



## G. W. Cottrell, Jr.: A memoir

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## G. W. Cottrell, Jr.: A Memoir

*William H. Bond*

George William Cottrell, Jr., known to his many friends as Bill, was an extraordinary scholar, editor, and ornithologist; a polymath who was interested in everything and whose learning was leavened by wit and a keen appreciation of both the ridiculous and the weighty. A slight stammer which afflicted him all his life (and which he tried by many therapies to overcome) did not impede his progress in scholarship or his proficiency in languages, although it eventually turned him from a career in teaching to one in research and editorship. In any event, it was a flaw that one quickly forgot in the warmth and humor of his conversation, the breadth of his learning, and the tact and cogency of his editorial judgment.

He was born in Detroit, Michigan on 16 September 1903, the son of Florence (Chamberlain) of that city and George William Cottrell of Cleveland, Ohio, where the family returned shortly after Bill's birth, and where he received his early education, first at the Laurel School and, for grades 3 through 12, at the University School. When Philip Hofer, also of Cleveland, five years Bill's senior and just graduated from Harvard, reluctantly came home to take up a position in his family's coal business (which he detested), he was befriended by the Cottrell family with a kindness he never forgot. As Phil wrote to Bill years later, "I greatly admired and liked your father, as you know. He was such a big warm comfortable person, on top of his very real accomplishments. . . . Bless him—he made the Coal Business more bearable—as did your mother and Eleanor."<sup>1</sup> We do not know how much attention the newly-minted Harvard graduate (class of 1921) paid to the young son of this friendly family—five years is a big gap to those in their teens and twenties—but a connection was made that served both Bill and Phil well in later years. Hofer left Cleveland and the family business as soon as he could. Personal investments shrewdly made and carefully managed enabled him to move from Ohio to New York City and the world of collecting and curatorship at the Pierpont Morgan Library and the New York Public Library. He was already a discerning collector and was elected to the Grolier Club in 1924. Seven years later William A. Jackson, then serving as curator-bibliographer of the private library of Carl H. Pforzheimer, Sr., became a Grolier member, and the long association between two exceptional bookmen began.

Bill Cottrell was admitted to Harvard College in 1922, and graduated A.B. in 1926, *summa cum laude* with highest honors in English. Among his classmates

WILLIAM H. BOND is Librarian  
*emeritus* of the Houghton Library.

<sup>1</sup> Philip Hofer to G.W.C., 31 December 1961. Eleanor was Bill's much-loved sister.

were Edward C. Aswell, the editor and literary executor of Thomas Wolfe; Daniel Berkeley Bianchi, who continued the Merrymount Press after the death of Daniel Berkeley Updike, its founder; Philip J. Darlington, a lifelong friend who became a Professor of Biology in the Museum of Comparative Zoology; Walter D. Edmonds, author of *Drums Along the Mohawk* and other distinguished novels; Walter Muir Whitehill, historian and director of the Boston Athenaeum; and Clifford K. Shipton, librarian of the American Antiquarian Society and archivist of Harvard University. All of them played some part in Cottrell's later career. Whitehill and Edmonds were also, like Cottrell, undergraduate members of the Signet Society, a college club that promoted (and continues to promote) interest in arts, literature, and good conversation. Wat Edmonds recalls that even in those days Cottrell had a notable collection of books about birds, the subject that eventually came to dominate his life. It might be noted that another member of the Class of 1926 who also graduated *summa* but with rather different interests, whose career has affected everyone on the planet, was J. Robert Oppenheimer, future director of the nuclear laboratory at Los Alamos.

Upon graduation Cottrell was awarded the Parker Fellowship for travel and study abroad. He chose Bonn as his European base and also traveled extensively in France, Italy, and England. He was already a seasoned traveler, having spent a summer two years earlier in England, France, and Switzerland. He returned from Bonn to a year-long position as Instructor in English in the Home Study Department of Columbia University and Assistant Editor of the *Columbia Encyclopedia of World Literature*, for which he wrote the *Home Study Guide* (1930) in collaboration with Hoxie N. Fairchild.

