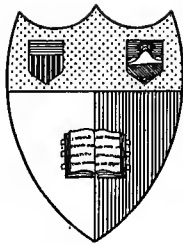




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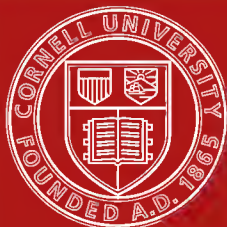
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THE VISITS OF SHAKESPEARE'S
COMPANY OF ACTORS

TO THE
PROVINCIAL CITIES AND TOWNS
OF ENGLAND,

ILLUSTRATED BY EXTRACTS GATHERED FROM
CORPORATE RECORDS

BY
J. O. HALLIWELL-PHILLIPPS, F.R.S.



BRIGHTON.

For Private Circulation and for Presents only.

1887.

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PREFACE.



ABOUT twenty years ago I commenced a search amongst the corporate records of England and Wales for materials likely to be illustrative of Shakespearean biography and the history of the contemporary stage. Devoting a portion of every summer since then to the prosecution of the task, I have up to the present time, with the kind permission of the various councils, consulted the archives of upwards of seventy towns.

In all these researches, in common with most of the affairs of this world, unforeseen results have held a conspicuous situation. Comparatively little of worth has been found in those towns the records of which might reasonably have been expected to have yielded a harvest, while entries of the greatest importance to

the theatrical historian, and others of suggestive value to the poet's biographers, have been discovered in the least promising localities. Little was met with in the corporation archives of either Worcester or Gloucester, and still less in those of Warwick. But my great disappointment was at Coventry. Considering the lead taken by the inhabitants of that city in the theatrical amusements of its county, and its singularly voluminous collection of documents, one would naturally have expected to have found some notice of the great dramatist himself, but a minute investigation failed to unearth a single allusion to him. There were, however, to be seen records of payments to his company, and a note of more curiosity, if of less importance, one that revealed the unlooked-for circumstance that the puritanical Sir Thomas Lucy, the avenger of the Charlecote escapade, was the patron of a body of itinerant actors. "To Sir Thomas Lucy's players, x.s."—Chamberlains' Accounts, 1584. This is one of the numerous evidences that illustrate the prevalence of dramatic entertainments in the midland counties during the period of Shakespeare's youth,—a fact that should exclude the unsupported conjectures which aim at establishing a special origin for the reception of his theatrical tastes.

The name or names of the company or companies to which Shakespeare belonged previously to the twenty-

sixth of December, 1594, are unknown ; but, from that day to the end of his theatrical career, it is certain that he was one of the Lord Chamberlain's actors, a body that was distinguished as the King's Servants soon after the accession of James. Every entry, therefore, respecting the Lord Chamberlain's Servants bearing date between December the twenty-sixth, 1594, and May the seventeenth, 1603, and every one respecting the King's Servants between the latter day and the year 1614 or thereabouts, are of a definite Shakespearean interest. The able workers under the Historical Manuscripts Commission, to whom all students of our early history and literature are under such lasting obligations, might perchance be enabled to add occasionally to the interest of their Reports by a special scrutiny for notices of the kind just indicated, those referring to other companies being generally of little or no value. It is also desirable, especially in those towns where the records anterior to the year 1615 are not preserved, that search should be made for notices of the King's Servants up to the end of the reign of Charles the First.

The records of Stratford-on-Avon, and of the corporate towns within a circuit of forty miles or thereabouts, have been exhaustively investigated for the objects in view, that is to say, I have carefully read every document in their possession that belongs to the

Shakespearean era. It is, however, obviously beyond the powers of any one individual to maintain this process throughout the country, and I have been compelled, in the large majority of cases, to restrict my work to an examination of the Council Books and of the Treasurers' or Chamberlains' Accounts. What there may be of theatrical interest in many of our towns in the other descriptions of records is at present unknown. The actors were occasionally getting into trouble with the local authorities, and any day a resolute search amongst the miscellaneous documents may bring forth a discovery of surpassing interest, including possibly a deposition attested by Shakespeare himself. Such a treasure, if in existence, would most likely be found amongst the papers for the Sessions of the Peace for the particular borough, and it is to be hoped that the respective town-clerks may be induced to go carefully through not only those but all the records in their custody that are dated between 1585, the twenty-seventh of Elizabeth, and 1616, the fourteenth of James. It is practically impossible that a notice of the great dramatist can be imbedded in any of the provincial records outside the limits of that period.

