



EDWARD DE VERE NEWSLETTER NO. 63

Published by De Vere Press
1340 Flemish Street
Kelowna, B.C. V1Y 3R7 Canada

Was an edition of the Langham *Letter* published after 1590?

An excerpt from the Langham *Letter* is quoted in most historical studies of the Elizabethan period as an illustration of the splendid entertainment put on by the Earl of Leicester for the Queen at Kenilworth from July 9-27 in the summer of 1575. The author of the *Letter* claims to give an eye-witness description of the entertainment, and dates his letter to his friend Humfrey Martin "From the Coourt. At the Citee of Worceter, the xx. of August, 1575" (Kuin 80). Historians have taken this claim at face value, and the *Letter* is almost invariably treated as a contemporaneous eye-witness account confined to a single edition published in late August 1575, a few weeks after the event.

In contrast, literary scholars have long recognized the existence of two extant undated and privately printed editions of the Langham *Letter*, which differ from each other not only in the manner of their printing but also with respect to a number of textual variants. Recently, new facts have been discovered which demonstrate that there were, in fact, three separate early editions of the Langham *Letter*. These consist of the original edition published before September 10, 1575, which was "supprest"; a second edition published circa 1577; and a third edition published after 1580 (actually, as will be demonstrated later in this article, circa 1590).

It will be convenient to deal first with the evidence for the existence of a now-lost first edition of the *Letter*. This evidence is summarized in an article

by David Scott, who was one of the first to notice the significance of the following letter of September 10, 1575 from William Patten to Lord Burghley.

May it lyke yoor honorabl Lordship. This day receyved I aunswer fro my good freend the master of Requests hoow the book waz too be supprest for that Langham had complayned upon it, and ootherwise for that the honorabl enterteinment be not turned intoo a jest. May it pleaz yoor honor, excepting the vi untoo master Wylson, too yoor lordship and untoo my Lord Kepar, I have not let three more pass me, but have & suppress them all. I indeed prayd master Wylson too gyve Langham one, for that of woont he woold have taken more upon him. sory I am that he takez it so noow. And for the rest, I humbly submit myself too yoor honor, mooch less to stond at ony poynt of defens, but rather beseching the continuans of yoor favoor, whearof my poor estate hath so mooch need of, God healp me. Thus endyng untoo yoor good Lordship, increas of mooch honor and continuans of good health most humbly & hartely wish I. From London this xth of September 1575.

yoor honorabl Lordships allweyz humbly at comaundment W Patten (Scott 301).

As Scott points out:

The date of this letter, Saturday, September 10, 1575, is twenty-one days after that subscribed at the end of the book's text: "From the Coourt. At the Citee of Worceter, the xx of August. 1575." Thus the "honorabl enterteinment" mentioned in the letter is likely on the grounds of date alone to be the Kenilworth revels of July 9-27, 1575. Moreover the suppressed book, exactly like Langham's *Letter*, could be thought of as having "turned intoo a jest" the "honorable enterteinment" described in it. And, as Langham's *Letter* could also do, the suppressed book had greatly offended a man at court named Langham. It follows that the book was Langham's *Letter* and that the complainant was Robert Langham, Keeper of the Council Chamber (and probably a London mercer), who had

been all but named in the book as the author, and was now nursing a sense of injury (301).

William Patten's letter of September 10, 1575 thus affords evidence of a suppressed first edition of the *Letter*. Moreover, Patten accounts for all copies of this first edition. He mentions that six copies had been given out to be distributed among Dr. Thomas Wilson, the Master of Requests; Sir Nicholas Bacon, the Lord Keeper; and Lord Burghley himself. He then tells Lord Burghley that:

I have not let three more pass me, but have & suppress them all. I indeed prayed master Wylson too gyve Langham one, for that of woont he woould have taken more upon him. sory I am that he takez it so noow.

