The poetical career of Arthur O'Shaughnessy was brief and rather obscure. Between 1870 and 1881 he published four volumes of verse, with diminishing success; the last volume was in fact posthumous. Today only one bit of his work is widely known, a fragment of a lyric beginning "We are the music makers". This is still reprinted in anthologies, and the accompanying biographical note usually mentions, as the most interesting aspect of O'Shaughnessy's life, that in his day he was thought to be the natural son of the first Lord Lytton. Though the rumour has not hitherto been disproved, it was untrue. The present essay traces O'Shaughnessy's lineage for three generations and more, and incidentally considers the source and history of the rumour. It may conveniently begin with a notice of his earliest known ancestor, who happens to have been on the distaff side. His mother's maiden name had been Louisa Ann Deacon.

I

"Thomas Deacon was born at Stepney on 2 September 1697. He was the younger son of Captain William Deacon and Cecilia, his wife. The sea-captain died in 1706 and the widow, a lady of lively and decided character, took about the year 1716 as her second husband the famous Jeremy Collier. This connection explains the rapid rise of Thomas Deacon to a position of great importance in the Non-Juring Communion. Collier ordained

1 The authority upon Thomas Deacon is Henry Broxap, in his biography (1911) and The Later Non-Jurors (1924); the two paragraphs quoted from him, however, come from some notes, here slightly edited and abridged, which he compiled in 1934/5 at the request of the Rev. E. M. L. Alien, who had married a descendant of Deacon (see p. 436, n. 3). When not taken from Broxap, the dates of death of the descendants come from their respective wills. The dates of birth of Humphrey's children come from the register of St. Mary Magdalen in Milk Street (Publ. Harleian Soc., vol. lxxi, 1941).
his precocious stepson both deacon and priest in the month of March 1715/6. Mrs. Cecilia Collier, who died in 1736, was suspected of pulling the strings of the little communion over which her husband presided, and was often referred to in private correspondence under the name of Pope Joan.

"Thomas Deacon took to himself a wife, apparently about the end of the year 1719, though the evidence as to the date is conflicting. The lady was Sarah, daughter of Robert Gamon of Smithfield and Datchworthy, Herts. The young couple removed to Manchester, probably in the year 1722, and with the exception of a brief period in the year 1727 Dr. Thomas Deacon (as he came to be called) passed the whole of his remaining life in Manchester earning bread as a physician for a very large family and serving a small congregation as priest. In the year 1733 he was consecrated bishop by Archibald Campbell, a Scots Non-Juring bishop, acting alone. Thomas and Sarah were the parents of no less than fifteen children. Their three eldest sons, Thomas Theodorus, Robert Renatus, and Charles Clement, all gave their lives in one way or another in the rebellion of 1745. Sarah Deacon died in 1745, immediately before the tragedy of the Manchester regiment in which her sons were implicated; Thomas Deacon himself died in great poverty in 1753."

The eldest son was executed, with eight companions, on Kennington Common on 30 July 1746 and his severed head was placed on a spike on the Manchester Exchange; the second son died in prison while awaiting trial; the third was transported to Jamaica, where he died of a fever in February 1747. A number of the children died in infancy or childhood, among whom one named William Wranius may be noted. Sarah Sophia (1731-1801) married William Cartwright of Manchester, then a presbyter and later a bishop in the little community. Edward Erastus (1741?-1813) practiced in Manchester as a surgeon and man-midwife. Three of the younger sons moved to London, probably under the protection of their paternal uncle, William Deacon, a banker, and had long and successful careers in the City: these were William Deacon's sole heir, Humphrey Hierophilus (1736-1789); Henry Hieronymus (1743-1824); and Samuel Sophronius (1745-1829).
The unusual names bestowed by Thomas Deacon on his children might cause some unjust suspicion of his learning, which his publications show to have been considerable. As the names were piously conferred by his sons on their children in turn, rather like heirlooms, the records of the family tend to a certain confusion. Of Humphrey's twelve children born in his house in Milk Street, Cheapside, seven died as infants or children. Those that survived were William Wranius (for whom see below); James Justus (1773-1857); Charles Clement (1779-1852); Edward Erastus (1784-1844); and Thomas Theodorus (1786-1806). The numerous children of Humphrey's brothers Henry and Samuel, who included another Charles Clement (a Lieutenant-Colonel in H.M.'s 61st Regiment of Foot), and an Edward Erasmus (a prominent barrister), the present account fortunately need not treat.

Humphrey died "suddenly, while giving directions in his compting-house".¹ A letter he had written to his wife nearly four years before, and had left among his papers, was offered to the Court of Probate as part of his will²:

My dearest Life, as Funeral pomp & parade is not consonant with my Ideas nor being of consequence enough to entitle to it or to admit of superfluous Expences, It is my particular request that my Funeral and everything appertaining to it be conducted in the most Frugal and private manner possible. That there be only one Coach to attend the hearse with one pair of Horses to each and that there be no things given to any Body whatever. I recommend Mr Hondo to be continued for the disposal of the Stock But not to allow him to trust any out, without first consulting my Executors. My Fathers Picture and Grandfathers and Grandmothers I wish may not be sold but remain with you unless you wish to part with them, in that case give my Fathers to Brother Henry & the other two to Brother Edward. And it is my Particular Wish that you will not (as you regard my love) buy any new Mourning, unless it be such Articles which as a Widow can't be dispensed with & which you may not have by you. It will save you trouble if you desire my Brother Henry to write to my relations in the Country to acquaint them with my decease. I have no further request to make but to beg of Almighty God to bless prosper and comfort you and to intreat you will be constant in your Prayers for me For the Pardon of my Manifold Sins and our happy meeting hereafter. Your unworthy tho' truly affectionate Husband. H. H. Deacon Novr. 25th 1785.