In the following pages I have collected together all the notices I have as yet met with that record the visits of Shakespeare's company to the cities and towns of England. These entries are of great interest, for

although it cannot be absolutely inferred from any of them that the great dramatist himself was present, there is not one which is not in itself a very strong presumptive evidence that he was. He is mentioned as a leading member of the company as early as the year 1594, and it is incredible that he should not, as a rule, have accompanied his colleagues in their provincial excursions.

It is only necessary to add, in conclusion, that strict accuracy has been sacrificed to convenience in the use of the expression, *Shakespeare's Company*,—words that are to be taken for the company to which he belonged. The poet was never the manager either of a theatre or of a company. As a dramatist he was the chief writer for the Lord Chamberlain's or the King's Servants, but as an actor he was never more than a sharer.

HOLLINGBURY COPSE, BRIGHTON,
December, 1886.





BARNSTAPLE.

SHAKESPEARE'S Company visited this town in 1605, and at some period before the Michaelmas of that year. "Geven to the Kynges players, beyng in towne this yere, x. s."—chamberlains' accounts from Michaelmas, 2 Jac. I., to Michaelmas, 3 Jac. I., the year 1605 being assigned to this entry.





BATH.



SHAKESPEARE'S Company were here at some time between the fourteenth of October, 1596, and the same day in 1597. "Gave unto the Lord Chamberlins players, xx. s." —chamberlains' accounts made up to 14 Oct., 39 Eliz.

The company visited this city again in the year 1603. "Item, given to the Kinges players, xxx. s." —accounts delivered in on October the 14th, 1 Jac. I. It seems all but certain that they were at Bath when the King's accession to the throne was proclaimed by the local authorities, this entry occurring amongst others referring to the rejoicings that took place on that occasion. See the following consecutive extracts:—"item, given to a fensor that did plaie before the shott with the sword att the proclayminge of our dreade and soveraign Kinge, ij. s. vj. d.—item, given to the musiciens att the same tyme, iij. s. iiij. d.—item, paid for fyve gallons of clarrett wyne

given the shott uppon the Kinges hollidaie, xiiij. s. iiij. *d.*—item, paid for a pound and halfe of suger att the same tyme, ij. s. iiij. *d.*—item, given to the musicions att the same tyme, v. s.—item, given to the Kinges players, xxx. s.—item, paid for two gallons of beare given to the shott uppon the Kinges holliday, viij. *d.*—paid for a glasse that was loste att the same tyme, ij. *d.*—paid more for cakes given to the shott att the same tyme, v. s.”





BRISTOL.

SHAKESPEARE'S Company visited this city in September, 1597. "Item, paid unto my L. Chamberlins plaiers playenge in the Guildehall, xxx.s."—chamberlains' accounts for 1596-1597, the twelfth week of the fourth quarter.





COVENTRY.

SHAKESPEARE'S Company were here in 1603, 1608, and again at some time between the sixteenth of November, 1613, and the same day in 1614. "To the Kinges players, xl. s."—chamberlains' accounts, 1603; an entry that of course refers to some day after the accession of James. "Paid to the Kinges players the 29th of October, xx. s."—chamberlains' accounts, 1608. "Given to the Kinges players, as appeareth by a bill under M^r. Maiours hand, xl. s."—accounts that were audited in November, 12 Jac. I.





DOVER.