A much more important event occurred during his year at Columbia. Florence Weeks Brinckerhoff had been a close friend of Florence Chamberlain Cottrell from childhood days in Detroit. Now she was living with her husband and children in Mount Vernon, a suburb of New York City. Meanwhile her daughter Annette was commuting to Columbia three days a week for courses in writing and psychology, unknown to Bill. As Annette relates in her memoirs, in due course Mrs. Brinckerhoff invited him to visit Mount Vernon and meet the family. Hitherto they and the Cottrell children knew each other only through photographs exchanged with Christmas cards. Both Bill and Annette viewed such a social occasion with considerable trepidation—a natural reaction to parental arrangements—and she was relieved when he responded to the first invitation with formal regrets.

But Mrs. Brinckerhoff persevered, not wanting to write her Christmas letter to Florence Cottrell without recording a visit from Bill, and so at last they met. If it was not love at first sight, it was near enough. They quickly discovered many interests in common: music, art, literature, natural history, and more. Weekly luncheons ensued in New York, and during the year they explored Manhattan's cultural and recreational resources together. An engagement followed, and they were married in 1929, beginning more than sixty-five years of shared pleasures and endeavors. Their only child, Annette, was born on 24 December 1930, after Bill's professional career had taken him back to Harvard as a graduate student in English and assistant to Professor John Livingston Lowes.

The Cottrells first settled in Cambridge in a flat on Brattle Street, moving in 1932 to Coolidge Hill, near the Charles River and just across the road from

Mount Auburn Cemetery, the most celebrated birding territory in the metropolitan area. During the spring migratory season they used to scale the cemetery fence at 5 A.M., binoculars at the ready, to add species to their life list (the gates did not open until later in the day, and all seasoned observers know that the early morning hours are best for birding). Through fellow enthusiasts met on these expeditions they made the acquaintance of the distinguished ornithologist, Ludlow Griscom, and soon they were joining Griscom for wide-ranging trips in aid of his ongoing census of the birds of New England. Through Griscom they met other celebrated ornithologists, such as Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher, with whom Bill later went further afield on trips to Alaska, Iceland, and other regions even more remote. In Cambridge he was elected to membership in the Nuttall Society, the senior ornithological organization in the United States. What was an absorbing hobby was already turning into a serious second occupation.

In 1933 the Mediaeval Academy of America, with headquarters just across the street from Harvard Yard, chose him as Executive Secretary and editor of its journal, *Speculum*, a position that he held until 1942 and one for which he was admirably qualified by temperament and training. He had mastered classical and later languages and their literatures, and his editorial technique was meticulous to a degree. *Speculum* flourished under his stewardship. But by 1940 the shadow of the European conflict began to impinge on Cambridge. The Cottrells became charter members of American Defense - Harvard Group, a volunteer organization founded in 1940 to engage in national defense activities. Bill served as chairman of its Committee on Registration and Personnel, and Annette maintained the membership files and kept lines of communication open. The Group was chaired by Professor Ralph Barton Perry, whose papers in the Harvard Archives are a principal source of its history, and it played an important part in preparing for the conflict to come.

In 1941 the American Council of Learned Societies, of which Bill was a member de facto through his secretaryship of the Mediaeval Academy, appointed him to its committee to select research materials to be microcopied for preservation against wartime destruction. But after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December of that year, much of the scholarly community was recruited for immediate participation in the war effort. In 1942 Bill resigned his secretaryship and moved with his family to Washington to work in the Office of Strategic Services (forerunner of the CIA) as chief of the Biographical Records Section, the unit charged with coordinating and maintaining intelligence concerning enemy personnel. The Cottrells did not return to Cambridge until the war entered its final phases.

