific Harold Patience has kindly written on how he became an Oxfordian for us. But his other articles cause us to hold that for a future issue.

Morse Johnson who is at work on a new article on the authorship question kindly drew our attention to a mystery novel, The Siskiyou Two-Step by Richard Hoyt, which uses the Oxford case in its plot.

Ruth Loyd Miller, Chairwoman of the LSU Board and editor of Shakespeare Identified by J. Thomas Looney, published by Minos Publishing Company, P.O. Bin 1309, Jennings, Louisiana 70546, was recently honored as "Woman of the Year" by a LSU sorority.

Mr. Kim Holston, typist of the Newsletter, has nailed down for us a rumored film reference to the Oxford theory. In "Pimpernel Smith," issued by British National in 1941, directed by Leslie Howard and with a screenplay by Anatole de Grunwald, Roland Pertwee and Ian Dalrymple, Howard, playing the part of Professor Horatio Smith, speaks these lines:

"I've been doing a little research work...on the identity of Shakespeare... I spent the afternoon in the library, at the embassy. Now this, this proves conclusively that Shakespeare wasn't really Shakespeare at all....He was the Earl of Oxford. Now, you can't pretend

that the Earl of Oxford was a German, can you? Now can you?...Well, there you are.... The Earl of Oxford was a very bright Elizabethan light, but this book will tell he was a good deal more than that."

Salud!

The Mysterious Swan of Avon

by

Harold W. Patience

Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appeare,
And make those flights upon the bankes of
Thames,
That so did take Eliza and our James!

(Ben Jonson, in the 1623 First Folio)

Jonson's great eulogy of "Shakespeare" is addressed

To the memory of my beloved, the author
MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
and what he hath left us.

"Beloved" is a curious word to use here, for in our own day we tend to think of it in a feminine context. Are there any indications that the immortal playwright may have been two persons--a man and a woman? To start us thinking along these lines there is that curious epigram by John Davies of Hereford:

To our English Terence, Mr. Will. Shake-speare.

There are modern scholars who hold the opinion that Terence, the name of a Carthaginian slave, was a cover used by the Roman aristocrats Scipio and Laelius as a mask for their literary activities. Have we a hint here that "Shakespeare" was a mask name used by two highly placed persons?

A letter, once kept at Wilton House but now unfortunately lost, inviting King James to see a performance of As You Like It there, contained the remark: "We have the man Shakespeare with us." Does this imply the existence of a woman "Shakespeare"? Note that in the opinion of Davies the great author was our English Terence.

Wilton House, near Salisbury, is situated beside the River Wiley, a tributary of the Wiltshire Avon. It has been the family seat of the Pembroke family for several hundred years. Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, enjoyed Elizabethan fame as a poet and translator, but the custom of the day forbade publication and the majority of her literary work has never been discovered.

Gabriel Harvey included her with Chaucer and Spenser among the "divine poets." The Countess inspired her famous brother Sir Philip Sidney, to write his Arcadia. As a close friend of the Countess, Jonson might naturally have described her, as he describes "Shakespeare," as "my beloved."

Mary Sidney's participation in the creation of the great plays must, of course, remain on the plane of pure speculation. Nonetheless, my own personal belief is that she may at least have supplied the Earl of Oxford with delineation of such feminine characters as Portia, Rosalind, Cleopatra, etc. Collaboration may have extended beyond this, of course, and when Oxford died in 1604 she may have taken on the task of revising and completing certain plays.

One would certainly assume that the following was written by a woman:

Valeria: You would be another Penelope; yet they say all the yarn she spun in Ulysses' absence did but fill Ithaca full of moths. Come, I would your cambric were sensible as your fin that you might leave pricking it for pity.
(Coriolanus, II.iii)

Many examples could be given. Balthasar's song in Much Ado About Nothing is certainly noteworthy:

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.

Many will disagree with me. They will attribute this kind of thing to the feminine side of the great writer's persona. This may well be so, but is it just another of those strange coincidences that in the engraving of the Countess of Pembroke (by Van de Passe, in the British Museum) we can see that the prominently repeated motif in her lace collar takes the form of a swan?

I was given further food for thought a few years ago when I visited Wilton House. For I was confronted with a life-sized statue of the "Bard" in the main entrance hall. Why, I asked myself, was this

statue placed in this particular mansion, so far from Stratford-upon-Avon? The explanation that it was because the First Folio was dedicated to the two sons of Mary Sidney seems somehow inadequate.

The priceless First Folio could never have been a commercial venture, and there is a strong possibility that the cost of the project was borne by the two men (both wealthy) to whom the immortal volume was dedicated--the two sons of the Countess of Pembroke, one of whom married a daughter of the Earl of Oxford. Work on the printing of the Folio must have commenced within a few months of the death of the Countess of Pembroke in 1621. I suggest that this lady and her sons were members of a group referred to in the Troilus and Cressida Quarto of 1609 as the "grand possessors" of the "Shakespeare" manuscripts. Sir Horatio Vere and the daughters of the Earl of Oxford may also have been members of this group which took upon itself the task of preparing the manuscripts for the press.

The Veriest Nonsense

by

Edmonn Lafew

...how unworthy a thing you make of me!

William Plumer Fowler's elaborations of Shake-speare's Sonnets strike me as products of the Malvolio School of Reading. I refer to S.O.S. Newsletter, Vol. 18, No. 4, Fall '82 where 3 Sonnets are quoted to prove that their author as Queen Elizabeth's lover fathered Henry, 3rd Earl of Southampton. But--literary products, however interpreted, cannot corroborate an historical supposition for which no document or testimony exists. The Stratford cult is notorious for such fallacies. As Mr. Jaggars counseled, "Take nothing on its looks; take everything on evidence. There's no better rule."

I wish to detract nothing from Mr. Fowler's impressive linguistic display. I ought to add rather that "sonnet" (noun, from Italian: sonnetto) means little song, or as Lewis Carroll might have termed it, a songlet. Shake-spears Sonnets we infer to have been pirated from his private correspondence. Ezra Pound once noted that the sonnet, once detached from the Canzone of

which it formed the 1st stanza, deteriorated in time to a method for composing letters, forgoing its lyrical quality. Such are those of Shake-speare. He heeded form so little in writing them, that one might exchange many quatrains among the Sonnets with no loss of meaning. Until Malone in 1780, no one remarked that Sonnets 36 & 96 end with the same couplet. This is a single instance of the Quarto's manifold corruptions.

Observers of poets' practice will know that anagrams, acrostics, codes of persistent double-entendre designate writers of social verse, whose object is tickling their readers with clever devices, and the novice. The Bard was neither by this time. One who imagines he devoted his brain to stuffing his lines with such purpose would find otherwise in studying how poems come to be. J.L. Lowes' The Road to Xanadu traces, in a mere 575 pages, the origins of the 2 best known works of Coleridge, who defined his art briefly as "The best words in the best order." Now consider the grammarians' agonies with the syntax of Shake-speare--the virtual inventor of English, the deepest probing writer of our tongue confining his Muse to word games. Ha!--In this view, he is a sort of rancher, branding all his cattle, or a parrot ever calling his own name. "How absolute the knave is! We must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us." Indeed he indulged in punning--to extremes distressing to critics like Dr. Johnson--not deliberately, but because his mind overflowed with associations and his impulse led him that way. I must deny that his quibbles distracted the author of the Sonnets from his subject,¹ else Shake-speare wrote them insincerely.

¹I found the most suggestive view of the Sonnets in Gerald W. Phillips' (1884-1956) The Tragic Story of "Shake-speare" (Cecil Palmer; London, 1932) which, though prone to errors rising from a bias against the Cecils, deduced the Fair Youth to be Oxford's bastard son, and Venus & Adonis to be a mockery of the Earl not of Shake-spearean origin. I regret failing to read "Shakespeare's Own Secret Drama," which Charles Barrell published in the Shakespeare Fellowship Newsletter, in 6 nos: 12/41-10/42; cited in Looney, Shakespeare Identified, vol. 2 (Port Washington, NY, 1975).

The concept of "the Virgin Queen's national image" strikes me as a comical anachronism. Contenance in a monarch was rare in those times--before, & since. But we ought not allow poets who made a virtue of necessity deceive us: they would have celebrated their Queen's wedding & offspring with like conviction. Indeed, Elizabeth abhorred life long her dynastic duty to give England an heir to the throne that the Tudors had usurped & bloodily maintained for 3 generations. Her father & grandfather having purged every possible contender for the crown, their own house fell with Elizabeth. (I submit that Henry VIII ceased philandering with Anne Boleyn's death and never consummated his 4th & 6th marriages; nor did Edward or Mary exhibit a carnal nature. So much for the Tudors' sexuality!) The Queen's conduct & speech provide a clinical picture of pathological aversion to sex & generation. She often expressed her repugnance toward marriage "and she hated it more everyday, for reasons which she would not divulge to a twin soul, if she had one, much less to any living creature." (F.A. Mumby, Elizabeth & Mary Stuart (Boston, 1914), p. 8) Her hatred extended to others, like Lady Katherine Grey whose marriage to Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, provoked cruel penalties. Her Councilors arranged match upon match; she thwarted them all.² Martin Hume wrote more than 300 pages on The Courtships of Queen Elizabeth, but dismissed Raleigh, Essex and other "gallant gentlemen" in his conclusion as "the vain amusements of...her declining years." Parliament formally petitioned her to wed & raise Royal heirs, which would have roused national support & shielded her life from the danger of Catholic plots. Nevertheless, she responded that she was married to the Realm of England & would accept no other spouse. She forbade all talk of the succession during her life. Her chastity meant nothing to the party of Rome: her birth & title were both illegitimate.

Robert Dudley's career shows what great rewards the Queen bestowed on the man she loved. His potent influence with his Sovereign enabled him to introduce Essex & Raleigh, his replacements, to the Court. The Queen seems invariably to have favored men of their breed: tall, rugged, virile. Leicester, Essex, & Raleigh each lost her favor in marrying and had concealed their liaisons in fear of her. She

inevitably banished them from Court in outrage. Raleigh was forbidden her presence 4 years. In contrast: De Vere's position gives small evidence of her regard; the commissions & offices he sought she granted to others. He was short in stature & rather effeminate; while he fancied himself a soldier, the Queen summoned him to dance before the Court. (Not with her, since her ulcerous leg prohibited it.) Oxford had attracted Royal favor in the tournament of Westminster, but within a month was engaged to Ann Cecil. (Might she have "lov'd him for the dangers he had passed"?) Following his refusal to play the courtier, the two married in Westminster Abbey and the Queen honored the ceremony "with her presence & great favor..." as Baron Burghley wrote. Indeed, his rise to the peerage may have been sped on to promote the match. One could say Elizabeth had some concern for De Vere, but "Love? her affections did not that way tend."