SHAKESPEARE'S Company visited Dover in September, 1597, in September, 1606, and again in July, 1610. "ij^o. Septembr., item, then unto my L. Chamberleyne players, xij. s. iij. d."—chamberlains' accounts for 1597. "Item, gyven to his Majesties players beyng here on Saturday last, 2. o. o."—accounts for the sixth of September, 1606. "Item, then paid which was gyven to the Kynges players for a gratuitye, o. io. o."—accounts for the sixth of July, 1610.





FAVERSHAM.



HAKESPEARE'S Company were here in the summer of 1597. "Item, payde to mye Lorde of Hunsdouns players aboute Lamas bye thappoyntmente of M'. Saker, xvj. s." —chamberlains' accounts from Michaelmas, 1596, to Michaelmas, 1597.





FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE.

SHAKESPEARE'S Company visited Folkestone at some time between the eighth of September, 1612, and the same day in the following year. "Item, gyven to the Kinges players, ij. s."—chamberlains' accounts for 1612-1613, the municipal business year commencing on September the 8th. The unusually small amount of payment here recorded leads one to suspect an error in the accounts for ij. *li*.

Shakespeare's Company were at Hythe in May, 1609. "Item, paid to the Kynges players 16 of Maye last, xx. s."—chamberlains' accounts, 1609. The arrangement of that portion of the volume in which this entry occurs is so irregular that it may at first be thought to refer to the previous year, 1608. A minute examination will, however, clearly show that the date here given is correct.



LEICESTER.



ITEM, in August, geven to the Kinges Majesties playars, xl. s." — chamberlains' accounts, 1606. This entry is cancelled, the note *quer.* being added in the margin. The payment was, perhaps, disallowed by the auditors, but there can be little doubt that the King's Servants visited the town in the summer of 1606.





MAIDSTONE.



SHAKESPEARE'S Company visited this borough at some time between the second of November, 1605, and the same day in the following year. "Item, payd to the Kynges players by M^r. Maior, and to the trompettors, v. s., ij. li. v. s."—chamberlains' accounts, 1605-1606, the municipal business year commencing on November the second.





MARLBOROUGH.

ITEM, to my lo: Chamberlayns players, vj. s. iiij. d.," accounts taken "the xiiij.th daye of December, anno Domini 1597, annoque regine Elizabeth, etc., xxxix,"—the number of the regnal year being erroneus, a fact that clearly appears from other entries. "Item, to M^r. Maior for the Kinges plaiers, xxij. s. iiij. d.," accounts for the year ending "on the vij.th daie of November, in the fowerth yeare of the reigne of our sovereigne Lord James, by the grace of God Kinge of England, Fraunce and Ireland, defendor of the faith, &c., and of Scotland the fortith, 1606." There does not appear to have been, as was usual with most Corporations, a special day for the termination of the financial year. "Item, to the Kinges players, xx. s.," accounts for the year ending "on the nynth day of December, in the sixt yeare of the reigne of our sovereigne Lord James, by the grace of God Kinge of England, Fraunce and Ireland, &c., and of Scotland the xliij.th, 1608."

Although referring to a period shortly before Shakespeare may have joined the company, the following extract should be added,—“item, paid to him, which he gave to the Lo. Chamberlins players, ij. s. viij. d.”—accounts for the year ending “the seconde daye of December, anno Domini 1594,” the *him* being a Mr. Diston, who was then a leading member of the Corporation.





NEW ROMNEY.



SHAKESPEARE'S Company visited this town in May, 1609, and again in April, 1612. "Maye 17, item, gyven to the Kinges players, xx. s."—chamberlains' accounts, 1609. "April 21, item, paid to M^r. Maior to geve to the Kinges players, xx. s."—*ibid.*, 1612.





OXFORD.