Meantime a post ideally suited to Bill's talents and experience was in the making at Harvard. In 1937 Keyes DeWitt Metcalf was appointed Director of the University Library and College Librarian, and charged with improving the housing and development of collections and the services offered to the scholarly public. He quickly proposed initiatives in several directions, and convinced the university administration that certain new facilities were required: a storage library for less-used books, to relieve overcrowding in Widener (solved by creating the New England Deposit Library); a new building with environmental controls designed to preserve rare books and manuscripts (the Houghton Library, completed and dedicated in 1942, releasing still more space in Widener); and a library intended

specifically to meet the needs of undergraduates (the Lamont Library, long planned but delayed by the war and not completed until late in 1948; it also relieved pressure on the central building). In addition, Metcalf faced the problem of replacing a number of senior staff members who were on the verge of retirement. Among those whom he recruited in 1938 were William A. Jackson and Philip Hofer, one as Assistant Librarian in charge of the Treasure Room (shortly overseeing the planning of the Houghton Library and then appointed as its first Librarian), the other to found the Department of Printing and Graphic Arts.

Metcalf's original proposal for the scope of Jackson's activities was ambitious, to say the least, involving not only supervision of the library's rare books and manuscripts but also formal and informal instruction of undergraduates and graduate students, book selection in the whole range of English literature, the editing of publications, and the cultivation of benefactors.<sup>2</sup> It was a daunting array of tasks, even for someone as able and energetic as Jackson, then in his thirty-third year and at the height of his powers.

Another Metcalf project was to establish a library journal to perform several functions once fulfilled by two official publications, *Harvard University Library Bulletin* (begun by John Langdon Sibley in 1876 and continuing until 1894), and *Library of Harvard University, Bibliographical Contributions* (initiated by Justin Winsor in 1878 and ending in 1911), as well as an "unofficial" newsletter, *Harvard Library Notes* (1920-1942). All three had appeared at irregular intervals; what was wanted was a regular periodical that would reflect the library's resources, the current scholarly research going on there, and the problems of libraries in general and Harvard's in particular. Jackson was fully occupied by the problems of planning, constructing, and moving into the Houghton Library. The approach and then the reality of World War II necessarily postponed the launching of a new journal. Long before the war drew to a close it was clear that its editing could not be one of his duties. The operation of Houghton already required the services of an assistant to the librarian just to keep up with the pace of acquisitions and correspondence. Furthermore, Jackson was more and more engaged by his great work, the revision of the *Short-Title Catalogue*; he was better suited to deal with the minutiae of bibliographical research than the minutiae of editorship. The creation of a new position was essential for the success of Metcalf's plan.

Early in 1944 Cottrell, whose war service was about to conclude, was an obvious choice to design and produce the projected journal, and the post of assistant to the librarian of Houghton, soon to be relinquished by its second occupant, was an ideal training-ground to learn the strengths of the library's collections and the use being made of them.<sup>3</sup> Along with being thoroughly familiar with Cambridge and the Harvard scene, he was well known to many of the scholars who were the *Harvard Library Bulletin's* potential contributors. The Reading Room of the Houghton Library was where they had access to the primary

<sup>2</sup> K. D. Metcalf to Charles Warren (Chairman of the library's Visiting Committee), 8 January 1938, reprinted in *Records of a Bibliographer*, ed. W. H. Bond (Cambridge, Mass., 1967) 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> It is probable that Hofer had renewed his acquaintance with Cottrell when he returned to Cambridge in 1938,

while Bill was still occupied at the Mediaeval Academy, and that Cottrell and Jackson then became known to each other. Cottrell's scholarship and editorial skills were already well established through his service in the Mediaeval Academy.

materials from which many such articles sprang, and the officers of the library were constantly in touch with the use being made of the collections. During all the years of his editorial tenure, Cottrell's base of operations was in Houghton one floor below the Reading Room, on the axis between the offices of Bill Jackson and Phil Hofer, the twin centers of library activity. He found the place and the prospects so congenial that as early as 29 July 1944 he declined to consider an editorship elsewhere at a higher salary.<sup>4</sup>

The Assistant to the Librarian of the Houghton Library was truly a man-of-all-work. The Librarian would check potential acquisitions in dealers' catalogs, and it was then the assistant's responsibility to make sure that the books were not already present in Harvard collections, no easy task. Once acquisitions arrived by purchase or gift, they had to be checked against orders and invoices, and examined for possible defects, before being accessioned as a preliminary to formal cataloging. Many reference questions coming by mail or over the reading room desk had to be answered, and much of this work devolved upon the assistant, who on occasion also had the duty of guiding important as well as casual visitors through the library. If by chance he had any spare time, there were always printed bibliographies of major authors or subjects to be checked against library holdings in order to identify desiderata to be searched in sale catalogs or on Jackson's periodic buying tours. The Assistant had little opportunity to be idle, but as an incomparable benefit he became thoroughly familiar with the library, its collections, and its personnel from sub-basement to top floor, including Widener and most of its satellite libraries.