Lyly knew better than to imply in his comedy, Endymion, intimacy between Endymion/De Vere & Cynthia/Elizabeth.³ (The Queen also sanctioned the Earl's 2nd marriage, to a Maid of Honor. Leicester, Raleigh, & even Southampton earned her wrath in engaging Maids of Honor.)

Oxford never found appeal in older women: his wife Ann was younger than he by 6½ years, his mistress Anne by 10 years, & his wife Elizabeth by some 9 years. (All 3 held social rank inferior to his.) The "May-December" romance occurs nowhere in Shakespeare (I disallow Venus & Adonis)

²She kept the Duc d'Alencon on a string for 12 years; he had finally to be paid off with £60,000 (for modern value, multiply by 20).

³This play seems to me Lyly's apology for the Anne Vavasor (=Tellus, Latin for "Earth," i.e., dark) affair on his patron's behalf.

even as a theme for comedy. Orsino decrees, "Let still the woman take/An elder than herself, so wears she to him..." Shake-speare never dwelt on the charms of maturity, nor wrote a line in praise of older women: youth & beauty are all but indivisible in his works. "Age cannot wither" his Cleopatra.-- In history, she died a matron at 39.

Fowler states Elizabeth bore a son in June 1574, failing to mention this was not 3 months from her 41st birthday. Bearing a child at this age, 400 years past, would threaten a woman's life. Elizabeth had no tolerance for hazards, nor would the Royal physician have allowed it. If it is true her Council received information of the Queen's menstrual periods, which were variable, an hiatus would have provoked gossip at Court. He proposes that this new-born infant replaced the Countess of Southampton's 8 month old boy. But a child will double its birth weight in 6 months; in 3 months its behavior will alter entirely. No new-born could masquerade as 8 months old, nor could the noble heir be concealed without report & scandal. Elizabeth's confinement, like her menses, could not avoid notice, since attendants waited on her day & night: Lady of the Queen's Bedchamber was no mere honorary post. Yet tales of her dalliance flew among the Embassies & Courts of Europe. The 2nd Earl of Southampton accused his wife of adultery--never denying Henry's paternity--but no one disclosed that she allowed her only son to be spirited away. This family romance was revealed only after 4 centuries, too late for Dumas to inscribe it. Hamlet's plague remains in force: "be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny."

The poet of "The Phoenix & the Turtle" did not wind his riddle to enmesh his readers in such a fabrication. This elegy is Shakespeare's most concentrated, intricate verse (the germ of the "metaphysical school"--actually of Tuscan origin, c.1300) and, despite its cerebral & abstract tone, the most touching I know. If Shake-speare intended this to praise Elizabeth, it would be his sole contribution to that flood of panegyric, apart from the dubious Henry VIII. His disdain for the Queen has stirred comment among Shake-speareans before now. He despised flatterers & Elizabeth had earned

no such tribute. The sonnets to the Dark Lady show him incapable of describing the object of his wildest passion "with false compare." (He created Imogen, Helena, Desdemona, et al., attempting to expiate the mistreatment of his wife.) It seems an error to think that Shake-speare, either here or in The Tempest, would pay himself homage as to the dead. For his sense of humor, as Bronson Feldman noted (Hamlet Himself, p. 93), "...saved him from the extreme penalty of auto-apotheosis." Donne rose from his death-bed & mounted the pulpit in his very shroud to speak a final sermon,--not his own eulogy!

"Dove" makes a fine anagram, but the poem is not titled "The Phoenix & the Dove." In fact, "turtle" is specified 4 times in the lines, & "dove" only once, to rime with "love." The turtle dove is "noted for its plaintive cooing & affectionate disposition." Aristotle observed that the command of metaphor distinguished poetic genius: to symbolize Oxford as a dove marks a mind quite beneath genius. The poet plainly reveals: that the couple were married (1.61); they shared everything between them (11.25-36); are interred together (1.65); he claims their perfect union was asexual (1.61)--which he could not know; but they left no inheritors (1.59) & the world is bereft forever of their virtues (11.53-55 & 62-64). There cannot be many couples of Shake-speare's time who might deserve such praise.⁴

More objections could be raised, but these seem sufficient. In the 14th century, William of Occam, the English Schoolman who revived Nominalism, confounded his Realist opponents (Newspeak is older than Orwell) with the dictum that "entities are not to be multiplied without necessity," known since then as Occam's Razor. Thus Copernicus eliminated Ptolemaic astronomy, Darwin & Wallace supplanted individual creation with natural selection, Greenwood negated the Stratford dogma & Looney established the Oxford case. In every instance, retention of the redundant hypothesis proved futile, while productive investigation followed the new direction. Ward, Clark, Barrell, Feldman, among many others, further verified the identity of "Shake-speare." Phillips' astounding

⁴I do not pose as an Elizabethan scholar, but I dare propose Thomas & Frances Radcliff, the Earl & Countess of Sussex. What I have read of them seems to exemplify the eulogy; I hope one better equipped will examine the case.

deduction that the Fair Youth was De Vere's illicit boy from the text, Barrell confirmed in the next decade when he presented records of the life of Sir Edward Vere (1581-1629). Applying Occam's Razor will sever the tissue of absurdities composing the "Southampton legend" from the body of Oxfordian studies with neither sepsis nor scar.--Yet considering the religious aspect of Shakespearean authorship doctrines leads me to suppose that this canard will persist, as it corresponds so well to a beloved story that was ancient in the days when the Evangelist wrote, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive & bear a son."

Charlotte C. Stopes in 1922 published her failure to find any evidence relating the Earl of Southampton to Will Shaksper. Then G.E. Bentley stated in 1961, "...the only facts so far established are Shakespeare's dedication of two long poems to him in 1593 & 1594." Although G.W. Phillips exposed those "facts" in 1932, dogmatists will not deal with his logic. Even so the Southampton mania loses no virulence among Stratfordians & many Oxfordians seem no more immune to the contagion. They ever emulate the philosopher whom Shaw scorned as "having pieced an illusory humanity & art out of the effects produced by his library on his imagination, builds some silly systematization of his worthless ideas over the abyss of his own nescience."⁵ The Stratfordians seem to hold a defensive stance, and while we have the benefit of employing their discoveries, they must ignore ours. But those who maintain fantasies of this kind cannot justly quarrel with advocates of the Stratford imposture.

If this be error & upon me proved/I never writ...

Lest We Forget

Editor's Note: One major difficulty with what might be called Oxfordian studies is that the vast array of scholarly works produced in the field are all but unknown and unavailable. This remains the case despite the extraordinary effort of the Millers of Jennings, Louisiana,

⁵ This recalls Thurber's "The Macbeth Murder Mystery": a devotee of detective stories buys Macbeth by mistake, then finds the Thane & his Lady cannot be guilty, etc.

which resulted in their encyclopedic reprints of the most fundamental of Oxfordian texts. The work of Gerald Phillips in the field is all but forgotten not only because the texts have been long out of print but also because his views were in some ways eccentric. We reprint the following obituary which originally appeared in the Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter (in England) for Autumn, 1956, so that current Oxfordians can be at least aware of the work Phillips did.

Mr. Gerald William Phillips, M.A.

Gerald William Phillips, M.A., scholar of Westminster and of Christ Church, Oxford, passed away on the 19th of June, 1956, in his seventy-second year. He firmly believed that Lord Oxford was the true 'Shakespeare'. For some thirty years, with intervals, he had been a member and supporter of the Fellowship, devoting his leisure to the elucidation of the problem of authorship, and his death is a great loss to the cause.

His interest in the subject was first aroused by the perusal of Looney's Shakespeare Identified, where he found the deductive method convincing. Ward's Life, and the works of Greenwood and other members of the Fellowship were also consulted, and he was then able to formulate his own reconstruction, rather different from those previously made. He concentrated mainly on the Sonnets, and by a detailed and meticulous examination of these, and comparison with the Plays and Poems, arrived at two discoveries:

1. The Venus and Adonis is later, not earlier than the Sonnets, and is not by the same author.

2. One hundred and thirty of the principal Sonnets can be arranged, by rhyme-link, personal pronouns and other objective data, in a series which forms a narrative poem. This was done quite independently of the arrangement by Sir Denys Bray, which he had not then seen. Furthermore, to account for the subject of the Sonnets, and for many allusions in the Plays, he found he had to postulate a 'pre-contract' marriage by the Poet, the birth of a legitimate son, about whom the Sonnets were written.

These results were published without delay in The Tragic Story of 'Shakespeare' (1932), followed in 1934 by a pocket edition of the text of the Sonnets, arranged in his new order, leaving the order to speak for itself. As it failed to do so, the theory was fully expounded in Sunlight on Shakespeare's Sonnets (1935), shortly followed by a more popular work, Lord Burghley in Shakespeare (1936), the concluding chapters of which deal further with the Venus, the Lucrece, and the distinction between Shakspeare and Shakespeare. He never ceased to examine his theories, and to collect further evidence, but the War, and also failing health precluded further publication. The net result was summarised in a pamphlet, Shake Spears Sonnets (1954) addressed to all members of the Fellowship.

This is not the place to discuss the validity of his findings. It was a great disappointment to him, that they met with little support, and he felt that, perhaps, they were not clearly understood. Some words from the First Folio may form a fitting conclusion: 'Read him therefore: and again and again; and if then you do not like him surely you are in some manifest danger not to understand him. And so we leave you to other of his friends, whom, if you need, may be your guides. If you need them not, you can lead yourselves and others; and such readers we wish him.'

H.S. Shield

Dynasticide: A Note on Macbeth

by Donald La Greca

Re-reading a passage in Macbeth recently reminded me of something I had once read elsewhere. The passage I have in mind occurs in Act IV, scene iii. Macbeth's enemies are in exile in England. Malcolm, heir of the murdered Duncan, and MacDuff are conversing when Ross arrives with news from Scotland. The lords question him about conditions in Scotland under the rule of Macbeth. Ross paints a grim picture of a Scotland where sorrow and death abound, and where "...good men's lives expire before the flowers in their caps,..."

This unusual phrase brought to mind a passage in Will Durant's Age of Faith. On page 670 of this book Durant tells of how the Plantagenets derived their family name from Geoffrey of Anjou, father of Henry II. It

was Henry who married Eleanor of Aquitaine, acquired her duchy, invaded England, and became king in 1154. In this way, the Plantagenet dynasty was established.

Geoffrey of Anjou favored the fashion of wearing a sprig of the broom plant (planta in French) in his hat (genet in French). The family name, Plantagenet, evolved from this practice of wearing a flower in the hat. The Plantagenet dynasty ended with the defeat and death of Richard Plantagenet (Richard III) of the House of York in 1485 at Bosworth Field. Richard's defeat was accomplished by forces gathered under Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond--forces which included ancestors of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. In this way, the Tudor dynasty was established.

Why does Oxford put these words in the mouth of Ross and introduce them into the text of Macbeth?