SHAKESPEARE'S Company were here in 1604, 1605, 1606, 1607, 1610, and 1613. "Item, to M^r. Niccolls for the Kinges players, xx. s."—accounts made up on the twenty-second of November, 2 Jac. I. It is most probable, but not certain, from the position of this entry in the accounts, that it refers to either May or June, 1604. "Item, given to the Kinges players the ix.th day of October, 1605, x. s."—chamberlains' accounts. "Item, given to the Kinges players, xx. s."—Accounts made up on the eleventh of November, 4 Jac. I., 1606. The entries both before and after this being in July, the present one may fairly be assigned to that month. "Item, given to the Kinges players the vij.th day of September, xx. s."—accounts made up the eighteenth of November, 5 Jac. I., 1607. "Item, paid to M^r. Mayor for the Kinges players, xx. s."—Accounts made up on the twenty-second of November, 8 Jac. I., 1610,

the entry apparently referring to a payment made in the month of August. "Item, paid to M^r. Niccolls for the Kinges players, given by M^r. Mayor, x. s."—accounts made up the ninth of November, 11 Jac. I., 1613.





RYE, CO. SUSSEX.



HAKESPEARE'S Company visited this town in the month of August, 1597. " Paid for a reward given to my Lord Chamberlens players at the assignement of M^r. Maior, xx.s."—chamberlains' accounts, August, 1597.





SAFFRON-WALDEN.



TEM, given to the Kinges plaiers, vj. s. viij. d.”—entry in “the accompte of M^r. Benedicte Growte, late Treasurer of the towne corporate of Walden aforesaid, M^r. Robert Newton and M^r. Robert Baker, then allso Chamberlaines of the same towne, taken and allowed the seaven and twentieth daie of December, anno Domini 1606, and in the yeares of the raign of our sovereign Lord James, by the grace of God of England, Fraunce and Ireland, Kinge, defendor of the faith, &c., the fourth, and of Scotland the fortith.” The Saffron-Walden accounts having always been made up to the Sunday after Michaelmas, it follows that Shakespeare’s company were there at some time between the sixth of October, 1605, and the fifth of that month in 1606.





SHREWSBURY.



HAKESPEARE'S Company were here in 1603, 1609, 1610, and 1612. "Item, given to the Kinges his Majesties players, xx. s."—accounts for 1603, referring, of course, to some day after the twenty-fourth of March. "Paid which was geven to the Kinges Majesties players, and the Queene and Princes players, and other noblemens players this yere iij. *li.* xv. s. viij. *d.*"—accounts for 1609. "Paid which was given to the Kinges Majesties players and Queenes and Princes and other noblemens players this yere, xx. s."—accounts for 1610. "Paid which was bestowed upon the Kynges Majesties and Ladye Elizabethes players, xx. s."—accounts for 1612.





WORCESTER RECORDS.

ACCIDENT may of course bring to light important documents from unnoticed recesses in any part of the country, in like manner as it has unearthed the ancient title-deeds of New Place so recently and so unexpectedly discovered in a family mansion near Shrewsbury; but it may be safely asserted that all the known sources of information in Warwickshire, such as public and private libraries, parish registers, corporate and family archives, have been exhaustively investigated for Shakespearian purposes. The poet's own county is now, indeed, the one in which there is the least chance of discovering new facts respecting either his personal or literary history. There is, however, a mine of unexplored materials in a neighbouring locality, one that is within an easy drive of Stratford itself, to which I would earnestly direct the attention of the local student. That a store of valuable matter remains

imbedded in that collection may be gathered from my having been enabled to discover, in less than a fortnight's search during the recent summer of 1886, the curious evidences which are given in the following pages (pp. 44-46).

