

Letters to the Editor: *Mr. Barrell Replies to Professor Stoll*

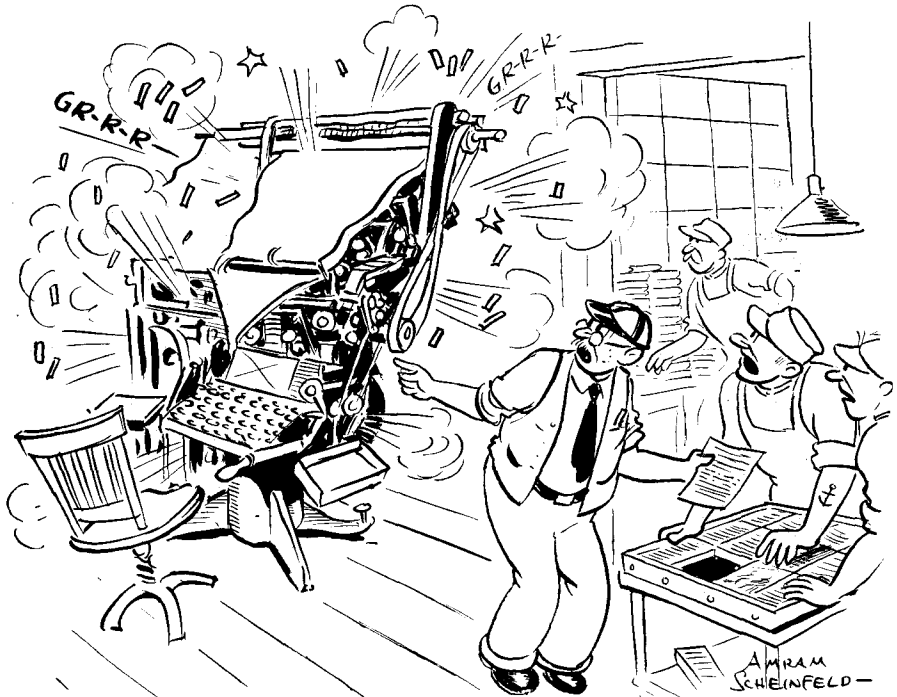
The Oxford Theory

SIR:—Professor Stoll seems to argue, if I read him aright, that disagreement with the orthodox Stratford canon is a type of "heresy" that in itself shows subnormal reasoning powers on the part of the skeptic. If such be the case, we must revise our opinion of the mentalities of such men as Henry Hallam, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Lord Palmerston, John Bright, Mark Twain, Henry James, and Dr. Sigmund Freud (to name but seven out of seventy times that number), for every one of the above mentioned has put himself on record as a vigorous disbeliever in the Stratfordian synthesis.

Professor Stoll has evidently not troubled himself to read the basic books of Oxfordian research, which are Looney's "Shakespeare Identified" and Ward's "The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford." Instead, he devotes more than half his space to labored ridicule of a phase of Percy Allen's controversy with the late John Drinkwater. This reminds me of the time that one Alf Landon inaugurated a political campaign with a fighting talk on maple syrup. It is an ancient device of the political propagandist, adopted by the reviewer, and is known as "red herring drag" or "shoving the sham sample."

As a matter of fact, some thirty books have been published in corroboration and amplification of Looney's original findings. Dr. Gerald H. Rendall, former Principal of Victoria College, University of Liverpool and for fifteen years Headmaster of the Charterhouse School, has written three of these. Dr. Gilbert Slater, Principal of Ruskin College, Oxford University, a prominent member of the British Royal Historical Society and a recognized authority on Elizabethan economics, is the author of another important contribution in "Seven Shakespeares." Mrs. Eva Turner Clark's "Hidden Allusions In Shakespeare's Plays" can be found in every well-equipped library specializing in Shakespearean research. In airily dismissing her work as an alternate for bridge or backgammon, Professor Stoll's "criticism" runs true to form. I wonder whether he has actually read any of these books? Even Percy Allen's pamphlet seems to have reached him at second-hand, by way of John Drinkwater.