William Wranius Deacon, Esq. (1772-1855), the eldest son of

² P. C. C., Macham, fo. 142. My search for biographical records has been much assisted by Miss Vera J. Ledger.
Humphrey, seems to have spurned the ways of Trade. He thought himself of consequence and had no horror of superfluous expenses and, possibly as a result, in middle life he seems to have discovered that his patrimony was not fully commensurate with his ideas. He married on 29 September 1798, at St Paul’s Church in Covent Garden, Caroline King of King Street in that parish, and took her to live at 4 Caroline Place (now Mecklenburg Place), a new and fashionable district, to which he may have turned because its name seemed to celebrate his bride. By 1809 they had moved to 4 Tavistock Place, an even newer and more exclusive suburb. The baptismal records of their children exist in the registers of their parish church, St. Pancras: William Frederick was born on 26 July 1799; (Caroline Matilda, born in 1800/1801, was baptized elsewhere); Charles Adolphus was born on 20 March 1802; Edgar Alfred on 21 August 1803; and Laura Clementina on 10 November 1804. After an interval of almost a decade, Louisa Ann was baptized on 7 May 1813. Mrs. Deacon seems to have died about 1816, and by 1822 the family had apparently left London.

The next available record of the father is somewhat surprising. In 1841 and 1851 William Wranius Deacon, Esq., was living

1 Deacon was described as a “merchant”, but his name does not appear in the trade directories, which were exhaustive, in connection with any enterprise or firm. For his first marriage, *Publ. Harleian Society*, xxxv (1908), 332 and Gent. Mag., lxviii (1798), 1149; for his later residence, *Holden’s Triennial Directory of London* (5th edn., 1809-11), *Boyle’s Court and Country Guide* (1818-22; his initials are erroneously given as “W. R.”), and *The Royal Blue Book* (1822). The date of the first Mrs. Deacon’s death is implied by Sir T. N. Talfourd (for whom see below). For Deacon’s residence in Dawlish, the Censuses of 1841 and 1851; his will, P.R.O., 1855, fo. 202; his second wife’s tombstone, information kindly supplied by the Rev. W. R. M. Ingram, Vicar of Bishopsteignton.

Deacon’s will refers to portraits “of my father-in-law and mother-in-law Mr. and Mrs. King”, which shows that, despite a tradition current among his descendants, his wife was the daughter of commoners. She was probably the sixth child of Thomas King and his wife Elizabeth, whose children were baptized at St. Paul’s, Covent Garden, “Carolina” in October 1777. Mrs. King was interred there in August 1778 and her husband—“Thos. King Esq., in the New Vault Under Communion Table”—in September 1793; their deaths explain why Caroline’s marriage in the church in 1798 was formally witnessed by Joseph and Arabella King; these were no doubt a cousin and his wife, since their four children were born in 1794-1802 (*Publ. Harleian Society*, vol. xxxiv (1906); vol. xxxvi (1909)).
alone, with a single servant, at 17 The Strand, Dawlish, in Devon­shire. In his will, which he signed on 21 January 1854, he bequeathed £50 to each of his grandchildren by his first and third sons and to the widow of the latter, a total of £300; en­trusted his manuscripts of verse to his daughter Caroline Matilda, who contrary to his expectation did not publish any of them; and directed that his family portraits, his personal jewelry, his plate and his books be divided between his daughters Caroline Matilda and Louisa Ann. He requested that his "body should be decently buried in the Grave in which the remains of my late beloved wife at Bishopsteignton are buried"; this was, however, his second wife, for though there is no corresponding entry in the burial register, the churchyard at Bishopsteignton contains a tombstone (now placed against the Vestry wall) bearing the legend: "Sacred to the memory of R. Ann Deacon, the faithful, fond and affectionate wife of W. Deacon, who died Nov. 16th 1835, aged 26 years & 4 months." There is no record to make certain that the old gentleman's wish was fulfilled after his death on 27 January 1855.

His eldest son, William Frederick Deacon, attended Reading School in 1810-17 and was joined there by his younger brothers. He was admitted to Trinity College, Cambridge in June 1817, but soon migrated to St. Catherine's Hall, which he left after some scrapes that alienated his father. Upheld by an annuity from his paternal grandmother until her death in February 1828, he published Le Déjeuné, or Companion for the Breakfast Table (a daily newspaper, price 2d., from 21 October to 15 December 1820, and a thrice-weekly paper until 30 December of that year) and, after his health failed and he went to live in Wales, various bits of light literature. In 1829 he was assistant to a school in Dulwich for a short time before he joined the Sun newspaper as a contributor of

1 Information kindly supplied by courtesy of the Headmaster, M. C. E. Kemp, M.A.

2 See D.N.B.; the notice depends largely on the memoir prefixed by Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd (a boyhood friend at Reading) to Deacon's posthumous novel, Annette (3 vols., 1852); this includes letters of counsel from Sir Walter Scott that refer to the alienation of Deacon's father. For his grandmother's death, see Gent. Mag., xcviii (1828), 283. The British Museum holds a file of Le Déjeuné. Deacon's three children are named in his father's will.
literary criticism, a connection which continued until his death in March 1845. In his last years he lived a rather secluded life.