One possible answer may have been suggested by our late Oxfordian scholar, Bronson Feldman, in an essay of his on Catullus. In this little gem, "The Contribution of Catullus to the Science of Statecraft," Feldman closes with this appraisal, "...political insight implicit in the satiric songs of Catullus almost come to consciousness in the poetry of his greatest pupil in the art, William Shakespeare. In a series of plays without equal that lord of language stripped naked the soul of the state." Touching on Macbeth, Feldman says, "Sigmund Freud was the first to observe that the main theme of this drama is the childlessness of the perverse lovers who devote their lives to overpowering and destroying instead of the cultivation of the best and brightest boys and girls." (Freud's thesis can be found in his Character and Culture.)

Here now we have the possibility of a dual allusion: one in reference to a political dynasty; the second in reference to a flower representing youth and its destruction by rulers who are barren of all human qualities except for the lust for power and control over their fellow men. The theme of childlessness and "solely sovereign sway and masterdom" points to an analogy between Macbeth and Elizabeth.

(Freud suggests that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth represent two aspects of a single personality.) Besides their corresponding childlessness, both Elizabeth and Macbeth ruled under a shadow of doubt concerning the legitimacy of their right to rule.

Do Ross's words indicate that Macbeth was written or revised when Oxford was particularly distressed over the state of the realm and the methods and characters of the men guiding England's destiny? Did Oxford personally know "good men" whose lives expired during the flower of their youths for an England ruled by Macbeth-like politicians?

Like Lear, Macbeth is a work of sheer, unrelenting tragedy. Both deal with, in Feldman's words, the "soul of the state." In Macbeth, murder is the method by which power is acquired; and terror (through more murders) is the mechanism by which power is maintained.

It is my conjecture that Macbeth was revised near the end of Oxford's life, sometime between the trial and death of Essex in February, 1601, and Elizabeth's death. The Essex treason trial was a victory for the Macbeths at court. In June, 1601, Oxford's brother-in-law, Lord Willoughby, died. It would not have been strange for Oxford to think the potential for leadership by honorable men was being killed off or was dying off. I can envision Oxford inserting Ross's words as a rebuff to Tudor rule and as an indication that another dynasty was in process of being uprooted and replaced. Elizabeth and her Macbeths (Hatton, the Cecils) closed the period of Tudor rule with judicial murder of talented youths (Essex was 33 when he was executed) and with a wasting of the lives of others (Willoughby died at the age of 46 following a life-exhausting battle with injuries suffered in the military service of Elizabeth). A discussion of Oxford's emotional involvement with what the historians call the Essex rebellion appears in Looney's Shakespeare Identified, pp. 331-333.

The Francis Beaumont Poem

by

Harold W. Patience

The Shakespeare contemporary allusion found in the Beaumont poem (addressed to Ben Jonson) is probably not as well known as some others which usually find a place in Shakespearean studies

whether 'orthodox' or anti-Stratfordian. For my purpose here I quote only that section of the poem which contains the allusion in question.

...heere I would let slippe
(If I had any in me) schollershippe,
And from all Learninge keepe these
lines as cleere
as Shakespeare's best are, which
heires shall heare
Preachers apte to their auditors to
showe
how farr sometimes a mortall man may
goe
by the dimme light of Nature, tis to
mee
an helpe to write of nothing; and as
free,
As hee, whose text was, god made all
that is,
I meane to speake: what do you thinke
of his
state, who hath now the last that hee
could make
in white and Orrenge tawny on his
backe
at Windsor? is not this man's miser
more
than a fallen sharers, that now
keepe a doore....

Observe the 'chatty' nature of this curious poem and its ambiguous phraseology. One is unable to escape the impression that the writer is attempting to say more to Jonson than actually appears in the text. "Preachers apte to their auditors" (progagandists just as gullible as that type of person in his audience who tends to believe everything he hears?) will spread the word to the effect that

1. Shakespeare's best lines are free of learning. (Perhaps they are, as distinct from his other lines!)
2. Shakespeare is an example of just how far a man may go by the dim light of Nature. (In this respect we are still expected to believe the "Preachers"!)

Now, is the "he" of "whose text was..." Shakespeare? There is no real indication that Beaumont suddenly switched to a discussion of two other men. It is indeed

a thankless task to attempt to penetrate the ambiguity of this strange poem. But surely, as far as the "text" is concerned, Beaumont is saying, "This is so good that one could believe that only God could have produced it"?

If, then, we can assume that at this point in the poem the immortal playwright is still the subject, may we not assume that the man who wore white and orange tawny on his back at Windsor is also "Shakespeare"? If so, it is worth recalling that the de Vere heraldic color was Reading tawny. "Shakespeare" mentions this particular color several times in his plays.

The mention of Windsor is also, perhaps, significant, for Lord Oxford was familiar with the Castle and its environment. In the Hollar engraving of the painting by Marcus Gheerhaedts we can see the Earl of Oxford bearing the Sword of State before Queen Elizabeth at Windsor, the venue of the great Falstaff comedy Merry Wives.

In the early 1930's the manuscript of this poem was held by the Pierpont Morgan Library of New York. (Whether it is still there is, of course, beyond my personal knowledge.)

What is astonishing (and these Oxfordian "coincidences" turn up time after time) is the fact that the manuscript was originally discovered at Colne Priory in Essex. Of all the places where this poem could have turned up in England, it was to be found in the heart of "de Vere country" in rural Essex! The manuscript is believed to have come from some member of the Holgate family of Saffron Walden, Essex, to whom the Priory passed by marriage in the 18th century.

It is difficult to give an exact dating of the poem, but the consensus of opinion places it somewhere between 1602 and 1604, that is, during Lord Oxford's last years.

The Victorian mansion of Colne Priory still stands. In its grounds we can see a few outcrops of stone which represent all that remains of the great Norman Priory which once housed the monumental tombs and effigies of the Earls of Oxford and their wives.

This monument five hundred years hath stood...

(Titus Andronicus, I.i.350)

Where for this many hundred years the bones

Of all my buried ancestors are pack'd...
(Romeo and Juliet, IV,iii.40-41)

A few yards distant from Colne Priory stands the parish church of Earls Colne, its tower emblazoned with the de Vere molet (five-pointed Star).

A few years ago, when Colne Priory was owned by Charles Morse (a dealer in antiques and a member of our Society) the long arm of coincidence was to reach out to me again. One day I received word from him that in the normal course of business he had obtained a portrait of Sir Edward Vere (the Earl of Oxford's son by Anne Vavasour, one of the Queen's ladies). He would be willing to sell; would I come over and view the portrait--suggest a possible purchaser? So there it was on the wall of the "modern" Priory--a fine full-length portrait depicting Sir Edward Vere with one arm in a sling. The portrait was eventually purchased by Judge Minos D. Miller and his wife, Ruth, of Louisiana.

Feldman Updates Ward

The current issue of The Bard (Vol. 4, No. 2, 1984), the organ of the British Shakespeare Authorship Trust, contains "Bronson Feldman's Amendment's to Ward's Life of Oxford from Contemporary Documents." This article represents the additions and corrections to B.M. Ward's The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, the only full-length life of the Earl, gathered by Bronson Feldman. The corrections and additional data are keyed to Ward's text for easy reference or insertion. This publication is a welcome addition to Oxfordian scholarship as it adds to our knowledge of the Earl's life and thought. Copies of The Bard are available from:

10 Uphill Grove
Mill Hill
London NW7 4NJ
England

New York, New York

Morse Johnson came across a brief discussion of Calvin Hoffman's doings in the New York Magazine of July 18, 1983: "Shakespeare Authorship: A Secret of the Tomb?" That piece concluded with this quotation from Harvard's Harry Levin, "It's a form of madness to question Shakespeare's authorship." Morse Johnson fired off the following letter to the editor, a shortened version of which appeared in the New York Magazine of August 15:

Harvard Shakespeare expert Harry Levin netted a distinguished catch with his psychoanalysis, "It's a form of madness to question Shakespeare's authorship." Among those in whom he has detected madness are: Walt Whitman, Henry James, Mark Twain, John Greenleaf Whittier, Sigmund Freud, Tyrone Guthrie, John Galsworthy, Leslie Howard, Senator Paul Douglas, Otto von Bismarck, Lord Palmerston, William McAfee, a remarkable number of jurists and lawyers who have purchased The American Bar Association Journal's book Shakespeare Cross-Examination, and a host of eminent literary scholars and historians whose publications would require hundreds of pages just to list.

Morse Johnson
Cincinnati, Ohio

Notes on d'Hiver

by
Edmonn Lafew

William P. Fowler has explained, after 4 centuries, the apparently senseless title, The Winter's Tale by translating it into French: Le Conte d'Hiver; the [French] season's name being a homonym of E. Vere: thus, the tale of EVeré. I wonder if the accented speech of Captain Denys the Frenchman suggested the pun to his patron, Oxford.--His Pandora contains an ode after Ronsard in praise of "Dever." He published this volume under the nom de plume, John Soothern. (See Shakespeare Fellowship Newsletter, October 1943, cited in "Shake-

speare" Identified, 3rd ed. (1975) Vol. 2, pp. 82-83.) The name Soothern is a pun as well: the Anglo-Saxon word "sooth," often used in their time, means "truth" or "true" and so again connects him to Vere. The tongue of Denys pronouncing the name of "Shake-speare" could well have punned with j'expire, meaning "I die," an Elizabethan metaphor for sexual climax. So does Shakespeare betoken masculine potency in war & love in English & the latter in French.

The relation of De Vere and Denys with Ronsard clearly accounts for Lorenzo's rephrasing the French poet in his praise of music. (Merchant of Venice, V, 1). I have yet to locate the source, but Romain Rolland quoted it in Jean-Christophe In Paris (trans. Cannan), p. 411.

He who does not rejoice to hear a sweet accord of instruments, or the sweetness of the natural voice, and is not moved by it, and does not tremble from head to foot with its sweet ravishment, & is not taken completely out of himself, does thereby show himself to have a twisted, vicious, & depraved soul, and of such an one we should be ware as of a man ill-born....

P.S. Lorenzo's renowned speech also reveals an unaccounted parallel to a sentence from St. Augustine: "Man is an immense abyss. It is easier to count the hairs of his head than to measure the depth of his affections or the motions of his spirit." (emphasis mine) Dark & depths are fused in the human mind from a time which I can hardly remember.

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Newsletter *Shakespeare Oxford Society*

Verò Nihil Verius

SUMMER, 1984

Vol. 20, No. 3

A Celebration of Charlton Ogburn's

The Mysterious William Shakespeare

Editor's Note: This will be the last issue of the Newsletter to appear under my editorship--at least for awhile. If members of the Society would like me to take up the task again in the future, when my Ph.D. dissertation is complete and other responsibilities are less pressing, I'd be happy to do so. For now, I'm very glad that Gordon Cyr feels able to once again edit the Newsletter, beginning with the Fall issue.