The only records at Worcester which are at all likely to be of use to the Shakespearean biographer are preserved in three large depositories,—1. The muniment-room of the Corporation.—2. The Diocesan Registry.—3. The District Registry of the Court of Probate. I have gone carefully through the first and second of these collections, but an effective examination of the immense number of wills, inventories, administrations, and licences, which are to be found in the last-mentioned office, could not be completed under a continuous labour of several years, and this has all along been beyond my reach. Something like thirty thousand documents would have to be read before a student could feel certain that no discoveries were left for his successors, and about four years would be necessary for the work even on the extravagant supposition that it could be continued without intervals of rest; that is to say, on the estimate that an average number of a hundred and fifty records would be despatched in a week. More than this could hardly be prudently attempted, for rapidity in such matters can only be secured at the expense of omission and inaccuracy, and

the student, to be successful, should always bear in mind the significant words addressed by our most eminent surgeon to his assistant in the midst of a time-limited operation,—“do not be in a hurry; we’ve no time to lose.” Nothing less than the minute search here intimated would be satisfactory, for offices of this kind being conducted for the transaction of testamentary legal business, not for the use of the literary inquirer, the latter cannot of course expect more assistance than that given to the public in the discovery of wills;¹ and this is altogether insufficient for his purposes. When he commences to explore in other directions, a special object of search will be as difficult to find, in the absence of a clue, as the needle that has remained so long undiscovered in the proverbial bottle of hay. It was, therefore, by accident rather than by design, although I certainly had reasons for suspecting that something of value might be recorded just about the period to which it refers, that I discovered the

¹ And these as a rule being calendared under names only, there are every now and then severe disappointments. Thus, for example, considering that the poet’s sister, Joan Hart, died in November, 1646, one naturally expected to find something of value, most probably accompanied by an inventory of the effects of the Birth-Place, in the will of a Joan Hart which is registered as having been proved in the following year, 1647. But it turned out to be that of a miserable individual of the same name who was wholly unconnected with Stratford-on-Avon.

interesting document, here printed as follows in extenso, amongst the Letters of Administration for the year 1561,—

Noverint universi per presentes nos Johannem Shakespere de Snytterfyld in comitatu Warwici, agricolam, et Thomam Nycols de Snytterfyld in comitatu predicto, agricolam, teneri et firmiter obligari Thome Powell, generoso, et Willielmo Warmstrey, notario publico, in centum libris sterlingorum, solvendis eisdem Thome et Willielmo, heredibus, executoribus, vel assignatis suis; ad quam quidem solutionem bene et fideliter faciendam obligamus nos, et utrumque nostrum, per se pro toto et in solidum, heredes, executores et administratores nostros per presentes sigillis nostris sigillatas. Datum decimo die mensis Februarii, anno regni domine Elizabethæ, Dei gracia Angliæ, Franciæ et Hiberniæ reginæ, fidei defensoris, etc., tercio.—The condicion of this obligacion is suche that if thabove bounden John Shakespere, administrator of the goodes, catalls and dettes of Richard Shakespere, deceased, late whyles he lyved of the parishe of Snytterfyld, in the diocese of Worcestre, do well and truly administre the said goodes, catalls and debtes in maner and forme followinge, that is to saye, do paye his debtes so fare as his goodes wyll therunto extend, and do also yeld and rendre a trewe, playne and full accompte of his administracion made in and upon the said goodes, catalls and debtes, to thordinarye of the said diocese of Worcestre for the tyme beinge, at suche tyme and place as he shal be therunto lawfully required; and do also, upon his proper costes and expenses, defend and save harmeles the right reverend father in God, Lord Edwine, Busshoppe of Worcestre, and thabove named master Thomas Powell, his vicar generall, and Wylliam Warmstrey, his registrar of the said diocese, and every of them, all wayes and at all tymes against all maner persons, for grauntinge, sealinge and deliveringe unto him a lettre of administracion to administre the said goodes, catalls and debtes, and for all other causes which maye ensue by reason and occasion therof, that then this obligacion to be voyde

and of noe effecte, ore els to stand and abyde in his full strenthe, power and vertue.