The two younger sons, Charles Adolphus and Edgar Alfred, at some unknown date went out as teachers to the National Schools of Jamaica, and before 1837 had been assigned posts in the parish of Manchester. After 1837 there seems to be no record of Charles Adolphus, who must be supposed to have died of the endemic fevers. On 12 September 1838 the Rev. G. D. Hill, who acted as secretary to the Bishop of Jamaica, wrote that Edgar Alfred "has been promoted to the superintendency of the Central School since June 1837 at a salary of 50 £ a quarter. He is a candidate for Holy Orders at the ensuing ordination." The young man must have entered Deacon's Orders at the time. His salary increased rapidly, and on 6 August 1840 he married Sophia Matilda Pike, also a teacher at the Central School.

On 20 July 1845 the bishop (whose see included British Hon-

1 Some documents from Jamaica I have inspected by the courtesy of Miss Carolyn Marion, archivist of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which subsidized the National Schools there in 1837-1845. The bishop's report of 1837 survives both in manuscript and in a copy in the volume entitled West Indies, Letters Received, pp. 48-49; a copy of the Rev. Mr. Hill's letter is on p. 162. Other information I owe to the kindness of Clinton V. Black, Government Archivist, Island Record Office, Spanish Town: the marriage, Kingston Marriages, C. R. Vol. III, fo. 198, entry no. 72; the Licence of 1845, Bishop's Book No. 3, p. 247; the Ordination, Bishop's Book no. 4, p. 143; the Licence of 1852, the same, p. 151. The record of Deacon's burial in St. Elizabeth Parish was discovered by Miss Glory Robertson, research assistant in the West Indies Reference Library, in the Institute of Jamaica.

Fancourt's letter was transmitted in C.O., 123/72, Dispatch no. 2; the official acceptance of Deacon's appointment, dated 15 March 1847, is C.O., 124/5, Dispatch no. 8. When Sophia Matilda Deacon died at Birchington on 26 May 1890 she was described by her daughter-in-law, who was in attendance, as the widow of an Army chaplain. This probably indicates that Deacon acted as the chaplain of the Garrison at Fort St. John in Belize, by the arrangement of the Rev. Dr. Newport, during the absence on leave of the regularly appointed chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Gegg, in August 1851-January 1852. (C.O. Index 18540, Honduras, sub Chaplaincy of Honduras, 29 August 1851, Dispatch no. 39, et passim). According to the Librarian of the War Office, Mr. D. W. King, "at this period it was quite customary for a civilian clergyman to officiate as an Army chaplain as and when required". Through the present Dean of Belize I learn, by the hand of the Rev. Philip R. Gibbs, that few records of the time survive in the Cathedral of St. John, though one Duty-Book bears witness to the ordination of Deacon in 1852. The chaplain of the Garrison received £250 a year.
durans) gave Edgar Alfred Deacon " Licence and Authority to perform the Office of a Priest at Belize ". As there was a chronic dearth of clergymen throughout the British settlements in the Caribbean, Deacon's move to Belize may have had some practical basis not now discernible. Later, in November 1846, Colonel St. John Fancourt, the Superintendent of Honduras, writing from Belize, informed the Governor of Jamaica that he had " nominated the Rev. Edgar Alfred Deacon, recently at the head of the National Schools of Jamaica, to be Master of the Grammar School at Honduras ", with a salary of £300 a year. Deacon seems to have taken up the post at once, while the ponderous wheels of the Colonial Office turned slowly to provide confirmation of his nomination and appointment. His son Alfred Wranius was born in Belize, on 8 September 1847, and no doubt also his second son, Charles Adolphus. On 18 April 1852 he was finally ordained priest in St John's Church, Belize, and on 1 July 1852 the Bishop granted him a " Licence as Substitute for the Rev. John Campbell Stone, Rector of the parish of St Elizabeth in Jamaica ". Deacon went at once to his new parish, and almost immediately died; he was buried there on 27 July. It is probable that he had left his family behind him in Belize, and that they were assisted and sent home to England by the Rev. Dr. Matthew Newport of Belize, for Deacon's elder son later inserted " Newport " in his own name, no doubt in gratitude.

The widow settled at 1 Grove Villas, Uxbridge Road, Acton, and sent Alfred, her elder son, to King's College School from 1856 to 1862.¹ Her younger son must be supposed to have died in the period, though no record of his death has been found. According to his own account,² after leaving school Alfred made some attempt to read law; one may suppose that he was clerk to some legal firm. He entered the Theological Department of King's College in the Michaelmas term of 1870, and studied there until

¹ My information about King's College School and King's College I owe to the courtesy of Mr. J. T. Combridge, late Registrar, and his successor Mr. Aneurin Davies. The records in their charge provide the address given, and the exact date of Deacon's birth.