During this strenuous learning process Cottrell was simultaneously engaged in planning the new journal, its design as well as its contents, with much cogitation and many conferences with Metcalf, Jackson, Hofer, and others. It was to appear three times a year, a large octavo of more than one hundred pages, generously illustrated when illustration was required. By late March, 1946, when Cottrell was at last relieved of his duties as Assistant, much of the framework was in place and the inaugural articles well in hand.<sup>5</sup> Very shortly he was able to issue a prospectus displaying its format and defining its policy together with the table of contents of the first number.

Volume I, Number 1 (Winter 1947) was distributed in January. Figure 1 reproduces the title page, hand set in Bruce Rogers's monumental Centaur. A glance at the table of contents (figure 2) reveals a varied and interesting fare, leading off with the first of eight parts of Hamilton Vaughan Bail's liberally-illustrated "Views of Harvard to 1860," later published as a book from the types of the *Bulletin*.<sup>6</sup> But anyone suspecting that the editor was being over-lavish with his scholarly ammunition would be wrong. Number followed number, volume

4 Memorandum, Jackson to Metcalf, in the Jackson correspondence, Houghton Library.

5 At that point I was released to inactive duty by the U. S. Naval Reserve and took Cottrell's place as Assistant to the Librarian of the Houghton Library. Thus our acquaintance began. For the next fourteen years we saw each other almost every working day, sometimes seven days a week, and became close friends. Later we continued to meet and correspond at frequent intervals.

6 This was the first of five works published serially in the *Bulletin* and later issued as monographs: the others were

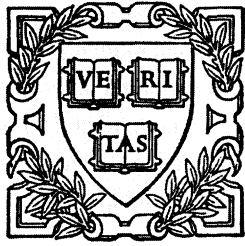
Merton M. Sealts, Jr., *Melville's Reading: A Check-List* (began in II, 2, 1948, and issued first in offprint format with revised and enlarged book publications in 1952 and 1956), A. E. Gallatin and L. M. Oliver, *A Bibliography of the Works of Sir Max Beerbohm* (began in V, 1, 1951), M. A. DeWolfe Howe and G. W. Cottrell, Jr., *The Scholar-Friends: Francis James Child and James Russell Lowell* (began in V, 2, 1951), and M. C. Bates, "That Delightful Man": *A Study of Frederick Locker* (began in XIII, 1, 1959).

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followed volume, and the level of both learning and interest was faithfully sustained. The contributors included notable scholars from all over the United States and Europe, as well as rising young graduate students making their earliest exploration of their chosen fields; some of the latter broke into print with papers written for the courses taught by Jackson and Hofer in bibliography and connoisseurship.<sup>7</sup> The subjects ranged in date from Egyptian papyri to the novels of Thomas Wolfe and the poems of Robert Lowell, from marginal drawings attributed to Albrecht Dürer to modern *livres de peintre*. Topics in world literature, art, and history dominated. Articles on the history, strengths, and policies of Harvard's many specialized libraries, some of them less well known than they deserved, suggested avenues for further investigation and invited proposals for change and development.

This pace was not merely sustained but accelerated through the fourteen volumes (forty-two numbers) of Cottrell's editorship. It is all the more remarkable because during the whole period he never had more than a single assistant. He personally worked through every article, checked all quotations and footnotes in a wide variety of languages, and made helpful and tactful suggestions to authors of every degree. Both his patience and his judgment were phenomenal. The end product was a journal of the humanities awaited with eagerness and read with pleasure and enlightenment by a lay audience as well as the learned and professional world. It was, however, to come to an abrupt conclusion in 1960.