I never said anything in these pages about editorial policy. But I'd like to state briefly now what I tried to do with the Newsletter. First, since the Newsletter is the Society's only publication it seemed to me necessary that it do double duty, that is, that it be a source of information concerning the Society's activities and members, but also an organ for the publication of research by members. It's my hope that the first function was aided by the "SOS Bulletin Board," a feature originally suggested by Celeste Ashley, and the "How I Became An Oxfordian" columns. It is also my hope that the attempt to fulfill the research function in the limited space of such a journal did not weigh down the whole too much for readers.

Second, I felt strongly that we could not afford to suppress any point of view. There's nothing worse than the spectacle of a dissenter silencing dissent--Cromwell jailing Lilburne. In other words, I have published articles which struck me personally as wrong-headed in the hope that they would prompt further research and debate. Some members, I know, worried that this approach could make us appear ridiculous or irresponsible in the eyes of Stratfordians. I feel certain that the spirit of free and democratic debate in these pages has helped to promote our cause, not hinder it.

Finally, it was my sad duty to edit these pages when it was necessary to announce the deaths of some of our brightest lights--Dorothy Ogburn, Bronson Feldman, and Hilda Amphlett come immediately to mind. The sadness of this necessity has been to some extent mitigated by the pleasure of publishing for the first time new, young Oxfordians--Owen Feldman, Brad Fisher, Donald LaGreca, and Philip Proulx.

To some extent, a point of view can be judged by the nature of the people who hold it. My deepest joy in editing this publication has been my contacts with Oxfordians--particularly Celeste Ashley, Morse Johnson, Rhoda Messner, Ruth Miller, Harold Patience, Michael Steinbach, and the Cyrs. And it gives me real satisfaction that the final issue of the Newsletter under my editorship should be this celebration of a long-awaited event, an event for us of the first magnitude, the publication of Charlton Ogburn's The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and The Reality.

The appearance of this book is the greatest boost to our cause since the Millers reissued and edited the Looney and Ward texts. Charlton Ogburn has spent seven years actively at work on this book which runs to almost 900 pages. But it would be more accurate and more just to say that he has poured a lifetime into this book--and the result glows with the passion, humor, and integrity of that lifetime.

Even members of the Society know too little about Charlton Ogburn's work. His greatest single qualification for the task he set himself in this book is that he himself is a fine writer. Long ago, Mark Twain argued that if he wished to know about mining he would ask a miner. Similarly,

if he wished to know about writing he'd ask a writer. This--what to call it?--common sense, has carried little weight with the Stratfordian professoriat. But with the appearance of The Mysterious William Shakespeare the notion again has the chance to carry weight with them--and if it fails to do so it will be to their shame.

The Mysterious William Shakespeare is Charlton Ogburn's fourteenth book. He has also published many articles and short works of fiction. He has written on war (The Marauders) and nature (The Winter Beach, The Adventure of Birds, etc.) and railroading (Railroads: The Great American Adventure) and Shakespeare. And he has done so with wit, integrity, and a lucid style that perfectly reflects a cool and humane mind. His novel, The Gold of the River Sea, was hailed by critics as "pure treasure" and as "everything one hungers for in a long novel." His books have won awards and praise and both have been deserved.

But this book is special. And not only because of its subject, or its size. It is special because it was inspired by the pursuit of truth, and written to establish truth, and the style of it makes it an astonishing accomplishment.

The Stratfordians, through their own words, stand convicted in this book of at best irresponsibility and at worst blatant fraud. Their case is shown to be unreason supported by forgery, false witness, misquotation, misrepresentation, and downright lying. And in this book they are confronted by an adversary who tempers the pursuit of truth with humor, who is a polemicist with a graceful style. The style is a moral outlook. Listen to one brief example:

Now, the insistence of the Stratfordian academics that the dissenters' views are devoid of the least merit or justification, unworthy of the smallest consideration, is bound to be met with raised eyebrows by anyone aware of the number and respectability of the dissenters. This would therefore appear to be a risky line for them to take, for an argument that cannot bear scrutiny is likely to recoil upon the polemicist, arousing the very suspicions it was intended to allay. Sound cases do not require unsound defenses or benefit from them.

The Stratfordian academics are not stupid, for the most part; Samuel Schoenbaum is uncommonly smart. Yet they cleave to a policy of total denunciation of dissent and dissenters. Why? I stand to be corrected, but the only answer I can give is that they assess the risks of any other course to be greater. In this view, they feel, consciously or unconsciously, that their case depends absolutely upon absolute acceptance: give admittance to the tiniest doubt, and doubt, proceeding from one element of incongruity and implausibility in the structure to another and growing by what it feeds on, must speedily consume the whole. Only on this premise--that in their hearts they fear that the Stratford faith must be unblinkingly swallowed whole if it is to be swallowed at all--can I explain to myself the contumely heaped upon those who hesitate over the dish. (p. 153)

All I can do more is to urge you to buy the book, read the book, give the book to friends, donate the book to libraries. badger local professors and newspapers and schoolboards with the book. It is a scholarly bomb wrapped in prose that is a delight to read, the work of an alert and impassioned intelligence wrestling honestly with vital questions.

The rest of this issue will be made up of David McCullough's "Foreword" to the book and an excerpt from Charlton Ogburn's introduction, "If Thou Read This....," which gives the book's plan, method, and reason for being.

W.H.

Foreword

It was over dinner in a Washington restaurant nearly twenty years ago that I first heard Charlton Ogburn talk about the mystery of William Shakespeare. We had met to discuss a book on the geology of North America, a book he was to write and I was to edit. At that point I knew him only as the author of several books I had greatly enjoyed--The Gold of the River Sea, The Winter Beach--a writer of intelligence and integrity and wonderful

feeling for the natural world. Of his interest in Shakespeare I knew nothing.

But once he got started on the subject, I could hardly let him stop, though until then, like most everybody, I'd been perfectly willing to accept the man from Stratford-on-Avon as the author of the plays and sonnets, and while I knew there were those who raised doubts about that, I imagined they were mostly cranks.

He was absolutely spellbinding. The case he made against the man from Stratford-on-Avon seemed to me astonishing, overwhelming, and the more he went on the more impressed I was by both his penetrating mind and his phenomenal grasp of the subject. He seemed to understand Shakespeare better than anyone I had ever met. I kept thinking what a shame his audience wasn't larger.

Now comes The Mysterious William Shakespeare and this brilliant, powerful book is a major event for everyone who cares about Shakespeare. The scholarship is surpassing--brave, original, full of surprise--and in the hands of so gifted a writer it fairly lights up the sky. Looking back on that evening years ago, I feel as if I had been witness to the beginnings of a literary landmark. Nothing comparable has ever been published. Anyone who considers the Shakespeare controversy silly or a lot of old stuff is in for a particular surprise. This is scholarly detective work at its most absorbing. More, it is close analysis by a writer with a rare sense of humanity. The strange, difficult, contradictory man who emerges as the real Shakespeare, Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, is not just plausible but fascinating and wholly believable. It is hard to imagine anyone who reads the book with an open mind ever seeing Shakespeare or his works in the same way again.

That Charlton Ogburn persisted and succeeded in so monumental a task, all alone, without institutional backing, without the support or blessing of academia, makes the accomplishment all the more extraordinary.

David McCullough

"If Thou Read This..."

The attribution of the poems and dramas known as William Shakespeare's to the man christened William Shaksper, or Shakspeare, at Stratford-upon-Avon rests on certain pointed but ambivalent statements made half-a-dozen years after his death. Before then, readers may be surprised to discover, the only indications we have that such a man was proposed as the author take the form of ridicule of the idea. One particularly curious circumstance may be cited here in justification of the quest for the man who was Shakespeare in which I hope to interest the reader: that is the wholesale, evidently selective disappearance, hardly to be explained as accidental, of records that might be expected to throw light on the object of the quest. It is this circumstance that from the beginning has baffled and frustrated investigation--and given rise to the Shakespeare Problem.

Interest in facts about the author's life seems to have been slight for a century after its end. Samuel Pepys, for example, in the famous diary he kept between 1660 and 1669, records his attendance at thirty-eight performances of Shakespeare's plays and mentions the dramatist's name in connection with only one of them. As curiosity about the dramatist began to grow in the 18th century, so, before long, did doubts about the Stratford man's authorship. These proved persistent and irrepressible--for efforts to repress them have not been lacking. A vigorous and acrimonious controversy over the issue is now in its second century, leaving deposits of scores of millions of printed words. There has been, so far as I know, nothing like it in history. And it has left the disputants as far apart as ever.

Another disquisition on the question of Shakespeare's identity would seem unlikely to be more fruitful than its predecessors. However, I should not have undertaken this book had I not reason to believe that it could lead to a resolution of the issue. I knew a book with that capability would be a large order, for it would have to leave no aspect of the case uncovered, no significant facts unaccounted for; it could take no chances. I did not foresee,

though, what a large order it would prove to be.

If I thought the book I planned could succeed where others had failed, it was not, certainly, from any illusion that my powers of intellect gave me an advantage. The reason was that I had been close to the controversy for many years: the roots of this book go back over four decades. I felt I had come to see why earlier treatments of the question had proved ineffective.

My acquaintance with the orthodox literature was wide. I knew every piece of evidence the Stratfordians could adduce to support their case, and I must have heard every argument. Plainly the evidence was insufficient, the case too weak, to allay the skepticism with which unnumbered thousands devoted to Shakespeare have regarded the credentials of the Stratford man. Among these are formidable figures. Disbelief, in our country, goes back at least to Walt Whitman, John Greenleaf Whittier, Mark Twain, and Henry James, if not to Ralph Waldo Emerson. I could see no resolution of the dispute in favor of the Stratford man without new documentary evidence unequivocally linking him with the authorship, and the facts in the case convinced me that no such evidence would be forthcoming unless it were forged—not that forgery to supplement the meagre remainders of the Stratford man would be anything new; William Henry Ireland at the end of the 18th century and John Payne Collier a generation later were sedulous counterfeiters.

Yet, statements of the case against the Stratford-man theory have lacked what is necessary to overcome the advantages of an established tradition with a body of supporters determined to defend their interest in its perpetuation. Too many statements of the case against the Stratford man have been marred by irrationality. As we may learn from any police department or newspaper city-room, a highly publicized and unsolved crime is certain to bring forth "solutions" urged by unfortunates whose obsessive susceptibilities outpace their reason. (That does not mean, however, that no crime has been committed.) The eccentricities of a minority of anti-Stratfordians have tended to bring discredit upon responsible dissent, or have been used to discredit it. In order to establish the case against the Stratford man, the great need, to begin with, has been to do more than expose the foundations of the Stratford case as unconvincing. A believable alternative had to be offered. The need was met in 1920, as I hope to show, with the publication by a

British schoolmaster of the results of a methodical, objective investigation of the field--strangely, the first undertaken. "Shakespeare" Identified established a candidate for the poet-dramatist's laurels who appeared to meet the criteria without disqualifications. The book made exciting reading for many. Since then numerous other researchers have enlarged upon the case presented in the--to me--brilliant pioneer study. They have done much to fill the framework and make it, in my view, even more persuasive. Investigation has gone a long way in sixty years.