Patten's language with respect to these remaining copies of the *Letter* is deliberately circumspect. He has not let "three more" pass him; there are thus two additional copies still in circulation. That Langham has one of them seems evident from the fact that he would have taken "more" if Master Wilson had been willing to part with an additional copy, as Patten had requested him to do. The individual who has the remaining copy of the *Letter* is unnamed. From the fact that the *Letter* is to be "supprest . . . for that the honorabl enterteinment be not turned intoo a jest" it seems not unreasonable to infer that the unnamed person who has this remaining copy of the *Letter* in her hands is the Queen, and that she is displeased with it to the extent that she has ordered that all copies be called in.

The scenario described in William Patten's letter thus raises some key questions with respect to the Langham *Letter*. Who was the *Letter's* author? It was certainly not Robert Langham, since his complaints about it are given as one of the reasons for its suppression. Moreover, how did the *Letter*, which had raised such royal displeasure in September, 1575 that it was ordered to be "supprest", regain favour to the extent that it was reprinted circa 1577, and again after 1580? Moreover, if the first edition was entirely suppressed, how did the second and third editions come into existence? Who retained the manuscript, or a copy of the *Letter*, in the face of the Queen's displeasure? Although these questions cannot be definitively answered, they provide consid-

erable food for thought.

The second and third editions of the *Letter* are readily distinguishable from each other. The earlier of these two editions seems to have been printed using half-sheet imposition, is gathered in fours, and employs a distinctive carved capital "A" on page 1 of the text. Only three copies have survived. The later edition is printed in a different type-face from that used in the earlier edition, is gathered in eights, features a factotum on page 1 in place of the carved initial "A", and contains a number of variant readings. Fourteen copies of this edition are still in existence (Kuin 17-9).

The distinctive carved capital "A" found on page 1 of the second edition of the *Letter* provides an important clue suggesting that the second edition was not printed before 1577. The carved letter "A" in question was part of a set of ornamental initials used between 1574 and 1577 by two different printers -- John Awdely and John Charlewood. A "W" from this set is found in Charlewood's 1574 edition of *The treasure of gladnesse*, while the letter "A" from the set makes its first appearance in Awdely's 1575 edition of Bullinger's *Christian state of matrimony*. After Awdely's death in 1575, the letter "A" from the set is found in three works printed by Charlewood -- Thomas Rogers' *Anatomy of the minde* (1576), and John Woolton's *Christian manuell* (1576) and *Castell of Christians* (1577).

Brian O'Kill has drawn attention to a break on the lower left-hand side of the border of the carved capital "A", and has demonstrated that there is greater observable deterioration of this border in the three copies of the Langham *Letter* which make use of the "A" than there is in Charlewood's 1577 edition of the *Castell of Christians*. This evidence has lead O'Kill to conclude that the second edition of the *Letter* was printed after the *Castell of Christians*, i.e. after 1577. O'Kill also argues for a late date for the printing of the third edition of the *Letter*, gathered in eights, since this edition is distinguished by the presence of a factotum which makes its first appearance in 1580 in Christopher Carlile's *Discourse of Peters life*. (O'Kill 41-2; *Purloined*, 120-2).

In light of the evidence summarized in the preceding paragraphs, it now seems beyond question that there were three separate and distinct editions of the Langham *Letter* -- the original edition, published before September 10, 1575, of which no copy survives; a second edition, gathered in fours, published circa 1577, of which there are three surviving copies; and a third edition, gathered in eights, published sometime after 1580, of which there are fourteen extant copies.

Given the general acceptance, until recently, of the view that all editions of the *Letter* date from 1575, the suggestion that the third edition of the Langham *Letter* was published as late as 1580 is quite remarkable. However, the hypothesis which will be put forward in this article is that this third and final edition of the Langham *Letter* was published, not circa 1580, but a decade later.

The evidence for this hypothesis is found in the only historically significant variant between the edition of the *Letter* gathered in fours (the second edition), and the edition gathered in eights (the third edition). This variant consists of alternate wordings in these two editions with respect to the ownership of Wedgenock Park. In the edition gathered in fours, Wedgenock Park is referred to as:

A goodly park of my very good lord the Earl of warwyk,

while in the edition gathered in eights, it is called

a goodly park of the Queenz Majestyez (Kuin 20, 59).