² For Deacon's statement see p. 436, n. 3. I learn from Mr. C. W. Ringrose, Librarian of Lincoln's Inn, that Deacon's name does not appear in the register of any Inn of Court.
the summer of 1873, seeking a Diploma of Associateship. The Diploma was then the sole alternative to a bachelor's degree from Oxford or Cambridge as a prerequisite to ordination in the Church of England. In 1872 Alfred was elected president of the King's College Literary and Debating Society; and it seems clear that at the time his ambition was not fixed unshakably on a clerical career, for in the same year he published eight numbers of a slim monthly magazine, *The London Students' Gazette*, which dealt largely in the appreciation of contemporary art and poetry. But as the magazine was not a success, a result which a perusal thoroughly justifies, in 1873 he was ordained a deacon and in 1874 a priest, by the Bishop of Winchester. He became the Curate of Holy Trinity, in Guildford. After several intermediate stations, in 1887 he became Rector of St Mary-le-More with All Hallows, at Wallingford, Berks; and in 1908 he was made an Honorary Canon of Christ Church, Oxford.

In the early eighteen-thirties the second daughter of William Wranius Deacon, Laura Clementina, attracted the attention and then the devotion of Edward Lytton Bulwer, the novelist, later Lord Lytton. In 1836 he was legally separated from his wife Rosina, whose eventual insanity had been foreshadowed by ex-

---

1 The *Gazette* appeared monthly from March to July and from October to December 1872; the British Museum holds a complete file. I draw from it (p. 13) the election of Deacon to the presidency of the literary society.

2 When the Rev. Alfred Wranius Newport Deacon's name first appeared in *Crockford's Clerical Directory* in 1875 and 1876, he there described himself as "KCL; Th.A. 1872"—that is, as a former student of King's College, London, who by passing the relevant examinations had obtained the Diploma of a Theological Associate in 1872. As he could not have been ordained without this achievement, in default of a bachelor's degree from Oxford or Cambridge, the entry seems routine; but unfortunately, the records of King's College make certain that Deacon was not eligible to take the examinations for the Diploma in 1872, and that he did not receive the Diploma either in that year or afterwards. In later issues of *Crockford's* and in *Who's Who* he made no such claim.

3 For his career see *Who was Who*, 1897-1916. His grandchildren, Mr. Philip Dennis Allen, Mrs. Elizabeth M. Roger and Miss J. V. Alien, have kindly allowed me to inspect their family papers and to copy some significant documents. These include a printed leaf, obviously cut from a volume, bearing a portrait of Deacon and a note which one may assume to have been autobiographical. The account includes a statement that he read law before he took up the study of theology. I am also indebted to Mr. and Miss Allen and Mrs. Roger for permission to publish the letters of O'Shaughnessy and Deacon.
treme variations of temper, with phases of violent personal hostil-
ity. According to his grandson, since a time when Rosina had
informed him that she was in love with a Neapolitan prince he
" had regarded himself as freed from his conjugal vows, and by
[1835] he had become deeply attached to another woman, who
gradually acquired that place in his affections which had been for-
feited by his wife. . . . This attachment was not a mere passing
flirtation but a relationship in all respects equivalent to marriage
except the legality of the tie." Laura bore a son who was named
Ernest and who died as a young man before 1855, and three
daughters named Georgina, Gertrude, and Violet. The family at
first used the name Beaumont, which by 1858 they had exchanged
for that of Grant; the mother and daughters seem to have sur-
vived Lord Lytton.²

The third daughter of William Wranius Deacon, Louisa Ann,
moved on 11 May 1843, in All Souls Church, Langham Place,
Oscar William O'Shaughnessey, a painter of animal pictures, a
recognized Victorian genre. The first child of the marriage was
Arthur William Edgar O'Shaughnessy, the poet; he was born on

1 V. A. G. R. Lytton, 2nd Earl Lytton, The Life of Edward Bulwer (2 vols.,
1913), i. 312 and note. The note continues: "Writing about it five years later
[1840], Bulwer says in a private diary: ‘I have one comfort, though not without
sore alloy. I am loved, I believe, honestly, deeply and endearingly, by one who is
indeed to me a wife. It is true there is sin in the tie, and there is the alloy.
But if ever such sin had excuse, it is in our case. She lone and friendless save me—
no family, no name, dishonoured; and I in the flower of manhood, with a nature
that demands affection as its food, utterly shipwrecked of all love at home, my
heart bruised and trampled upon—and never forming this tie, till in despair of all
harmony in one more lawful. And if in love itself there be a redeeming sanctity,
surely it is in ours—mutual honour, loyal fidelity, perfect respect, unwavering con-
fidence. Had we but been married, we should have been cited as models of
domestic happiness and household virtues. We have both been better since we
loved each other, and I have sought to atone by more active kindliness to others
for the sin that exists here.'" Without supposing that after 1835 Bulwer became
monogamous, it is evident that his liaison with Laura Deacon was of far greater
length and consistency than Michael Sadleir understood (Edward and Rosina
(1931), pp. 362-3), since it continued until his death.

2 Information from wills and letters among the Knebworth Papers, published
with the permission of Lady Hermione Cobbold, daughter of the second Earl
Lytton. Gertrude Elizabeth Grant published three novels under the name of
"Gerald Grant": Coming Home to Roost (3 vols., 1872); Old-[sic] Cross (3 vols.,
1873); and The Great Gulf Fixed (3 vols., 1877; probably posthumous); these I
have not been able to see.
14 March 1844 at 46 Pembroke Square. The second child, Oscar Frederick, was born on 18 March 1846 at the same place. The husband died on 31 March 1848, at Ramsgate (a place renowned for pure air), of consumption, aged 31, attended by his mother.¹