As I saw it, however, a more compelling presentation of the case could be made than in any of the score of books on the subject. It would, for one thing, have the help of the books that had preceded it and of the journals of two societies concerned with the Shakespeare authorship, one British, one American, that over the years had brought out articles on new and important discoveries. From my own reading I felt I could throw further light on the subject. The opportunity beckoned to present a much greater range and depth of evidence than that contained in any other work.

No less important was the opportunity to repair what I saw as a fatal deficiency of earlier books, including one of which I was part author. All were vulnerable to a demurrer by critics--by those whose backing was essential if a fair hearing of the case was to be had. Of all it could be objected that, "Yes, what you say sounds convincing, but you have argued only one side of a question I am not fully up on. The experts on the subject--the scholars in the universities--have gone over all the evidence thoroughly and have decided against you. They say there is no possible doubt that the Stratford man wrote the works of Shakespeare."

The book I had in mind would allow the critics no such way out. I could not pretend to have made Shakespeare my life work. No one I knew of, however, was as steeped as I in the methods practiced by the academic authorities in meeting challenges to the possession of the high ground they enjoyed by consent of critics, editors, journalists, professors, heads

of philanthropic foundations, and, apparently, a determining part of the reading public. One of their weapons was to attack the character and motives, even the sanity, of dissenters. I meant to try not to reply in kind. One of my points would be that argumentum ad hominem, while often effective and difficult to combat, does not much advance anyone's understanding of the issues and is the resort, usually, of those unable to defend their case on its merits. What I could do and would do was to put the orthodox academicians on record at every turn and contrast their claims with the facts. I knew the academicians well enough to have little doubt that if their animadversions were matched against those facts they would never again be cited as authorities by anyone with a respect for evidence and reason. It might require considerable illustration to convince reluctant readers, but I had much to draw upon--more than I could find place for.

By putting the leading spokesmen for orthodoxy on the witness stand, I thought, another essential end could be gained. Orthodoxy's first line of defense against dissent is to ignore it. I believed that a book in which the most respected and best-known professionals in the field of Shakespearean letters were held to account for their statements would find its way through any barriers of silence erected against it. Among such savants I include those prominent in the university world, those whose biographies of the conventional Shakespeare are book-club selections, those who appear in magazines and newspapers as august authorities.

Having defeated censorship by disregard--if it had--the book could expect to encounter the second line of defense: counterattack with no weapons barred. If it was to succeed it must be proof against the onslaught. Obviously it was going to contain mistakes; no book could retail so much information and not slip up here or there on peripheral facts, and such lapses would be pounced on by its adversaries; the reader would have to be relied on for a sense of perspective. On issues that counted, however, the presentation would have to be impregnable. Rebuttals of every significant assault that could be made upon it would have to be built into it. Parenthetically I might add that if past experience was any guide, the book would be misrepresented in its totality in some quarters. That could not be prevented--unless

by my confessing to a decision I have been too long in coming to, that the victim of purposed and malignant misrepresentation should forget about standing on his dignity (no one will notice) and take legal action. Finally, the book would have to cover points I might feel could be passed over without loss lest I invite too often that query from hostile critics, "Has the author never heard of such and such?"

In other words, the prescription was for a thorough treatment. The book was not going to be brief, even as it dealt with the Stratford theory alone, quite apart from its exploration of the alternative. The United States government, in support of its suit against IBM for violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, produced about 26 million pages of documents, IBM in its defense about 56 million, and the trial lasted three years. We are not, at any rate, talking of anything on that scale, though the orthodox establishment we are putting on trial has long maintained a monopoly in its field that Standard Oil in its heyday could have saluted. The book will, however, make demands on the reader and try him with rather tedious going in stretches; such is true of some of the most important trials at court. Look at this as a work of detection, not a detective novel in which the author can manipulate the elements for the sake of easy readability, but detective work as it is in real life, entailing much leg-work, the investigation of many documents, and the examination of many witnesses. Recognize at the same time that its aim is not to convict the guilty in some mere mundane infraction of the law but to determine the rightful possessor of the grandest title perhaps ever in dispute--claim to the authorship of our society's greatest written masterpieces--and in doing so solve what is probably the outstanding mystery extant apart from the field of the sciences. We shall be engaged in the greatest man-hunt in history and, too, in an intellectual adventure equalled by none I know of.

We shall be establishing, with as near an approach to certainty as the evidence permits, who Shakespeare was, and we shall also be making the more important discovery of what he was. The rewards will not stop with the solution of a mystery.

Others await our rereading of Shakespeare's poems and plays in the light of our new knowledge--knowledge I feel will soon be enlarged if some part of the research effort and funds devoted in the past to the investigation of the Stratford man are given a more fruitful application.

To have the curtain lifted, finally, upon the reality of Shakespeare amounts to the discovery in the world of literature of a new continent of inexhaustible wealth. Its exploration will justify any efforts exacted of us and offer each of us the chance to help bring more of the continent within our ken, to help map the terrain--that is, to extend our knowledge of the relationship between the man who was Shakespeare and his works.

A word as to the plan of attack in what follows:

The reader will find that there are actually two books. In Book One we confront the blank in the record of Elizabethan times where we should look for Shakespeare the man and the curious nature of the contemporary references his works elicited. We review the grooming of Shakspeare of Stratford for the part and then proceed to scrutinize, element by element, the case the orthodox scholars have built up for him. Finding in the process why so many readers have been left dissatisfied, we then examine the qualifications of the other candidates who have been put forward, ending with the one on whom dissent has come chiefly to focus. We turn to the embattled response of orthodoxy to the challenge and, to play fair with the reader, I explain my association with the controversy over the authorship. The balance of the book is given over to deducing from Shakespeare's works what the characteristics of the author must have been and the nature of his experiences; all of this is found consistent with the man who had previously seemed the one convincing candidate and confirms him as uniquely fitting the role of Shakespeare.

In Book Two we follow the life of this man as well as it is known, in his relationships with others and against the background of his times. We are rewarded, as we proceed, by accumulating evidence that it was out of these elements that the poems and plays we know as Shakespeare's took form and, incidentally, by discovering some other works not known as such that seem also to have been written by Shakespeare.*

An Obituary: Stanley Hayes

Stanley Hayes, a member of the British branch of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, died in January of this year. He was a resident of Braintree, Essex, the heart of the De Vere country, and was a neighbor of Harold Patience, the secretary of our British branch.

Mr. Hayes was for years a journalist on the staff of the Braintree and Witham Times, a local weekly paper in Essex. His regular articles on a wide variety of subjects were the fruits of an inquiring mind and they gained for their author a readership which extended beyond the local community.

Mr. Hayes's keen interest in local history and native curiosity drew him to the Shakespeare authorship question. As a result, he not only joined the Society but devoted a number of columns to the question. He began one such article, "What's In A Name?" published in 1972, this way, "Shakespeare is the most prodigious figure in the whole of the world's literature. He is also the world's literary enigma."

Mr. Hayes will be greatly missed by his many friends in Braintree and by those British Oxfordians who were fortunate enough to know his work.

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EIGHTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE HONORS CHARLTON OGBURN

Pleasant fall weather ushered in the Shakespeare Oxford Society's conference this year at the Hyatt/Regency Washington on Capitol Hill. The annual event began Friday evening, October 12 with a reception to celebrate the publication by Dodd, Mead & Co. of Charlton Ogburn's *THE MYSTERIOUS WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE* (see also *Newsletter*, Summer 1985, v. 20, #3) and to honor its author, the Society's Honorary President. In addition to the guest of honor, who attended with his wife Vera, and the other members present for this event, the party was also graced with a visit by Dr. and Mrs. O.B. Hardison. Dr. Hardison is the former director of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., and under his stewardship the "Folger" extended many courtesies to our Society, including the hosting of two previous conference receptions and tours of that institution's many facilities.

On Saturday, October 13, the conference was called to order by Gordon Cyr, Executive Vice-President, who discussed the agenda. After reports from the Society's Secretary (Helen Cyr) and Treasurer (Phillip Proulx), Dr. Cyr read the first paper of the morning session, "The Remarkable Theories of Professor Walter Freeman, Fairleigh Dickinson University." The late Dr. Freeman's specialty was apparently Indo-European languages, and he taught many classes in Greek and Latin. A typescript of Freeman's book was sent to the Society by a former student of the professor's, Mrs. William Grant Goff of Arizona. Mrs. Goff inquired into the possibility of publishing this typescript, which proved to be an interesting and entertainingly written but highly speculative and undocumented account of how Edward de Vere might have come to have written Shakespeare's works. Two areas of Freeman's hypothesis seemed to merit further investigation. The language specialty had led the typescript's author to construct some intriguing anagrams from various Latin title-page inscriptions and "posies" attributed to de Vere. And Freeman seemed to support some investigations by scholars such as Frances Yates, who have found traces of "hermetic" and esoteric philosophies of the Tudor and Jacobean eras in certain plays and poems of Shakespeare. (This was to be the subject of Helen Cyr's paper following.) Because of the many unproven, if not unprovable, assertions in Freeman's presentation, the S.O.S. Board decided to return Prof. Freeman's typescript to Mrs. Goff with the Society's thanks.

Following the mid-morning "coffee break," Helen Cyr read a paper entitled "The Occult Connection -- Are Secret Academic Societies of the Sixteenth Century a Key to the Authorship?" Cyr cautioned against using the term "occult" in its more modern, pejorative connotation. What was to be inferred here was rather the pervasiveness -- in the middle ages particularly, but throughout the Renaissance until the end of the seventeenth century -- of so-called "hermetic" philosophy and esoteric knowledge (pursued almost exclusively by a handful of an educated elite forming secret societies) often interacting with a "proto-scientific" method of investigation. She was led to this path, Cyr said, by certain aspects of Walter Freeman's typescript discussed above, even though few, if any, of his speculations "proved out." She promised a full report on her own readings in

a future Newsletter. But Cyr's presentation pointed up many absorbing Shakespearean usages of the hermetic movement's motifs and symbols. And, moreover, further research into this branch of study should prove useful, Cyr feels, in discriminating authorship of Elizabethan texts on the basis of individual authors' "points of view" on social, religious, philosophical, and political issues of those days.