For a number of years Cottrell's eyesight had been threatened by a worsening case of glaucoma, for which the only effective treatment at that time was the constant application of painful eye-drops. It was not a happy prospect for an editor as meticulous as he. At the same time he and Annette had determined that they no longer wanted to live in the city or its suburbs, largely because both of them had become more and more concerned with natural history and the environment. In the 1930s they had seriously considered making their home on Isle au Haut, off the coast of Maine, but that had proved to be impractical for a number of reasons. Now many of their weekends were spent exploring New Hampshire in the Monadnock region looking for a place to settle down. After many fruitless investigations they were shown the Andrews Farm, in a fold of the hills not far from the old village of Hillsboro Center. It consisted of 115 acres of meadow and woodland. The house dated from 1810 and was in fairly good condition despite some hard use, mainly during Prohibition days when its then owner manufactured moonshine in the barn and ran it as a speakeasy. Later owners, however, had restored and cleaned it to a considerable extent, though Bill and Annette still found much to do to adapt it to their needs after they took possession of the property in 1959.<sup>8</sup> In the course of minor excavations around its foundation they were not surprised to find a quantity of broken glassware, evidence of either revelry or raids from its days as a tavern.

Bill later remarked that the first time they turned into the lane leading up to the house and barn, he knew this was precisely what they had been looking for. In her own memoirs Annette tells of having had the same reaction, and describes

<sup>7</sup> The two indices to the *Bulletin* compiled by G.W.C. display the scope of its contents: to vols. I-X (1957) and XI-XIV (1960).

<sup>8</sup> See Paul O. Bofinger, Nancy Foley, and Annette

Cottrell, "When Land Protection Protects More Than Land: The Andrews Farm," *Forest Notes*, no. 182 (May-June 1990): 18-21, with pictures of the house and barn both before and during the Cottrells' occupancy.

their beautiful new home in some detail. The combination of circumstances—the threat of increasing glaucoma and the finding of a perfect home—confirmed him in the decision to resign his editorship.

At the same juncture Harvard University was undergoing one of its periodic waves of budgetary austerity. One hesitates to cite the hoary local admonition that every tub must stand on its own bottom, but age and usage had not (and have not) diminished its power. The *Bulletin* enjoyed an international *succès d'estime*, but it was running at a deficit. Near the close of volume XIV, no. 3, appeared the dry statement, “By decision of the University administration, the *Bulletin* ceases publication with this present issue.” Cottrell’s resignation evidently preceded the administrative decision to terminate the *Bulletin*, though there had been signs of increasing concern about its finances.

In the [London] *Times Literary Supplement* (3 March 1961) the anonymous reviewer of that last number (actually the respected bibliographer and bibliophile John Carter) headed his article “Ave atque vale,” and wrote,

*The Bulletin*, during fourteen years of scrupulous service to bibliographical and literary studies, has grown steadily in scope and authority. It has furnished to the world an index of the value to international scholarship of the greatest library in the Western Hemisphere. And, by sharing the fruit of Harvard’s resources with anyone who could afford \$4 a year and read English, it has declared honourable dividends on a rich heritage. Its abrupt demise, in the prime of life, is most heartily to be deplored.

It was seven years until acceptable financing was found and the *Harvard Library Bulletin* could resume, and continue to the present day, under other editors.

As soon as the articles and notes for XIV, 3, had been assembled and copy-edited, the Cottrells turned their full attention to the Andrews Farm, leaving Bill’s last assistant, Grace Jager, to see it through the press, which she did with her usual competence. There was much to be done in Hillsboro: first, needed repairs and refurbishing of the farmhouse, followed by extensive planning to construct a harmonious new wing behind it to house a working library of more than 15,000 volumes in surroundings both practical and elegant. The collection was a scholar’s dream, one to be envied: not rarities but authoritative editions and reference books covering all phases of the Cottrells’ interests, from natural history to classical literature, the fine arts, music (with an extensive range of fine recordings), food and wine, and much more. A large section was devoted to travel guides; trips all over the world could be (and were) carefully planned.