The name O'Shaughnesssey is a phonetic approximation of (to transliterate) O'Seachnasaigh, the designation of a clan whose territory lay about Gort, co. Galway. Its chief Dermot was knighted in 1533, as were many of his successors until Roger O'Shaughnesssey fought for the Pretender at the Boyne, for which he was attained in 1697. Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century the young men (including the last chief, William O'Shaughnesssey, who died in 1744) fled to the Continent and became officers in the French and Spanish armies, while at home the clan disintegrated in growing poverty.² It must be borne in mind that in earlier times the bearers of the name were not necessarily related by blood, for a clan was historically a permanent war-group with a fixed base rather than a family; the interrelations of its members were a consequence rather than a cause. With this precaution, we may fix our attention upon Michael O'Sheanessy, who was born about 1765 in Tuam, Co. Galway; he had an older brother named Dominick (c. 1761-1812) who owned considerable property. Michael married Bridget, daughter of Bryan Gildea, by whom he had two daughters who remained in Ireland and a son who emigrated to England. The son, William Gildea O'Sheanessy, married on 29 November 1815, in St. Anne's Church, Westminster, Sophia Lewis (1795-1864) who was, according to family tradition, the daughter of an officer in H.M.'s Consular Service by his wife Sobresca, née Meredith. After their marriage he respelled his name in the usual English form but with a terminal -ey, as O'Shaughnessey; all his grandsons were to eliminate the second e. William and Sophia had seven children before, about 1844, he deserted his family and fled

¹ Information from the relevant certificates of marriage, birth, and death. Louisa's marriage was witnessed by her elder sister Caroline.
to France with a woman; his wife, who died in 1864, never heard of him again. The first son of the marriage was Oscar William O'Shaughnessy, the painter, whose marriage and death have already been related.¹ He left a wife and two sons.

The circumstances of his young family were precarious. Probably his widow knew better than to expect help from her father, the fashionable recluse of Dawlish; her two elder brothers had already died; and her surviving brother was in Jamaica. No doubt she and her father received financial assistance from their daughter and sister, Laura. Louisa's sons seem to have obtained a good education, its later stages probably from masters rather than at a school; both boys became competent pianists, and Arthur had a fluent command of French. The Census of 1861 records (in slight confusion) that 4 Earls Court Terrace, Kensington, was inhabited by Caroline Deacon, 60, and Louisa O'Shaughnessy, her sister, 48, unmarried, both schoolmistresses, and their nephews Arthur and Oscar O'Shaughnessy, scholars, aged 17 and 15 respectively. Caroline Matilda Deacon died at the same address on 10 April 1862, a gentlewoman and schoolmistress; her death was reported by her nephew Oscar O'Shaughnessy. No further records of Oscar seem to be available in England. Within the next decade he emigrated to the Mid-West, where about 1872 he lent a copy of his brother Arthur's first volume of verse, *An Epic of Women*, to the young Ella Wheeler, later Ella Wheeler Wilcox, who was roused to rapture.²

¹ The third son, George Gildea O'Shaughnessy (1824-1900), a schoolmaster and later a house-agent, succeeded in obtaining part of the disputed estate of his paternal great-uncle Dominick O'Sheanessy, a project in which he attempted without success to interest his nephew, the poet. He emigrated to Australia and later to New Zealand, but returned to England and took up again his profession of school-mastering, in which he was never particularly successful. Among his children, the third son (1882-1909) was named in honour of the poet, then recently deceased. The first son, Oscar William O'Shaughnessy (1869-1938), a general clerk in a chemical firm, was the father of Lawrence John Francis O'Shaughnessy, now of West Wickham, Kent, who has courteously confirmed and supplemented this account from the family papers (1962).

² About 1866 Eleanor Marston began to collect autographs in an album of tinted leaves of paper; after her marriage to Arthur O'Shaughnessy she enlarged this into a collection of autograph letters and documents; after their deaths, the collection was owned and added to by Arthur's literary executor, his cousin A. W. N. Deacon; it is now held by the library of the University of Kansas. It
By June 1892 he had become organist at St John's Reformed Episcopal Church in Chicago, and advertised himself as a music-teacher. He does not seem to have married; the date of his death is not known.

II

In 1861 Arthur O'Shaughnessy was nominated to a position on the staff of the British Museum. His nominator was one of the Trustees ex officiis, the Speaker of the House of Commons, who acted to oblige Edward Lytton Bulwer, a Conservative M.P. for Hertfordshire. The young man, aged 17, was appointed a Transcriber in the Department of Printed Books. According to one anonymous but credible recollection, "For him now and again, when the office hours had ended, there called a veiled lady in a well-appointed carriage with liveried servants. This veiled lady was always believed to be O'Shaughnessy's mother"—she was, of course, his aunt. In 1863 he became an Assistant (Second Class) in the Department of Zoology. One cannot suppose that he felt any lively interest in the subject, for during the next six years he made no particular effort to master any portion of it, or to ingratiate himself with his colleagues. Young Edmund Gosse, then a mere Transcriber, later described O'Shaughnessy in this period:

He was a sort of mystery, revealed twice a day. In the morning, a smart swift figure in a long frock-coat, with romantic eyes and bushy whiskers, he would be seen entering the monument and descending into its depths, to be observed no more till he as swiftly rose and left it late in the afternoon.