The "Special Event" on the agenda took place after lunch, when Charlton Ogburn gave his presentation -- based on his long experience and involvement in the Oxfordian theory -- "Tilting with Stratfordians -- Uncovering a Literary Watergate." (The subtitle of Mr. Ogburn's talk came from Kevin Kelly's review of THE MYSTERIOUS WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE in the Boston Sunday Globe, October 21st.) Ogburn boiled down the first half of his new book, which is devoted to a powerful indictment of the Stratfordian scholarship of the present day, to a few well-chosen examples of what he has himself come up against when trying to promote the case for the 17th earl of Oxford's authorship of the Shakespearean corpus. The incidents he described ranged from the hilarious to the appalling, and, despite the justified anger Ogburn feels toward his more outrageous opponents, the presentation was unfailingly good-humored.

Mr. Ogburn's talk was followed by a discussion, led by Gordon Cyr, on Ogburn's new book. Cyr also announced other items of new business and answered questions from members. The conference was then adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

EDITORS' NOTE

Warren Hope, as announced in the last Newsletter, has temporarily resigned the editorship, which he held from 1981, in order to work on his Ph.D. dissertation. The position has reverted to Gordon C. Cyr, Executive Vice-President, and to Helen W. Cyr, Secretary, who will continue to issue the Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter on a quarterly basis.

Because the current issue is behind schedule, look for our Winter 1985 Newsletter (Vol. 21, No. 1) to follow shortly. (We are working on both issues simultaneously.) Submissions for publication should be sent to The Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter, P.O. Box 16254, Baltimore, Maryland 21210. Members should keep in mind that we cannot print everything that is sent us, so brevity and clarity of presentation will be considered in our selection.

The editors wish to thank Warren Hope for his fine stewardship of the Newsletter. We wish him every success in his completion of the doctorate.

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BOOK REVIEW

THE MYSTERIOUS WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: The Myth & the Reality. By Charlton Ogburn. Dodd, Mead (New York), 1984, 892 pages. \$25.00.

Oxfordians have waited a long time for this book--the most comprehensive treatment of the case in favor of the 17th earl of Oxford's candidacy for the Shakespearean laurels and against that of the Stratford maltster to have appeared to date. The book's author, Charlton Ogburn, has spent nearly a lifetime in the noble cause of Shakespearean authorship, and this latest effort in that direction represents at least a decade of revision and updating the pioneer work begun by Sir George Greenwood and J.T. Looney, and continued by Col. and Capt. Ward, Gerald Rendall, Eva Turner Clark, Charles W. Barrell, and many others. Ogburn has also drawn on the work of more recent Oxfordian writers, such as his parents Charlton (Sr.) and Dorothy Ogburn, the late Gwynneth M. Bowen, the late Bronson Feldman, and Ruth Loyd Miller.

Well, the wait has been worth it. As the present reviewer wrote in the briefer review for The Shakespeare Newsletter (forthcoming Winter issue), Mr. Ogburn's book "is a rich, satisfying, beautifully written account of one of the most fascinating of literary figures in Western civilization, who, whether he wrote Shakespeare's works or not, deserves far better than what he gets from the blinkered condemnations of historians, for his almost single-handed nurture of that literary renaissance that is rightly regarded as the chief Tudor glory."

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Robert Giroux, in his monumentally irrelevant review in the December 9 New York Times Book Review (see article following), is palpably silent on this whole aspect of Ogburn's case. Prof. Frances Shirley gives a largely negative appraisal in the October 21st Boston Globe (side-by-side with a glowing review by the Globe's drama critic Kevin Kelly), but concedes that the author "frequently demonstrat[es] -- as I was warned in college -- that with repetition, possibilities become probabilities and, finally, accepted fact!" Prof. E.A.J. Honigmann (in a January 17th New York Review of Books article the present reviewer has not yet read) apparently makes a similar concession on the weakness of the Stratfordian case, etc., etc.

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That Oxford was generous to a fault toward his fellow writers, however, is beyond question. And the very dispendiousness which Stratfordian moralizers criticize helped to finance the earl's many theatrical and literary enterprises. Indeed, the point of view that money and property are of low priority in the author's scale of values is demonstrable in The Merchant of Venice, As You Like It, and elsewhere. It is the dismal record of penny-pinching, corn-hoarding, land-enclosing, and perpetual litigation for the recovery of shillings and pence displayed by Shakspeare of Stratford which is irreconcilable with "Shakespeare's" generosity, as Ogburn's book amply shows. (And did Wagner's character preclude his composing the sublime Parsifal?)

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Meanwhile, all Oxfordians (and non-Oxfordians for that matter) should buy Charlton Ogburn's new book. Its many delights will keep them busy for a long time.

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January 13, 1985. Letter to the editor, New York Times Book Review by Gordon C. Cyr. (See article below.)

January 17, 1985. New York Review of Books. Review by E.A.J. Honigman (Joseph Cowen Professor of English Literature, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne; author of many books, including the forthcoming "Shakespeare: The Lost Years"). "Even if he has not converted me to the 'Oxford theory,' he has changed my image of the Stratford man... Mr. Ogburn... --unlike most Stratfordians -- has also written a book that will entertain and fascinate readers for years to come."

January 17, 1985. National Public Radio, Chicago. "Midday with Sondra Gair." Interview "live" with Charlton Ogburn.

"Coming Events:"

February 3, 1985. "Firing Line" with William F. Buckley. Guests: Charlton Ogburn and Prof. Maurice Charney, Rutgers University. (Check times and exact date in your local newspapers.)

The Shakespeare Newsletter, Winter 1985. S.O.S. Russell des Cogne

Fund column. Review by Gordon C. Cyr.

"AN HUNDRETH SUNDRIE FLAWS" IN THE (NEW YORK) TIMES REVIEW

Well, maybe only twenty-five. But enough to cause concern. In the December 9 issue of the New York Times Book Review, Robert Giroux -- of the publishing firm Farrar, Straus and Giroux; also author of "The Book Known as Q: A Consideration of Shakespeare's Sonnets -- was selected to review Charlton Ogburn's "The Mysterious William Shakespeare." Although an initiate in the murky waters of Stratfordian commentary, Mr. Giroux performed according to the fraternity's expectations, and delivered -- what else? -- a hatchet job. The S.O.S. Executive Vice-President dispatched a letter of protest to the New York Times, which was published in their January 13 issue, detailing some of the reviewer's many misstatements. Unfortunately, the Times' editors could devote space to only one of our examples. Thus the article presented here -- intended to give our members a fuller account of Mr. Giroux's critical lapsus.

At the beginning, Giroux spends much time praying in aid Francis Meres's 1598 "Palladis Tamia" references to Shakespeare and other writers. "I needed the testimony of this Rutland rector," writes the reviewer, "as an anchor to my sanity, after reading with an open and, in the end, numbed mind the 892 pages of Charlton Ogburn's long-winded and obsessive book." But Giroux's claim of open-mindedness is disingenuous to say the least. He had already gone on record on the authorship issue, dismissing as "nonsense" in his own book the belief that the name "William Shakespeare" was the pseudonym of an aristocrat. Giroux goes on to say that Ogburn's book "tries to disintegrate ... William Shakespeare." "Disintegrate" is a verb of obfusca-

tion as Giroux uses it. In Shakespearean scholarship it is the common term denoting the assignment of parts of the canon to different authors, certainly not Ogburn's intention. And if Giroux means it in the sense of the alternate word he supplies, "vaporize," then surely it is not the immortal poet who is Ogburn's target, but the Stratford man he believes is wrongly assigned the laurels.

The reviewer then characterizes the first half of the book under review as devoted to "'proving' that the man from Stratford wrote neither the 12 plays in Meres' list nor any of the 36 that Heminge and Condell, his fellow shareholders at the Globe Theater, published in his memory in 1623." Wrong on two counts! What is proved -- and very ably so -- in the first half of the book is how Stratfordians have persistently misread the record, are guilty of flawed logic, careless scholarly methods, and at times the inability to read plain English. Also, that they resort to ad hominem attacks on those who have the temerity to disagree with them. And it strains the credulity to assign the role of "publisher" to Heminge and Condell! Their statements were composed for them by Ben Jonson -- as George Steevens demonstrated 200 years ago in a masterly stylistic analysis.

"Mr. Ogburn finds it impossible to believe that a country boy, with perhaps little education, could have written such immortal works." Here is a characteristic straw man. Oxfordians only contend that these particular works -- with their wealth of detailed knowledge attainable only by an educated elite and their wide acquaintance with the sports, habits, and interests of the nobility -- are unlikely to have been composed by a person of such limited background as the Stratford man's. "Although Ben Jonson ... referred to [Shakespeare's] 'small Latin and less Greek'..." Mr.

Giroux is not the first Stratfordian to misconstrue Jonson's line as a declarative statement, when "though thou hadst... I would not..." clearly indicates the conditional.

The one correction which did appear in the New York Times (see box, page 7) was of Giroux's horrendous misreading of Ogburn's stated reason for a "cover-up": "Because playwriting was too disreputable a pursuit for an aristocrat." Having failed to understand that it was publishing that was disreputable for noble playwrights (and poets), Giroux wastes more space in rhetorically wondering why "the Queen did not mind" the playwriting activities of a half-dozen courtiers he cites.

The reviewer next proceeds to dismiss Ogburn's attempt to account for Meres's listing of both Oxford and Shakespeare (which Stratfordians always cite as literal "proof" that the two writers were different men). Giroux calls Ogburn's theory on this point "absurd speculation" which is typical of the "circular reasoning" throughout the book. Giroux does not let the reader in on why the speculation is absurd. As for the charge of "circular reasoning," we shall see some further examples of Giroux's own tendencies in the regard. Meanwhile, we note its presence here in 1) the assumption that Meres means the Stratford man when he says "Shakespeare," and 2) that Meres necessarily knew whether Oxford may have used a pseudonym. In any case, unlike his listing of some other writers (including Shakespeare) Meres names no plays by Oxford, which may be a clue that he knew of Oxford's activities only by reputation.

There follows another rhetorical question about Ben Jonson: "Was he too in on the conspiracy?" Well, yes--which we would have thought obvious, given the peculiar circumstances of the First Folio's production and the clear evidence he wrote Heminge's and Condell's prefaces.

FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, JANUARY 13, 1985

'Mysterious Shakespeare'

To the Editor:

To assign Robert Giroux to review a book like "The Mysterious William Shakespeare" by Charlton Ogburn (Dec. 9) is like assigning a book on Watergate to Richard Nixon. Mr. Giroux is part of the very problem Mr. Ogburn spends fully half his book attacking — the faulty reasoning and slipshod "scholarship" of Shakespearean commentators. It is significant that your reviewer deals not at all with Mr. Ogburn's well-documented indictment of even the highest priests in the Shakespearean critical fraternity.