The Professor becomes difficult to follow at times, especially when he endeavors to confuse the Oxfordian case with the Baconian theory. The evidence is of a fundamentally different type, Oxfordians depending in no important particular upon cryptograms, ciphers, or Rosicrucian symbols. Edward de Vere's personality, his known activities and writings, as well as the letters of his relatives and associates, and the comments of his contemporaries, answer hundreds of Shakespearean questions that remain mere conjectures in the minds of Stratfordians and Baconians alike. Dr. Stoll would have us believe that the Stratford man's life is a thoroughly documented record, whereas such is by no



"I WAS JUST SETTING SOME STUFF ABOUT AUTOMATIC WRITING."

means the case. George Saintsbury refers to the orthodox life-story as "the great Perhaps."

Professor Stoll takes me to task because I do not tell him forthwith why it was that Lord Oxford never came forward to claim credit for the immortal plays. It is a leading question and one that will not be flinched under proper jurisdiction. From the vasty ocean of the Public Record office in London we have recently dredged up several documents which go far to explain this important circumstance. I have also completed of late at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D. C., an investigation into another phase of the mystery which should prove equally interesting. The main reason why it seems inadvisable to blurt out these matters at this time is a very practical one. My literary agent won't let me.

Ignoring the chief point of my argument in comparing similarities in *situation plus phraseology*, as disclosed in Oxford's 1584 letter to Burghley and Shakespeare's Sonnet 121, Professor Stoll finds only the Biblical reference worthy of comment. In one particular, I am glad to acknowledge his correction. The phrase *I am that I am* does appear in the Geneva Bible of 1560. Dr. Stoll states very positively that Shakespeare read it there. I will agree that the author of Sonnet 121 may have done so. Arguing backwards—as all Stratfordians do—from the works to their creator—that would be the natural assumption. But there is not one scintilla of personal evidence to show that Will Shakespeare of Stratford ever owned or read a Geneva Bible and nobody knows this better than Professor Stoll himself. On the other hand, if he will turn to page 33 of Ward's "The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford," he will find this transcription

from a record of Lord Oxford's expenditure during 1569 and 70:

To William Seres, stationer, for a Geneva Bible, gilt, a Chaucer, Plutarch's works in French, with other books and papers. 2. 7. 10.

Here in one entry we have three books mentioned as the personal property of the literary Earl, each one of which is "known" by Stratfordians to have been "read by Shakespeare." Yet no record exists to show that any book of any type was ever owned by the Stratford man.

Parallels in word imagery between Oxford's writings and Shakespeare's mean little or nothing, says Professor Stoll. By the same token, I suppose, similarities in design, color-treatment or brushstrokes count for nothing in identifying a painter's works. Textual affinities are certainly of paramount importance in tracing questionable literary identities. What, may I ask, is literature if not text? Lord Oxford's letters and other writings are studied with Shakespearean ideas expressed in the distinctive phraseology that sets Shakespeare's work apart. To present Kyd, Spenser, Lyly, and others as definite originators from whom Shakespeare "borrowed" is no real answer, because it can be shown that Oxford was using the Shakespearean imagery and word-patterns years before any of these men came to the fore.

If the proponents of orthodoxy could show us one—only one—letter or other personal document from the hand of the rustic Will containing a single Shakespearean phrase, no question of his responsibility for the creation of the poems and plays would ever have been raised.

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Spain

BY W. H. AUDEN

YESTERDAY all the past. The language of size
Spreading to China along the trade-routes; the diffusion
Of the counting-frame and the cromlech;
Yesterday the shadow-reckoning in the sunny climates.

Yesterday the assessment of insurance by cards,
The divination of water; yesterday the invention
Of cartwheels and clocks, the taming of
Horses. Yesterday the bustling world of the navigators.

Yesterday, the abolition of fairies and giants,
The fortress like a motionless eagle eyeing the valley,
The chapel built in the forest;
Yesterday the carving of angels and alarming gargoyles.