Although, as Kuin points out, this variant has long been noticed by scholars, its importance in terms of the dating of publication of these two editions of the *Letter* can only be assessed accurately when the variant wordings are examined in the context of a series of entries in the Patent Rolls which set out grants by the Crown with respect to Wedgenock Park from 1553 to 1602. The entries in question read as follows:

1. Philip & Mary, 15 Jan., 1553: Grant for life to the queen's servant Roger Lygon, esquire, of the offices of paler or perambulator and of woodward of the park

of Wegenoke, co. Warwick, lately held by John Wellesbourne, deceased, and afterwards by John, duke of Northumberland, attainted; together with the wages and fee of 2d. a day for the exercise of each office, to be paid by his own hands and by those of the receivers and others of Warwick, Berkeley and Spencer lands in the said county (*CPR 1553-4*, 62; Kuin 20-1).

2. Philip & Mary, 26 Oct., 1553: Grant for life to Roger Ligon, one of the four gentlemen daily in waiting on the queen, of the offices of keeper of the manor or lordship of Goodrest in Wedgenock park, co. Warwick, with the garden and the waters in the same park, of keeper or parker of the said park with the custody of the wood called 'Fernehill' adjacent to the same, and of master of the chace of deer, hares, coneys and other beasts in the park. Further grant for the exercise of the said offices of the fee of 4d. a day for the keepership of the manor, 6d. a day for the keepership of the park and for the mastership of the chace the wages and fees of old due and accustomed, to be received from Lady day last half yearly from the queen's receiver general in the said county or the receivers or others of the said manor. Authority to Ligon to appoint or remove all inferior officers in the said park as shall seem expedient to him. Further grant of the herbage and pannage of the said park and the fishery there and the herbage and pannage of Fernehill from Lady day last, at a yearly rent of 10 marks to the said receiver general at Easter. To hold the said offices as amply as Francis Brian or Edward Belknapp held them (*CPR 1553-4*, 324-5).

3. Philip & Mary, 21 May, 1555: Whereas by patent 26 Oct., I Mary, were granted for life to Roger Ligon, esquire, one of the four gentlemen ushers daily attendant upon the queen, *inter alia* the herbage of the park of Wedgenock, co. Warwick, the fishery in the same and the herbage and pannage of the wood of Fernehill adjacent to the same park at a yearly rent of 10 marks; Lease in consideration of his service, to the king and queen's councillor, Henry Jernegan, knight, captain of the queen's guard and vice-chamberlain of her household, of the foregoing premises for 30 years immediately after the death of Ligon at a yearly rent of 10 marks (*CPR 1554-5*, 299).

4. Elizabeth, 6 April, 1562: Grant in tail male, at his suit and for the better maintenance of his dignity, to Ambrose Duddleley, knight, baron Lysley and earl of Warwick, with remainder to lord Robert Duddleley, K.G., master of the horse, in tail male, of the reversions and rents of the lands comprised in grants and leases as follows: . . . [here are mentioned 9 other properties] . . . ; (x) Grant by patent, 26 Oct. I Mary, to Roger Lygon *inter alia* of the herbage of Wedgenock park, co. Warwick, the fishery thereof and the herbage and pannage of Fernehill wood adjoining the park for life from Lady Day then last at a yearly rent of 10 marks; (xi) Lease by patent, 21 May, 1 and 2 Ph. & Mary, to Henry Jernegan, knight, of the same herbage, fishery and herbage and pannage for 30 years from

the death of Lygon at the same rent. Also grant of the following, late of John, late duke of Northumberland . . . Wedgenock park . . . the manor of Goodrest within the said park of Wedgenocke; the wood called Le Fernehill aforesaid . . . [here follows a list of a large number of properties]. To hold by service of the fortieth part of a knight's fee. Notwithstanding omissions or wrong recitations touching previous grants or leases. Issues from Michaelmas last (*CPR 1560-3*, 291-3).