The reasons for Mr. Giroux's silence on this point are not far to seek. His upside-down account of Mr. Ogburn's support for the 17th Earl of Oxford as the real Shakespeare only furthers the omissions, distortions and misreadings perpetrated by A. L. Rowse, Samuel Schoenbaum, Louis B. Wright and many others exposed in the book under review.

It was not writing plays that was "disreputable" for an aristocrat, as Mr. Giroux would twist it, but publishing them. The same was true of verse. With the possible exception of Thomas Sackville, none of the noble playwrights Mr. Giroux cites published their work. (Even Sir Philip Sidney's verse was not published in his lifetime because of this social prohibition.)

Mr. Giroux does not bother to explain the utter dearth of documentation of any literary activities or friendships among writers that the Stratford man is alleged to have undertaken. Nor does the reviewer seem bothered that it is this singular circumstance that has given rise to all the claims about the Bard's real identity.

Mr. Giroux and other Shakespearean scholars should ponder the following remarks, published in 1962, by Sir Hugh Trevor-Roper. In writing of the Stratford citizen, the historian says, "As far as the records go, he was uneducated, had no literary friends, possessed at his death no books, and could not write."

GORDON C. CYR
Baltimore

an embarrassment to Stratfordians, Sir Hugh cited some of these very characters (and Shakespeare's ridicule of them) as evidence of the author's sympathy toward the nobility!

A large part of the remainder of Giroux's polemic is an attempt to impeach Oxford's character, donning the Cecilian glasses most historians use for such purposes. Oxford to Giroux is one who "easily cowed" a "miserable and helpless Burleigh," "cruelly" abandoned his wife, was "profligate" and "ran through his enormous wealth." On the other hand, Burleigh (whom historian Joel Hurstfield has shown to be an exploitative manager—to his own gain—of the Queen's Wards, of which Oxford was a chief victim) is portrayed in Giroux's sentimental account as the kindly but exasperated guardian who "continued to obtain for [Oxford] whatever financial favors he could." (We have often wondered why, if the Stratfordian white-washed view of William Cecil is the correct one, the man from Stratford — if he indeed wrote Hamlet — satirized him so mercilessly as Polonius? Also, the Stratfordians have never satisfactorily answered how a man in Shakespeare's social position would have been allowed to do so!)

Although the reviewer concedes the favor in which the Queen held the earl, he misleadingly states that "she found him less and less qualified for important state posts." But she did pay him £1000 a year for life — which she would not have done if he were not performing some important service for her. And he continued on the Privy Council until her death, whereupon he was reappointed by the new king.

Next, Giroux falsely accuses Ogburn of neglecting to mention that Gabriel Harvey called Oxford "a passing singular odd man," whereas Ogburn cites Harvey's complete poem containing the line. But in his clumsy attempt to drag in the hapless

And Giroux apparently has not read Trevor-Roper. The reviewer asks of those who assume a noble author, "How does one account for lowlife and earthy types like Doll Tearsheet ... Dogberry ... Bottom the Weaver...?" Among other statements which must be

Charles Arundel as a character witness against Oxford, it is Giroux who "neglects to point out" that Arundel's testimony has been deemed worthless by historians. His "falling out" with Oxford -- to use Giroux's own whopping euphemism --- consisted of the latter's denunciation of the former's treason. Cornered like a rat, Arundel took refuge in the wild countercharges Giroux tries to pray in aid. An indication of Arundel's trustworthiness may be gleaned from his later flight to Spain, where, in adhering to Elizabeth's enemy King Philip, he is alleged to have launched scurrilous pamphlets homeward, denouncing the English court.

"Mr. Ogburn's argument is that even a bad character can be a genius. Yes, but this bad character only went downhill. Despite his high promise and brilliant beginnings, he died in comparative obscurity." But whether the earl went downhill (or was it merely "underground"?) is the whole point at issue. (And Giroux calls Ogburn's arguments "circular"!)

Finally, the old Stratfordian saw: "The year [of Oxford's death] was 1604, before many of Shakespeare's greatest plays were written -- but this does not deter Mr. Ogburn in the least." Nor should it, we may observe, especially since Stratfordians have never been able to prove that a single play could not have been composed before that date! Giroux's last word -- which we presume he thinks is the clincher -- also requires a response. "[Francis Meres's] reaction to this book might well be, 'But my dear sir, I know the work of both playwrights. Haven't you read my book?'" It is clear that Mr. Giroux seems not to have read Mr. Ogburn's.

* * *

IN MEMORIAM

GWYNNE M. BOWEN, one of the foremost Oxfordian scholars of recent years, died April 5 after an 18-month-long illness. The Society was informed of Miss Bowen's passing by her sister, Mrs. J.O. Harrison, who has since become a S.O.S. member. For many years, Gwynne Bowen edited The Shakespearean Authorship Review (now The Bard), to which she contributed several articles distinguished by solid, valuable research. The Newsletter editors, on their trips to England, visited Ms. Bowen at her Montague Square maisonette, where she maintained a fine library and meeting room for her colleagues in the Shakespearean Authorship Society. She will be sorely missed by all Oxfordians.

PHILIP S. WELD, former publisher and transatlantic sailor, died November 6 of a heart attack. Mr. Weld was 69. His untimely death occurred just after Charlton Ogburn's "The Mysterious William Shakespeare" had been released. Mr. Weld had generously supported the publication of Mr. Ogburn's book. A publisher who owned at one time three Massachusetts newspapers, Mr. Weld was a long-time devotee of the Oxfordian theory and member of our Society. He achieved international fame when in June 1980 he knocked two days and 14 hours off the record for the 3000-mile solo transatlantic race from Plymouth, England to Newport, Rhode Island.

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EIGHTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE HONORS CHARLTON OGBURN

Pleasant fall weather ushered in the Shakespeare Oxford Society's conference this year at the Hyatt/Regency Washington on Capitol Hill. The annual event began Friday evening, October 12 with a reception to celebrate the publication by Dodd, Mead & Co. of Charlton Ogburn's *THE MYSTERIOUS WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE* (see also *Newsletter*, Summer 1985, v. 20, #3) and to honor its author, the Society's Honorary President. In addition to the guest of honor, who attended with his wife Vera, and the other members present for this event, the party was also graced with a visit by Dr. and Mrs. O.B. Hardison. Dr. Hardison is the former director of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., and under his stewardship the "Folger" extended many courtesies to our Society, including the hosting of two previous conference receptions and tours of that institution's many facilities.

On Saturday, October 13, the conference was called to order by Gordon Cyr, Executive Vice-President, who discussed the agenda. After reports from the Society's Secretary (Helen Cyr) and Treasurer (Phillip Proulx), Dr. Cyr read the first paper of the morning session, "The Remarkable Theories of Professor Walter Freeman, Fairleigh Dickinson University." The late Dr. Freeman's specialty was apparently Indo-European languages, and he taught many classes in Greek and Latin. A typescript of Freeman's book was sent to the Society by a former student of the professor's, Mrs. William Grant Goff of Arizona. Mrs. Goff inquired into the possibility of publishing this typescript, which proved to be an interesting and entertainingly written but highly speculative and undocumented account of how Edward de Vere might have come to have written Shakespeare's works. Two areas of Freeman's hypothesis seemed to merit further investigation. The language specialty had led the typescript's author to construct some intriguing anagrams from various Latin title-page inscriptions and "posies" attributed to de Vere. And Freeman seemed to support some investigations by scholars such as Frances Yates, who have found traces of "hermetic" and esoteric philosophies of the Tudor and Jacobean eras in certain plays and poems of Shakespeare. (This was to be the subject of Helen Cyr's paper following.) Because of the many unproven, if not unprovable, assertions in Freeman's presentation, the S.O.S. Board decided to return Prof. Freeman's typescript to Mrs. Goff with the Society's thanks.

Following the mid-morning "coffee break," Helen Cyr read a paper entitled "The Occult Connection -- Are Secret Academic Societies of the Sixteenth Century a Key to the Authorship?" Cyr cautioned against using the term "occult" in its more modern, pejorative connotation. What was to be inferred here was rather the pervasiveness -- in the middle ages particularly, but throughout the Renaissance until the end of the seventeenth century -- of so-called "hermetic" philosophy and esoteric knowledge (pursued almost exclusively by a handful of an educated elite forming secret societies) often interacting with a "proto-scientific" method of investigation. She was led to this path, Cyr said, by certain aspects of Walter Freeman's typescript discussed above, even though few, if any, of his speculations "proved out." She promised a full report on her own readings in

a future Newsletter. But Cyr's presentation pointed up many absorbing Shakespearean usages of the hermetic movement's motifs and symbols. And, moreover, further research into this branch of study should prove useful, Cyr feels, in discriminating authorship of Elizabethan texts on the basis of individual authors' "points of view" on social, religious, philosophical, and political issues of those days.

The "Special Event" on the agenda took place after lunch, when Charlton Ogburn gave his presentation -- based on his long experience and involvement in the Oxfordian theory -- "Tilting with Stratfordians -- Uncovering a Literary Watergate." (The subtitle of Mr. Ogburn's talk came from Kevin Kelly's review of THE MYSTERIOUS WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE in the Boston Sunday Globe, October 21st.) Ogburn boiled down the first half of his new book, which is devoted to a powerful indictment of the Stratfordian scholarship of the present day, to a few well-chosen examples of what he has himself come up against when trying to promote the case for the 17th earl of Oxford's authorship of the Shakespearean corpus. The incidents he described ranged from the hilarious to the appalling, and, despite the justified anger Ogburn feels toward his more outrageous opponents, the presentation was unfailingly good-humored.

Mr. Ogburn's talk was followed by a discussion, led by Gordon Cyr, on Ogburn's new book. Cyr also announced other items of new business and answered questions from members. The conference was then adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

EDITORS' NOTE

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"AN HUNDRETH SUNDRIE FLAWS" IN THE
(NEW YORK) TIMES REVIEW

Well, maybe only twenty-five. But enough to cause concern. In the December 9 issue of the New York Times Book Review, Robert Giroux -- of the publishing firm Farrar, Straus and Giroux; also author of "The Book Known as Q: A Consideration of Shakespeare's Sonnets -- was selected to review Charlton Ogburn's "The Mysterious William Shakespeare." Although an initiate in the murky waters of Stratfordian commentary, Mr. Giroux performed according to the fraternity's expectations, and delivered -- what else? -- a hatchet job. The S.O.S. Executive Vice-President dispatched a letter of protest to the New York Times, which was published in their January 13 issue, detailing some of the reviewer's many misstatements. Unfortunately, the Times' editors could devote space to only one of our examples. Thus the article presented here -- intended to give our members a fuller account of Mr. Giroux's critical lapsus.

