

424 North George Mason Drive
Arlington, Virginia
1 June 1950

Mr. Edmund M. Sloman
1426 Buhl Building
Detroit 26, Michigan

My dear Mr. Sloman:

In my letter of 28 April 1950 I indicated that I would reply in greater detail as soon as possible to your letter of 3 April 1950.

A couple of years ago Miss Pauline Holmes of Watertown, Mass., wrote to me and we exchanged some letters on the subject of Dr. Owen's "word cipher." I fear that I was not very helpful, because I have no confidence in the validity of Dr. Owen's method and, as a consequence, in the validity of any results which might be obtained from the application of the method. I am afraid that Miss Holmes' efforts during the past three years to work out exact rules are doomed to disappointment because, in my opinion, Dr. Owen's "word cipher" is purely subjective in character.

You imply that I have studied the Owen system intensively while I was at Riverbank. This is far from the fact because I paid little or no attention to it. If I am not mistaken, Mrs. Gallup had herself lost faith in the "word cipher," for I rarely ever heard her even mention it.

You state that Miss Holmes is convinced that Dr. Owen was substantially handicapped by the fact that he did not know of the existence of three additional "guidewords." It seems to me that the multiplicity of "guidewords" that Dr. Owen already had available or had elaborated is such that additional ones are hardly necessary. The number used by him is sufficient to enable one to compile "cipher messages" to one's heart's content, provided sufficient ingenuity and time are available.

I may, of course, be mistaken in my opinion. I note that you state "We are both convinced that there are a number of plays, histories and poetic works written by Francis Bacon which are still buried in the cipher, and which would constitute a substantial addition to English literature if they could be deciphered and preserved." I would be very glad to have you indicate the basis upon which your conviction rests; and if it is sound enough to dissuade me from my present non-belief in the existence of a cipher such as that postulated by Dr. Owen, I will be very glad to be of whatever assistance I can.

Very truly yours,

WILLIAM F. FRIEDMAN

6 July 1950

Mr. Edmund M. Sloman
1426 Buhl Building
Detroit 26, Michigan

Dear Mr. Sloman:

This will be just a short note to acknowledge receipt of your long letter of 30 June and to say that as soon as possible I will reply in greater detail.

Very truly yours,

WILLIAM F. FRIEDMAN

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