5. A grant dated November 5, 1602 to Fulke Greville and his heirs (Kuin 21).

This sequence of entries shows that Wedgenock Park was in the possession of John Dudley (1502?-1553), Duke of Northumberland, during the reign of Edward VI. After Dudley's attainder and execution for treason, the Park reverted to the Crown, and in January and October of 1553, Queen Mary made grants of certain offices and privileges pertaining to the Park to her gentleman-usher, Roger Lygon. Later, in May, 1555, the Queen granted a thirty-year lease, commencing at Roger Lygon's death, of the herbage and fishery of Wedgenock Park to her councillor, Henry Jernegan, at a yearly rent of 10 marks.

On the accession of Elizabeth, however, Queen Mary's grants to Lygon and Jernegan were revoked, and Wedgenock Park again came into the possession of the Dudley family through a grant from Queen Elizabeth to Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick, in tail male, with remainder, also in tail male, to his brother, Robert. In the event, however, both Ambrose and Robert Dudley died without legitimate male issue (Robert Dudley in 1588 and Ambrose Dudley in 1590). As a result, the grants of Wedgenock Park in tail male were automatically extinguished for lack of male heirs, and Wedgenock Park again reverted to the Crown. The Park then remained in the Queen's hands until 1602, at which time she granted it to Fulke Greville.

The relationship between these royal grants and the variant wordings in the second and third editions of the Langham Letter seems clear. In 1577, at the time of the printing of the second edition, gathered in fours, Wedgenock Park was, as stated in that edition of the *Letter*, "A goodly park of my very good lord the Earl of warwyk". After Ambrose Dudley's death in 1590, Wedgenock Park reverted to the

Crown, and was once again "A goodly park of the Queenz Majestyez", as stated in the third edition of the *Letter*, gathered in eights. The conclusion seems inescapable: the third edition of the *Letter* was printed after Ambrose Dudley's death in 1590. Moreover, if the emendation is authorial, as seems likely, the author of the Langham *Letter* was still alive in 1590. Once again, the purported author of the *Letter*, Robert Langham, is effectively eliminated from consideration. By 1590, Robert Langham, Keeper of the Council Chamber, had been dead for ten years (Kuin 15).

The question naturally arises as to what event might have occasioned the printing of a new edition of the Langham *Letter* as late as 1590. A possibility presents itself in the fact of Ambrose Dudley's death in that year.

Most, if not all, of the sons and daughters of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, were particularly close to the Queen. Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (1533-1588), befriended the Queen in her youth, and is said to have lent her money in the troubled years of her sister Mary's reign. He was, moreover, popularly reputed to have been her lover. Elizabeth showered him with lands, titles and monopolies, and is said to have kept his last letter beside her bed until her death. Ambrose Dudley (1528?-1590), also a friend of the Queen's from her youth, was in such favour that Elizabeth bestowed on him the earldom of Warwick only three years after her accession. Another of the five Dudley brothers, Guildford (d.1554), was the husband of Queen Elizabeth's ill-fated cousin, the "nine days queen", Lady Jane Grey. One of the two Dudley sisters, Katherine (d.1620), was the wife of Henry, Earl of Huntingdon (1535-1595), a possible successor to the throne whom the Queen entrusted for many years with the important office of President of the North. The other Dudley sister, Mary (d.1586), the wife of Sir Henry Sidney (1529-1586), served the Queen as a lady in waiting, and is remembered for her devoted attendance when Elizabeth was ill with smallpox, at which time Mary Sidney herself caught the disease and was permanently disfigured (Kuin 112). Thus, the republication of the *Letter* after 1590 may well have been

occasioned by the Queen's affection for the Dudleys, brought to the fore by the death of the last of the five Dudley brothers in 1590. In many ways, the *Letter* is an encomium to the Dudley family, and to the lavish Dudley hospitality. At the same time, however, it must be pointed out that the *Letter's* author was not an admirer of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester; certain of his references to that nobleman in the *Letter* are subtly, but decidedly, double-edged (see issue #66 of the *Edward De Vere Newsletter*).