At the beginning, Giroux spends much time praying in aid Francis Meres's 1598 "Palladis Tamia" references to Shakespeare and other writers. "I needed the testimony of this Rutland rector," writes the reviewer, "as an anchor to my sanity, after reading with an open and, in the end, numbed mind the 892 pages of Charlton Ogburn's long-winded and obsessive book." But Giroux's claim of open-mindedness is disingenuous to say the least. He had already gone on record on the authorship issue, dismissing as "nonsense" in his own book the belief that the name "William Shakespeare" was the pseudonym of an aristocrat. Giroux goes on to say that Ogburn's book "tries to disintegrate ... William Shakespeare." "Disintegrate" is a verb of obfusca-

December 30, 1984. Boston Globe. "Theater" by Kevin Kelly. "Once and for all Ogburn seems to me to prove the case for Oxford... And for that reason Edward de Vere, out from under the wraps of myth and mystery, is the theater's man of the year."

January 13, 1985. Letter to the editor, New York Times Book Review by Gordon C. Cyr. (See article below.)

January 17, 1985. New York Review of Books. Review by E.A.J. Honigman (Joseph Cowen Professor of English Literature, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne; author of many books, including the forthcoming "Shakespeare: The Lost Years"). "Even if he has not converted me to the 'Oxford theory,' he has changed my image of the Stratford man... Mr. Ogburn... --unlike most Stratfordians -- has also written a book that will entertain and fascinate readers for years to come."

January 17, 1985. National Public Radio, Chicago. "Midday with Sondra Gair." Interview "live" with Charlton Ogburn.

"Coming Events:"

February 3, 1985. "Firing Line" with William F. Buckley. Guests: Charlton Ogburn and Prof. Maurice Charney, Rutgers University. (Check times and exact date in your local newspapers.)

The Shakespeare Newsletter, Winter 1985. S.O.S. Russell des Cognets

tion as Giroux uses it. In Shakespearean scholarship it is the common term denoting the assignment of parts of the canon to different authors, certainly not Ogburn's intention. And if Giroux means it in the sense of the alternate word he supplies, "vaporize," then surely it is not the immortal poet who is Ogburn's target, but the Stratford man he believes is wrongly assigned the laurels.

The reviewer then characterizes the first half of the book under review as devoted to "proving" that the man from Stratford wrote neither the 12 plays in Meres' list nor any of the 36 that Heminge and Condell, his fellow shareholders at the Globe Theater, published in his memory in 1623! Wrong on two counts! What is proved -- and very ably so -- in the first half of the book is how Stratfordians have persistently misread the record, are guilty of flawed logic, careless scholarly methods, and at times the inability to read plain English. Also, that they resort to ad hominem attacks on those who have the temerity to disagree with them. And it strains the credulity to assign the role of "publisher" to Heminge and Condell! Their statements were composed for them by Ben Jonson -- as George Steevens demonstrated 200 years ago in a masterly stylistic analysis.

"Mr. Ogburn finds it impossible to believe that a country boy, with perhaps little education, could have written such immortal works." Here is a characteristic straw man. Oxfordians only contend that these particular works -- with their wealth of detailed knowledge attainable only by an educated elite and their wide acquaintance with the sports, habits, and interests of the nobility -- are unlikely to have been composed by a person of such limited background as the Stratford man's. "Although Ben Jonson ... referred to [Shakespeare's] 'small Latin and less Greek'..." Mr.

Giroux is not the first Stratfordian to misconstrue Jonson's line as a declarative statement, when "though thou hadst... I would not..." clearly indicates the conditional.

The one correction which did appear in the New York Times (see box, page 7) was of Giroux's horrendous misreading of Ogburn's stated reason for a "cover-up": "Because playwriting was too disreputable a pursuit for an aristocrat." Having failed to understand that it was publishing that was disreputable for noble playwrights (and poets), Giroux wastes more space in rhetorically wondering why "the Queen did not mind" the playwriting activities of a half-dozen courtiers he cites.

The reviewer next proceeds to dismiss Ogburn's attempt to account for Meres's listing of both Oxford and Shakespeare (which Stratfordians always cite as literal "proof" that the two writers were different men). Giroux calls Ogburn's theory on this point "absurd speculation" which is typical of the "circular reasoning" throughout the book. Giroux does not let the reader in on why the speculation is absurd. As for the charge of "circular reasoning," we shall see some further examples of Giroux's own tendencies in the regard. Meanwhile, we note its presence here in 1) the assumption that Meres means the Stratford man when he says "Shakespeare," and 2) that Meres necessarily knew whether Oxford may have used a pseudonym. In any case, unlike his listing of some other writers (including Shakespeare) Meres names no plays by Oxford, which may be a clue that he knew of Oxford's activities only by reputation.

There follows another rhetorical question about Ben Jonson: "Was he too in on the conspiracy?" Well, yes--which we would have thought obvious, given the peculiar circumstances of the First Folio's production and the clear evidence he wrote Heminge's and Condell's prefaces.

FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, JANUARY 13, 1985

'Mysterious Shakespeare'

To the Editor:

To assign Robert Giroux to review a book like "The Mysterious William Shakespeare" by Charlton Ogburn (Dec. 9) is like assigning a book on Watergate to Richard Nixon. Mr. Giroux is part of the very problem Mr. Ogburn spends fully half his book attacking — the faulty reasoning and slipshod "scholarship" of Shakespearean commentators. It is significant that your reviewer deals not at all with Mr. Ogburn's well-documented indictment of even the highest priests in the Shakespearean critical fraternity.

The reasons for Mr. Giroux's silence on this point are not far to seek. His upside-down account of Mr. Ogburn's support for the 17th Earl of Oxford as the real Shakespeare only furthers the omissions, distortions and misreadings perpetrated by A. L. Rowse, Samuel Schoenbaum, Louis B. Wright and many others exposed in the book under review.

It was not writing plays that was "disreputable" for an aristocrat, as Mr. Giroux would twist it, but publishing them. The same was true of verse. With the possible exception of Thomas Sackville, none of the noble playwrights Mr. Giroux cites published their work. (Even Sir Philip Sidney's verse was not published in his lifetime because of this social prohibition.)

Mr. Giroux does not bother to explain the utter dearth of documentation of any literary activities or friendships among writers that the Stratford man is alleged to have undertaken. Nor does the reviewer seem bothered that it is this singular circumstance that has given rise to all the claims about the Bard's real identity.

Mr. Giroux and other Shakespeare scholars should ponder the following remarks, published in 1962, by Sir Hugh Trevor-Roper. In writing of the Stratford citizen, the historian says, "As far as the records go, he was uneducated, had no literary friends, possessed at his death no books, and could not write."

GORDON C. CYR
Baltimore

an embarrassment to Stratfordians, Sir Hugh cited some of these very characters (and Shakespeare's ridicule of them) as evidence of the author's sympathy toward the nobility!

A large part of the remainder of Giroux's polemic is an attempt to impeach Oxford's character, donning the Cecilian glasses most historians use for such purposes. Oxford to Giroux is one who "easily cowed" a "miserable and helpless Burleigh," "cruelly" abandoned his wife, was "profligate" and "ran through his enormous wealth." On the other hand, Burleigh (whom historian Joel Hurstfield has shown to be an exploitative manager—to his own gain—of the Queen's Wards, of which Oxford was a chief victim) is portrayed in Giroux's sentimental account as the kindly but exasperated guardian who "continued to obtain for [Oxford] whatever financial favors he could." (We have often wondered why, if the Stratfordian white-washed view of William Cecil is the correct one, the man from Stratford — if he indeed wrote Hamlet — satirized him so mercilessly as Polonius? Also, the Stratfordians have never satisfactorily answered how a man in Shakespeare's social position would have been allowed to do so!)

Although the reviewer concedes the favor in which the Queen held the earl, he misleadingly states that "she found him less and less qualified for important state posts." But she did pay him £1000 a year for life — which she would not have done if he were not performing some important service for her. And he continued on the Privy Council until her death, whereupon he was reappointed by the new king.

Next, Giroux falsely accuses Ogburn of neglecting to mention that Gabriel Harvey called Oxford "a passing singular odd man," whereas Ogburn cites Harvey's complete poem containing the line. But in his clumsy attempt to drag in the hapless

And Giroux apparently has not read Trevor-Roper. The reviewer asks of those who assume a noble author, "How does one account for lowlife and earthy types like Doll Tearsheet ... Dogberry ... Bottom the Weaver...?" Among other statements which must be

Charles Arundel as a character witness against Oxford, it is Giroux who "neglects to point out" that Arundel's testimony has been deemed worthless by historians. His "falling out" with Oxford -- to use Giroux's own whopping euphemism --- consisted of the latter's denunciation of the former's treason. Cornered like a rat, Arundel took refuge in the wild countercharges Giroux tries to pray in aid. An indication of Arundel's trustworthiness may be gleaned from his later flight to Spain, where, in adhering to Elizabeth's enemy King Philip, he is alleged to have launched scurrilous pamphlets homeward, denouncing the English court.

"Mr. Ogburn's argument is that even a bad character can be a genius. Yes, but this bad character only went downhill. Despite his high promise and brilliant beginnings, he died in comparative obscurity." But whether the earl went downhill (or was it merely "underground"?) is the whole point at issue. (And Giroux calls Ogburn's arguments "circular"!)

Finally, the old Stratfordian saw: "The year [of Oxford's death] was 1604, before many of Shakespeare's greatest plays were written -- but this does not deter Mr. Ogburn in the least." Nor should it, we may observe, especially since Stratfordians have never been able to prove that a single play could not have been composed before that date! Giroux's last word -- which we presume he thinks is the clincher -- also requires a response. "[Francis Meres's] reaction to this book might well be, 'But my dear sir, I know the work of both playwrights. Haven't you read my book?'" It is clear that Mr. Giroux seems not to have read Mr. Ogburn's.

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IN MEMORIAM

GWYNNETH M. BOWEN, one of the foremost Oxfordian scholars of recent years, died April 5 after an 18-month-long illness. The Society was informed of Miss Bowen's passing by her sister, Mrs. J.O. Harrison, who has since become a S.O.S. member. For many years, Gwynneth Bowen edited The Shakespearean Authorship Review (now The Bard), to which she contributed several articles distinguished by solid, valuable research. The Newsletter editors, on their trips to England, visited Ms. Bowen at her Montague Square maisonette, where she maintained a fine library and meeting room for her colleagues in the Shakespearean Authorship Society. She will be sorely missed by all Oxfordians.

PHILIP S. WELD, former publisher and transatlantic sailor, died November 6 of a heart attack. Mr. Weld was 69. His untimely death occurred just after Charlton Ogburn's "The Mysterious William Shakespeare" had been released. Mr. Weld had generously supported the publication of Mr. Ogburn's book. A publisher who owned at one time three Massachusetts newspapers, Mr. Weld was a long-time devotee of the Oxfordian theory and member of our Society. He achieved international fame when in June 1980 he knocked two days and 14 hours off the record for the 3000-mile solo transatlantic race from Plymouth, England to Newport, Rhode Island.

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