Underneath the library they built a commodious wine cellar whose contents represented another facet of Bill’s connoisseurship. A link between library and farmhouse contained an efficient kitchen. These additions were so well carried out that they blended seamlessly with the original house. Across the driveway was a shed-like building, all that remained of the first Andrews farmhouse. It was preserved and screened to make a pleasant outdoor sitting-room in black-fly season. The barn also received necessary repairs; everything was returned to top-notch condition.

Meanwhile Annette and Bill explored the land around the house to determine where springs arose and water flowed. A small stream made a pool and a waterfall beside the house, and a hundred yards below it a dam produced a pond large enough to attract wild life and to provide a swimming-hole in warm weather.

The older trees nearby were pruned, and weed trees and brambles thinned and replaced by appropriate native shrubs. Paths and trails were laid out through meadows and woods. Bill took particular pride in his extensive plantings of indigenous ferns and thousands of daffodils of many varieties. From the very beginning the Cottrells kept careful notes of the trees, plants, birds, animals, and other living creatures on their land. In this they were aided by the professional naturalists who frequently visited them. These notes form an invaluable index to the resources of the property and provide bench-marks for the study of future change.

Well before he left the *Bulletin* Bill was heard to say that if he had fully realized the fascination of ornithology earlier, he would have made it his life work. It now became an absorbing second career. Through his connection with Ludlow Griscom he had come to know many other professionals and amateurs in the field. Although his own library of ornithological works was the product of years of careful collecting and was more than adequate for his purposes, he also made extensive use of the library and other facilities of the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology. Among the members of the department he was particularly close to Professors Ernst Mayr and Raymond Paynter, Jr., and when he retired from the Harvard Library he received a new appointment as Associate in Ornithology at the Museum.<sup>9</sup> With Mayr he undertook two extensive and important tasks: editing the English translation of Erwin Stresemann's classic *Entwicklung der Ornithologie von Aristoteles bis zur Gegenwart*, published by the Harvard University Press, and preparing the greatly revised and enlarged second edition of volume 1 of James Lee Peters, *Check-list of Birds of the World*, published by the MCZ. Both appeared in 1979.

Cottrell's contribution to these works was best characterized by Walter J. Bock of the American Museum of Natural History in a review of the *Check-list*:

A comparison of revised volume I with the other volumes . . . will show that it is the best edited volume of the set, with accurate summaries of geographical ranges, extensive citation to recent literature of individual taxa, etc. Most of the credit for this accuracy and detail must go to Mr. Cottrell, who did a magnificent job as editor. . . . No detail was too small to escape his attention. This editorial care, which is shunned by too many of us, makes the difference between a good and an outstanding work. . . .<sup>10</sup>

He performed similar service for the Stresemann translation. As Ernst Mayr testified, "there is no doubt that, owing to Bill's labors, the English edition of Stresemann's book is a far more scholarly publication than the original German one."<sup>11</sup>

Had Cottrell made ornithology his principal study earlier, he would undoubtedly have been a fine field worker, as is evident in his only published article based upon his own observations, "A Problem Species: *Lamprolia victoriae*."<sup>12</sup> In the course of an expedition around the world from July 1964 to April 1965 (freed from editorial responsibility for the *Bulletin*, he was happy to be able to travel extensively and at will), the Cottrells spent the best part of a week on Taveuni, Fiji, especially to observe this bird, the Silktail. For nearly a century it had been

<sup>9</sup> His interest in the Harvard Library did not slacken: he continued for more than twenty years as a member of its Overseers' Committee to Visit the Library.

<sup>10</sup> *The Auk*, 96, no. 4 (October 1979).

<sup>11</sup> Letter to Annette Cottrell, 3 May 1995.

<sup>12</sup> *The Emu*, 66, (1967): 253-266.

a puzzle to taxonomists, who ascribed it inconclusively to one family and another. His article is a thorough survey of the previous literature on the subject combined with a record of close observation in the field. Unfortunately in the end Cottrell had to admit that the puzzle was not solved, though he had succeeded in eliminating a number of earlier theories. His old friend Governor Robert F. Bradford summed it up from a layman's viewpoint :

It is a fascinating report which divides itself like all Gaul into three parts. The first goes to show a lack of agreement among scholars, just as there was never harmony on Mount Olympus.