Moreover, in support of the hypothesis that the death of Ambrose Dudley might have motivated the republication of the Langham *Letter* in 1590, it is noteworthy that there are two complimentary references to Ambrose Dudley in the *Letter*. In the first of these, the sumptuous banquet on the evening of the ninth day is punningly referred to as "(if I may so terme it) an Ambrosiall banket" (Kuin 55), from which it can be inferred that Ambrose Dudley played a prominent part in hosting, and defraying the cost of, this elaborate banquet. In the second reference, Ambrose Dudley, personified as "Sage Saturn", is recognized as one of the organizers and overseers of the entire Kenilworth entertainment:

Sage Saturn himself in parson (that bicauz of hisz lame leg could not so well stur) in chayr thearfore too take order with the grave officerz of hoousholld, holpen indeed with the good advise of hiz prudent nees Pallas (Kuin 65).

The specific reference to "hisz lame leg" points almost certainly to Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick, whose leg was injured by a poisoned bullet at Le Havre in 1563; his death in 1590 was, in fact, the result of an operation to amputate this injured leg (*DNB*, 98). Moreover, it seems reasonable in the circumstances to accept the *Letter's* hint that Ambrose Dudley played a large part in the organization of the 1575 Kenilworth entertainment. When the Queen was entertained at Ambrose Dudley's seat of Warwick Castle in 1572, her stay at Warwick was interrupted by a lengthy visit to Kenilworth; it is thus evident that the two Dudley brothers divided the responsibility for the Queen's entertainment in Warwickshire in 1572, and it is not unreasonable to assume that they pooled their resources for the spec-

acular 1575 entertainment as well. Moreover, the personification of Ambrose Dudley as Saturn is both complimentary and apposite in view of the Earl's role in helping to organize the Kenilworth entertainment, Saturn being:

an ancient Italian deity, corresponding to the Greek Cronus, whose reign was celebrated as the Golden Age because he brought civilization and order out of barbarism (Rollins 995).

Two other members of the Dudley family are also favourably noticed in the *Letter*. The mention of Saturn's "prudent" and helpful niece, "Pallas" (Kuin 65) seems almost certainly a reference to Mary Sidney (1561-1621), later Countess of Pembroke. Ambrose Dudley's sister, Lady Mary Sidney (d.1586), is also referred to by the author of the *Letter* in terms which bespeak close friendship ("my good Lady Sydney", "a Noblwooman that I am az mooch boound untoo, az ony poor man may be untoo so gracious a Lady") (Kuin 78). As well, on a surface level, the *Letter* is replete with fulsome praise of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.

In summary, then, the new facts which have been uncovered by recent scholarship cast the Langham *Letter* in an entirely new light. William Patten's letter of September 10, 1575 confirms what might have been inferred from the fact that the *Letter* was privately printed, namely that the *Letter's* intended audience was the court, and that its distribution was confined to a small number of individuals within the court circle. The suppression of the first edition suggests that the *Letter* is not entirely what it appears to be on the surface, and that there are, indeed, aspects of it which could be perceived as turning "the honorabl enterteinment" into a "jest". The reappearance of the *Letter* in a second and third edition suggests that its author was someone with influence at court; otherwise, all printed copies of the *Letter*, as well as the original manuscript would have been destroyed in accordance with the royal directive in September, 1575. Instead, someone braved the Queen's displeasure by retaining a copy, from which the second edition was printed. The fact that a second edition was privately printed a few years after the Kenilworth entertainment suggests that the

author was someone with sufficient influence at court to gain the royal ear and dispel any fears that the purpose of the *Letter* had been to turn the entertainment into a "jest". Finally, the reappearance of the *Letter* in the form of a third privately printed edition in 1590 suggests that the *Letter* had value to members of the court circle as a memento, either of the Dudley family, or of happy experiences shared a decade and a half earlier, or both.

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