In the autumn of 1870 the Keeper of the Department of Zoology, who had long been dissatisfied with O'Shaughnessy's work, at-
tempted to obtain his discharge. O'Shaughnessy appealed to Lord Lytton who, although now retired from politics, quietly persuaded a majority of the Standing Committee of the Trustees that the young man should be reprimanded rather than discharged. It is not clear how much information about the incident drifted out to the staff, but they were sure that O'Shaughnessy must have some powerful protector. To quote Edmund Gosse again,

On January 20, 1873, [I] descended for a chat to the bald home of ichthyology. To my surprise, I found the poet, who had brushed his phials aside, with his head on his folded arms upon his table. He raised his face to me in tears, and when I inquired what was the matter, he replied by a question, “Have you not seen the newspaper? Lord Lytton is dead!” When I hinted my surprise at his emotion, he added, “No one will ever know what he was to me!”

—or, as Gosse had earlier told the story within his own family, “He was the best man that ever lived!”

In either case, Gosse was aware that he had stumbled upon a secret.

One can see them—Gosse standing, tall, blond and alert, concealing his aggressive nature behind a charming circumspection; O'Shaughnessy seated, small and slight, his dark hair rumpled, his sensitive face uplifted, his fine eyes blurred, and the tears running down from behind his glasses. Gosse was at the time preoccupied with his own efforts to escape the intellectual tether held by his father, a pillar of the Plymouth Brethren, who sent loving, interminable screeds from Devon to London in condemnation of his Willy’s attempts to write poetry, Willy’s new practice of paying calls on Sunday, and his growing indifference (could he not hear the roaring flames?) to the stern grandeur of God’s Word. At the breathless moment Gosse had a vision of paternity aristocratic, distinguished in belles lettres, distant but protective, free and bestowing freedom. He was immediately convinced that O'Shaughnessy was the natural son of Lord Lytton, and he retained the conviction to his death.

His position at the British Museum again secure, O'Shaughnessy married Eleanor Kyme Marston, the elder daughter of John Westland Marston, the playwright, on 26 June 1873 at St. Mark’s,

1 Cecil Y. Lang, ed. The Swinburne Letters, ii (1959), 255, n. 2. Professor Lang has kindly informed me that he obtained the alternate version from Dr. Philip Gosse.

2 Evan Charteris, The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse (1931), passim.
Regent Park. Their first child, Westland Kyme O’Shaughnessy, was born on 31 July 1874 and died on 12 September, at Margate.1 A second son seems to have been still-born, for his birth was not registered. "The mother’s digestion and health became disordered, and she resorted to whiskey as a remedy, with the results which might have been anticipated. . . ."2 Her death on 8 February 1879 was certified to be due to cirrhosis of the liver. It is difficult to relate such cold statements to living men and women; but we may turn to the note O’Shaughnessy wrote his cousin, the Rev. Mr. Deacon3:

My dear Alfred

I am in deepest grief. My dear wife died yesterday. The funeral will take place about Thursday & I should like you to come if possible, as she has often expressed to me her affectionate regard for you. I was totally unprepared for the loss of my sweet wife & I am in the most hopeless sorrow

Yours affect[ly]
Arthur OS

Two years later—when, in fact, he was preparing for a second marriage—O’Shaughnessy also died, on 30 January 1881, and was buried beside his wife in Kensal Green Cemetery.4 His cousin Alfred became his literary executor; his small estate passed to his mother.5

III

As a close friend, Edmund Gosse wrote an obituary in the Academy of 5 February 1881. Among O’Shaughnessy’s volumes he termed An Epic of Women (1870) "a decided success", and the Lays of France (1872) a succès d’estime. Music and Moonlight (1874), he wrote, "though containing some of his best productions, must in fairness be called a failure, and one which, for a time, seriously injured his position. . . . His mind was lacking in that

1 The child is buried in St. John’s Cemetery, Margate; consecrated grave no. 706, class B, section F.
2 Newton Crosland, Rambles Round My Life (1898), p. 81. Crosland had been a witness to Dr. Marston’s marriage, and had known the family intimately.
3 In the possession of Mrs. Roger; unpublished.
4 Grave no. 26806, section 117, row 3.
5 Louisa Ann O’Shaughnessy died on 18 December 1896, at 188 Brixton Hill, Brixton, a Home for Aged Women, of senile decay, aged 79. She was buried beside her sister Caroline in Brompton Cemetery, Fulham Road, grave no. 104 x 137.
critical sense which is now so common, and which used not to be
considered at all a necessary attribute of a poet . . . the quality of
his work was exceedingly unequal." He expressed a hope that
O'Shaughnessy's posthumous editor would firmly omit much.

A few days later Gosse addressed a letter to the Rev. Mr.
Deacon, advising him of several small ways in which the poet's
reputation could be sustained. Though the matter is far from
clear, Gosse seems also to have conveyed a publisher's offer or
suggestion for a posthumous volume of O'Shaughnessy's verse;
to have stated his conviction that O'Shaughnessy had never edited
his own verse with sufficient rigour; and to have more than in-
timated his willingness to act as editor of a posthumous volume.
In Deacon's reply, one has some trouble in following his train of
thought, which may be a result of his attempt to decline these
offers with a maximum of tact. He wrote, from the parsonage at
Milton-under-Wychwood, near Chipping Norton, Oxon., on 19
February:

I am extremely indebted to you for the very kind and helpful letter which arrived
yesterday. . . . I shall write to-day about the sonnet to Mr. Caine, whose address
at Liverpool I have found at last. . . . As to Mr. Stedman & his kind contemplat-
ed notice. I will write at once & obtain a copy of the best photograph ever
taken (as I think) of O'S—just after the issue of Lays of France—in the Isle of
Wight. . . . He came (through his mother—Miss Deacon) from a literary family
his grandfather being a verse writer of no mean capacity & his uncle, Mr. W.
Frederick Deacon, from the time of his leaving Cambridge, pursuing literature as
a profession, & in fiction & specially dramatic criticism leaving a high reputation.
He was, till his death, Editor (in its palmy days) of the Sun. . . . O'Shaughnessy's
own father was a painter of fair ability but very delicate health who deceased at
an early age.