The trial of heretics among the columns of stone;
Yesterday the theological feuds in the taverns
And the miraculous cure at the fountain;
Yesterday the Sabbath of witches; but today the struggle.

Yesterday the installation of dynamos and turbines,
The construction of railways in the colonial desert;
Yesterday the classic lecture
On the origin of Mankind. But today the struggle.

Yesterday the belief in the absolute value of Greece,
The fall of the curtain upon the death of a hero;
Yesterday the prayer to the sunset
And the adoration of madmen. But today the struggle.

As the poet whispers, startled among the pines,
Or where the loose waterfall sings compact, or upright
On the crag by the leaning tower:
"O my vision. O send me the luck of the sailor."

And the investigator peers through his instruments
At the inhuman provinces, the virile bacillus
Or enormous Jupiter finished:
"But the lives of my friends. I inquire, I inquire."

And the poor in their fireless lodgings, dropping the sheets
Of the evening paper: "Our day is our loss, O show us
History the operator, the
Organizer, Time the refreshing river."

And the nations combine each cry, involving the life
That shapes the individual belly and orders
The private nocturnal terror:
"Did you not found the city state of the sponge,

Raise the vast military empires of the shark
And the tiger, establish the robin's plucky canton?
Intervene. O descend as a dove or
A furious papa or a mild engineer, but descend."

And the life, if it answers at all, replies from the heart
And the eyes and the lungs, from the shops and the squares
Of the city:
"O no, I am not the mover;
Not today, not to you. To you, I'm the

Yes-man, the bar-companion, the easily-duped;
I am whatever you do. I am your vow to be
Good, your humorous story.
I am your business voice. I am your marriage.

What's your proposal? To build the just city? I will.
I agree. Or is it the suicide pact, the romantic
Death? Very well, I accept, for
I am your choice, your decision. Yes, I am Spain."

Many have heard it on remote peninsulas,
On sleepy plains, in the aberrant fisherman's islands
Or the corrupt heart of the city,
Have heard and migrated like gulls or the seeds of a flower.

They clung like birds to the long expresses that lurch
Through the unjust lands, through the night, through the alpine
tunnel;
They floated over the oceans;
They walked the passes. All presented their lives.

On that arid square, that fragment nipped off from hot
Africa, soldered so crudely to inventive Europe;
On that tableland seared by rivers,
Our thoughts have bodies; the menacing shapes of our fever

Are precise and alive. For the fears which made us respond
To the medicine ad and the brochure of winter cruises
Have become invading battalions;
And our faces, the institute face, the chain-store, the ruin

Are projecting their greed as the firing squad and the bomb.
Madrid is the heart. Our moments of tenderness blossom
As the ambulance and the sandbag;
Our home of friendship into a people's army.

Tomorrow, perhaps the future. The research on fatigue
And the movements of packers; the gradual exploring of all the
Octaves of radiation;
Tomorrow the enlarging of consciousness by diet and breathing.

Tomorrow the rediscovery of romantic love,
The photographing of ravens; all the fun under
Liberty's masterful shadow;
Tomorrow the hour of the pageant-master and the musician,

The beautiful roar of the chorus under the dome;
Tomorrow the exchanging of tips on the breeding of terriers,
The eager election of chairmen
By the sudden forest of hands. But today the struggle.

Tomorrow. For the young the poets exploding like bombs,
The walks by the lake, the weeks of perfect communion;
Tomorrow the bicycle races
Through the suburbs on summer evenings. But today the
struggle,

Today the deliberate increase in the chances of death.
The conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder;
Today the expending of powers.
On the flat ephemeral pamphlet and the boring meeting.

Today the makeshift consolations: the shared cigarette,
The cards in the candlelit barn, and the scraping concert,
The masculine jokes; today the
Fumbled and unsatisfactory embrace before hurting.

The stars are dead. The animals will not look.
We are left alone with our day, and the time is short, and
History to the defeated
May say Alas but cannot help nor pardon.