The second part is particularly thrilling to your friends because it helps to visualize how it must have felt to be pursuing and studying these glorious little birds against the background of tropical growth and other new and exotic bird calls.

The third part puts you back where you started, with the weight of one more scholarly conclusion that there is no real answer to the question of the species.

All in all, the article gives your friends a vignette of the nature of your work and the thoroughness of research that goes into it: something which I could only guess at before.<sup>13</sup>

In 1986 the Museum of Comparative Zoology recognized Bill's contributions by appointing him Honorary Curator of the Ornithological Collections in its library. He had already determined to bequeath his own library to the Museum.

Travel was always a passion of the Cottrells. Among the many systematic lists to be found in Bill's papers is one closely written on seven pages noting every trip that he could remember from 1908, when he was taken at the age of four to Camden, South Carolina, to 1984, when he and Annette spent a week in February in the Bahamas. That did not end their travels; his list simply stops at that point. They were never mere tourists. There was always purpose in where they went and what they did; and as they explored routes over much of the world, they were as interested in the people, the museums and the monuments they visited as in the flora and fauna that were the objects of Bill's study.

When declining health began to limit their range, both Bill and Annette found contentment and pleasure in their surroundings in Hillsboro and in the visitors who came to see them. In later years they divided their time between the Andrews Farm and a flat in a retirement condominium in Exeter, New Hampshire, near the home of Annette's brother Dick Brinckerhoff and where medical assistance was close at hand. It was there that Bill died at the age of 92 on 18 May 1995. But the farm in Hillsboro was their real home, and it stands as a lasting memorial to Bill and Annette, who bequeathed it to the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests as a center for meetings and study. They are survived by their daughter, Annette (Cottrell) Merle-Smith, and their granddaughter, Margaret.

★ ★ ★

Bill Cottrell was a kind and gentle man, a man of broad interests who wore his learning lightly. He collected many things besides books, birds, and fine wines, and kept systematic files concerning them: absurd personal names, books with odd titles and subjects, "good-bad" verse of the sort anthologized in *The Stuffed Owl*, out-of-the way recordings of ethnic music and the sounds of wild

<sup>13</sup> R.F.B. to G.W.C., 13 July 1967, Cottrell papers.

creatures, and much more. His correspondence is full of notes from friends reporting *trouvailles* of such matters. He particularly appreciated certain kinds of quiet humor. To cite a few examples, not quite chosen at random, he knew by heart most of the Cautionary Tales of Hillaire Belloc and many of the songs of Flanders and Swan, was fond of the cartoons of the late Walt Kelly and similar gentle satire, and loved to quote (or have quoted to him) an apposite passage from these and many other sources. The late lamented Thursday Lunch Group<sup>14</sup> was often the forum for such flights of unexpected erudition.

He was a fluent thinker and writer. His individual voice comes through clearly in the letters he wrote to friends and acquaintances. It is a gift that not many people possess, and it generally called out the best from his correspondents. For one who spent so much time and energy editing and polishing the writing and research of others, it seems a shame that he did not find occasion or opportunity to publish more work of his own. But his presence endures in the fourteen volumes that he produced for the *Harvard Library Bulletin*, the ornithological works that he brought to perfection for the Museum of Comparative Zoology, and the legacy that he and Annette left of land and of eloquent concern for the conservation of nature and the environment.

<sup>14</sup> An informal and irregular group that for more than thirty years met once a week in various restaurants around Harvard Square for sustenance and conversation. Its members, assimilated rather than elected, included (among others) Cottrell, Bill Bentinck-Smith, Jacob Blanck, Bill Pinkerton, Jack Sweeney, Bob

Metzdorf, Les Oliver, Phil Hofer, Fernando Zobel, Robert Shenton, and the present writer. It maintained its name but proclaimed its irregularity by sometimes meeting on Wednesday or Friday if that better suited the membership.