In another place there is the following entry under the date of 10 February, 1560-1.—Richard Shakespere; eisdem die et anno commissa fuit administracio bonorum Richard Shackespere, defuncti, nuper dum vixit parochie de Snytterfyld, Johanni Shakspere, filio suo, qui in forma juris juratus exhibuit inventariam ad summam xxxviij. li. xvij. s.

It is unfortunate that these notices add nothing in confirmation of the theory that the John Shakespeare, herein mentioned, was the poet's father, but, at the same time, they are not inconsistent with that assumption, it being known from other evidences that the latter owned a small property in Snitterfield that he might have held in his own occupation. It is, moreover, to be observed,—and this is a point of great importance in the consideration of the question,—that it is all but certain that the person here termed an agricola of Snitterfield did not reside in that parish, for otherwise his name would surely be found amongst the numerous references to its inhabitants that occur in the manorial rolls.¹ He is, however, only once named in those records, and then merely in a presentment respecting his hedge, dated in October, 1561, a notice that might of course be applicable to a non-resident.

¹ For the opportunity of going through these interesting documents I am indebted to the kindness of R. N. Philips, esq., of Welcombe, the owner of the manor of Snitterfield.

The inventory attached to the Letters of Administration above given does not appear to be preserved, but it may be gathered from the amount of the valuation that Richard Shakespeare was in comfortable circumstances for a farmer of the period. Two of the following additional notices of him, gathered from the same collection of records, show that he was occasionally engaged in the somewhat responsible occupation of a testamentary appraiser.

1. "Witnes hereof unto my last will, Sir William Burton, vicar of Snytterfilde, Richarde Maydes, Richarde Shakesper, Roger Mayeo and John Sawbrygges," will of Henry Wager of Snitterfield, dated 31 August, 1558, proved in the following October. In a list of "the dettes that be owing unto me, Harrie Wager," is this entry,—
"inprimis, Richarde Shakesper of Snytterfilde, vj. s. viij. d."

2. The Inventory of all the gooddes, catall, corne in the barnes, houshold stuff, implementes and utensilles of the same and of husbandry, of the goodes of Richard Maydes, late of Snytterfyld now deceased, taken by Thomas Robyns, Richard Shakespere and Thomas Palmer, the xxvij.th day of September, the yere of our Lord God m^l.c.lvij.

3. The invyntary of the goodes and cattayles of Henry Cole of Snytterfyld deceassyd, preysyd by Wylliam Bott, Wylliam Perkes, Henry Parsons, John Hargrave and Rychard Shakspere, primo die Junii, 1560.

Amongst the later documents is one which proves that Shakespeare the shoemaker married the widow, not, as has always been supposed, the daughter of Thomas Roberts ; and on a re-examination of the will

of Thomas Whittington of Shottery, 1601, I was surprised to find that interesting notices of the Hathaways had been omitted in the copy that was printed in the *Archæologia*, one of the many circumstances that tell us how unwise it is to conduct these researches too expeditiously.



ADDITIONAL NOTE.

Page 41, line. 8 All the known sources of information in Warwickshire have been exhaustively investigated for Shakespearean purposes.— The only feasible exceptions are the old parish-registers, and these are in the course of re-examination by Mr. Richard Savage, the librarian of Shakespeare's Birth-Place. Although it is practically impossible that they will yield new information of a direct kind bearing on the poet's life, it is very likely that Mr. Savage's predecessors may have overlooked entries of considerable interest. Let us hope that before long we may hear something about goodman Puff, Peter Turf, Henry Pimpernell, Marian Hacket, and, above all, news of old John Naps of Greece. Notices of these individuals would add greatly to the already high probability that Shakespeare, in his writings, was occasionally thinking of his provincial audiences. They might at the same time be useful to those who think it worth while to enter into controversy with the Baconian theorists. The latter would then have to explain a little more than how it came to pass that his Lordship knew of Will Squele of Cotswold and Stephen Sly of Stratford-on-Avon, both of whom, as we know on indisputable evidence, were veritable contemporaries and neighbours of the great dramatist.