And now to turn to your most kind information as to the gentleman whose
most kind intimation on a financial point of view you have referred to. I am
waiting to hear from Messrs. Chatto & Windus what offer they are prepared to
make as after my interview with them they took time to consider the matter.

The three following letters, and Gosse's note, are in B. M. Ashley MS.
5739, fos. 163-175; published by permission.

T. Hall Caine edited Sonnets of Three Centuries (1882), which includes a
sonnet by O'Shaughnessy.

Edmund Clarence Stedman, the American critic, the author of Victorian
Poets (1875 ff.).

Chatto & Windus had published O'Shaughnessy's Music and Moonlight
(1874), and had taken over the unsold sheets of his Lays of France (1872), which
they issued as a second edition in 1874. They accepted the posthumous volume,
But to mention how matters stand. His Mother has been left *almost destitute* saving a small pittance a year which he has I hope secured to her (though unfortunately he died without a will)—therefore any liberal terms on the part of publishers would have been a help—but this I fear cannot be expected & all I can hope for is to be relieved of any outlay... If only his *idle* friends would push the sale of *Music and Moonlight* whilst his decease is lamented by so many, matters might be helped a little. He had left clear directions among his papers as to this new volume & its contents so that they must be carried out but I *quite* agree with you as to the value rather of quintessence than bulk & in a *collected edition* it should be carried out—On which subject let me thank you for your kind offer a very valuable one as coming from one whose critical poetical faculty is so highly and deservedly rated. I shall be glad some day to talk the matter over with you—

Meanwhile let me say that I think, not long after the issue of the new volume, the publishers would be willing to issue a *collection* (small volume) *of His* LYRICS with a short sketch of his life (&, perhaps a critical sketch of his works) in the same book—How does this strike you? ... I hope we may meet soon. I shall be glad to hear from you at your leisure. I am,

Yours sincerely,

A. W. N. Deacon

Put baldly, the letter implies—or seems, possibly incorrectly, to be intended to imply—that O'Shaughnessy's literary executor had his task well in hand, and needed no help. If Gosse so read it, one can understand his reaction. For though he seemed the soul of civil moderation, he had a swift and violent temper; he did not suffer rebuffs without retaliating. Two years later, in 1883, the revised edition of the fourth volume of *Ward's English Poets* appeared; in it Gosse edited a small selection of O'Shaughnessy's lyrics; and in his prefatory paragraph he wrote that the poet's quality ""was thin and soon exhausted. His earliest book had most of it; his posthumous book, which ought never to have been published, had none of it."" The opinion must be regarded as an ebullition of Gosse's temper, and no more. On 4 December, from Milton-under-Wychwood, the Rev. Mr. Deacon wrote again:

My dear Mr. Gosse

I have been hoping every day to find time to write a few lines to you since seeing vol. IV of *Ward's English Poets* A quiet half-hour in an examination room gives the opportunity at last.

which appeared as *Songs of a Worker* (1881); it was so badly received that no further editions of O'Shaughnessy's poetry were ever published in England. Some copies of Louise Chandler Moulton, *Arthur O'Shaughnessy, his Life and Work, with Selections from his Poems* (Cambridge [Mass.] and Chicago: Stone & Kimball, 1894) were imported by Elkin Mathews and John Lane.
Let me thank you very heartily for your good work & the good taste, & critical acumen which is displayed in the little notice & in the quotations for the anthology. I could have wished that another of the six pages given to James Thomson might have been yours to have quoted in extenso “The Fountain of Tears.” In the space at your command I think you have exercised a wise judgment in your selection of most suggestive specimens of O'Shaughnessy’s style—As a piece of prose the critical introduction, if you will allow me to say so, is admirable & the reference to George Eliot affords you opportunity for a most happy touch of pathos & true criticism, as does your felicitous note as to Novalis.

Three little remarks & I have done. The first I hope may induce you to a slight addition in any new Edition of the work. It is that you would be so good as to mention O'Shaughnessy’s Father—the late Oscar O'Shaughnessy, an animal painter of no special mark—who died when the poet was but a child. My reason for this request is that several persons have written to me & asked if it was not true that my cousin O'Shaughnessy was an illegitimate son of the late Lord Lytton!! I need hardly say that the statement is a pure fabrication, but it is nevertheless widely spread, by many, as a truth, hence my anxiety that his father’s name & profession should have been stated. Lord Lytton was always kind to him having been an old friend of our family & for a reason which until I see his son’s (the Earl of Lytton’s) memoir I am unable to state—as it was a matter of interest in Lord Lytton’s life. When we meet I may perhaps be able to mention it—It is known but to two or three persons, besides myself.

