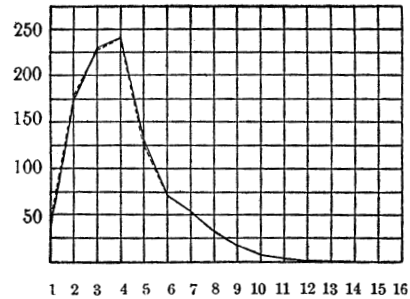
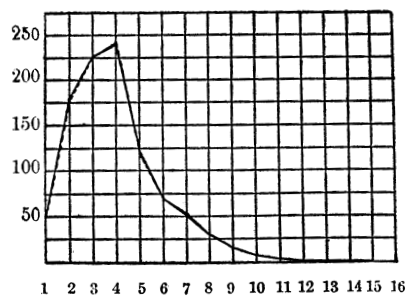


## SHAKESPEARE'S LITERARY FINGERPRINT



**Left: Shakespeare vs. Shakespeare**      **Right: Shakespeare vs. Marlowe**

Dr. Thomas Mendenhall, president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, developed a scientific method to determine the authorship of anonymous or disputed writings. He found that every author has a unique “literary fingerprint” that reveals itself across different genres and styles, as well as from youth to old age. After calculating and plotting the frequency of words of various lengths (two-letter, three-letter, and so on) in a given work, he constructed a graph that displays the writer’s ratio-curve. In researching Elizabethan playwrights, Dr. Mendenhall was astonished to discover Shakespeare’s and Marlowe’s curves matched perfectly. The graph on the left compares two groups of Shakespearean writings, consisting of 200,000 words each, and shows that they agree with each other. The graph on the right shows that Marlowe’s and Shakespeare’s ratio-curves are virtually identical. “Christopher Marlowe agrees with Shakespeare as well as Shakespeare agrees with himself,” concluded Dr. Mendenhall, who is now regarded as the father of stylometrics, or the scientific study of literature. In the above examples, note the highest frequency of words is four letters. Many authors have lower peaks, e.g., Cervantes is two letters and Dickens is three. In Shakespeare’s and Marlowe’s case, not only do they favor four-letter words, but every word from one to sixteen or more letters matches.