The second is (and of course it is a personal feeling) that you could have qualified your statement as to the posthumous book by the words “perhaps” & “least” (if the statement was necessary)—so as to read “his posthumous book, which, (perhaps) ought never to have been published, had (least) of it” or “little of it” instead of “none” of it. It seems to me a strong statement,—the latter. With regard to the former I cannot think that carrying out a man’s last known wishes & expressed views can be wrong—& this was why the book was published.

The third is that I could have hoped for one line as to his transparency shown in his translations the realization of the true spirit of a lyric in a foreign tongue & giving it new words but the old force. It matters not that the poems he translated were most of them trivial—his power remains the same.

Believe me how grateful I am for your good work and forgive these slight suggestions. Yrs truly & admiringly

AWN Deacon

[P.S.] May I ask if you have any objection to my reading your stirring ballad (published in the Magazine of Art some years ago) in public with other modern work I am in the habit of giving occasionally?"

Since Gosse was the hidden source of the notion that O'Shaughnessy had been the son of Lord Lytton, he was more

1 James Thomson’s City of Dreadful Night fills six pages in Ward; The Fountain of Tears was of course by O'Shaughnessy.
2 The first earl of Lytton published two volumes of biography of his father in 1883.
3 Unidentified. The Magazine of Art did not publish verse.
than mildly curious about Deacon’s denial and promised—or half-promised—revelation. He wrote an ingratiating reply, and on 18 December Deacon responded:

My dear Mr Gosse

I must do myself the pleasure of thanking you for your kind letter with its frank and friendly character. I am glad we are so much in accord on the points I mentioned to you.

I think I should like you to know—or anyone who is interested in the matter—one or two circumstances connected with O’S.

Our common grandfather William Wranius Deacon was a man of great culture & of large acquaintance with not only at court to which he went but, from his poetic tastes, among literary men. His own verses were known & set to music by Sir W. Stevenson. His daughters—three highly accomplished women, especially the two elder; (Louisa afterwards Mrs. O’S was the youngest) kept house for him as a widower & their house was the resort of all the men of the day. The poets, dramatists, young men of fashion & fame—among them D’Israeli, Count D’Orsay, Jerrold, Dickens, my uncle Frederick Deacon, the two Lytton-Bulwers (Henry, afterwards Sir Henry, & subsequently Lord Dalling & Bulwer the great diplomatist & ambassador to Turkey & man of letters & Edward afterwards Sir Edward and subsequently Lord Lytton.) HENRY was in love with Louisa Deacon but she refused him and married (a run-away match) a young, obscure artist Oscar O’Shaughnessy, to whom she was attracted by a similarity of tastes I suppose viz. animal painting. Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer never ceased to regret all through his life that this was the cause of his brother Sir Henry’s remaining a bachelor—he being tenderly attached to him (Lord Dalling & Bulwer). He always continued to take an interest in Mrs. O’Shaughnessy & promised for the sake of his brother’s penchant, to be kind to her two sons—left very soon a widow & very poor. [H]e was as good as his word & it was to his nomination that Arthur O’S owed his first introduction to the Museum for competitive examination. This is the simple matter about O’S’s paternity. [Through] this intimate friendship the facts of the tragic story of Lord Lytton’s own life came to be known to Mrs. O’Shaughnessy & our family & Arthur O’S & I were perhaps two of the only persons who knew the full details of his sad story with its tragic ending which has made him so misjudged but which at a death (not Mrs. O’Shaughnessy’s) will I suppose be made known. The two volumes of his life stop short, doubtless intentionally, of the critical period of his story. One or two of his earlier novels were dedicated to another of my Aunts & he was on close terms of intimacy with Frederick Deacon whose extraordinary talents as poet, novelist, conductor of a daily journal (written entirely by himself) for a year were so well adverted to by Talfourd in his memoir of him when he died so young & regretted—Mrs. O’S marriage was not forgiven by her father—in the old prejudice of those days a marriage with “an artist fellow” was not likely to be by an old aristocrat whose proudest boast was that his family had been always Jacobites & their estates attainted for the Stuart cause.

I hope I have made it clear to you that a more infamous lie was never concocted than that about O’Shaughnessy’s mother, & her sons. I have told you how we

1 William Henry Lytton Earle Bulwer (1801-72) inherited an ample fortune from his grandmother; he married in 1848.
came to know Lord Lytton's tragic story. The illegitimate son of Lord Lytton for whom Arthur was mistaken died as a youth in the Austrian army long years before—and the daughters two of them are alive & the one who died [?] years ago was regretted as one of our most promising young novelists (writing under a pseudonym) whose talents had gladdened her father's literary judgment in her earliest book before he died.

I hope you will do me the favour to keep these latter details "a confidence"—some day you will be able to prove them true with the world at large. O'Shaughnessy's literary tastes came from his mother's family who were very remarkable sons & daughters of a remarkable father.

I have just seen P. B. Marston’s new volume.¹ I suppose you have seen his two tributes to O'Shaughnessy's memory? Excuse this long scrawl. Pray believe me,

My dear Mr. Gosse,
Yours sincerely,
A. W. N. Deacon

Gosse made a note, on a slip of paper which he placed with Deacon's three letters in his archives²:

These letters were, I think, a blind. I have no doubt that Arthur O'Shaughnessy was the son of E. Bulwer-Lytton & Louisa Deacon. Whether Oscar O'Shaughnessy ever existed, I am not sure; nor whether the very common old woman who survived the poet was his mother. I think not. E. G.

¹ Philip Bourke Marston, *Wind Voices* (1883).
² Published with the permission of Miss Sylvia Gosse.