

SUMMARY: The document below is the last will and testament, dated 15 April 1576 and proved 30 October 1576 of Thomas Leveson (1532-1576), esquire, the father of William Leveson (d.1621), who acted as trustee to the Lord Chamberlain's Men, including William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon, in the allocation of shares in the ground lease of the Globe Theatre in 1599.

The testator was the son of Nicholas Leveson and Dionyse Bodley. For the will of Nicholas Leveson, see TNA PROB 11/27/552. For the will of Dionyse (nee Bodley) Leveson, see TNA PROB 11/43/645.

The testator married Ursula Gresham (1534–1574), the daughter of Sir John Gresham by his first wife, Mary Ipswell, by whom he was the father of Sir John Leveson (1555-1615), Shakespeare's trustee, William Leveson (d.1621), and nine daughters named in the will of his brother, William Leveson (d.1593): Dionyse, Mary, Elizabeth, Frances, Ursula, Anne, Grisell, Mary (again), and Nazareth. For the will of Sir John Gresham (d.1556), see TNA PROB 11/38/241. For the will of the testator's brother, William Leveson (d.1593), see TNA PROB 11/82/143.

For the testator's son, Sir John Leveson (1555-1615), who assisted in the repression of the Essex Rebellion on 8 February 1601, see the entry in the *ODNB*.

For the will of the testator's son, William Leveson (d.1621), Shakespeare's trustee, see TNA PROB 11/137/600.

The testator's brother-in-law and overseer, John Gresham, married, on 17 July 1553, Elizabeth Dormer, the daughter and heir of Edward Dormer, haberdasher of London. For the will of Edward Dormer, see TNA PROB 11/28/4.

For the will of the testator's friend and trustee, John Glascock of Roxwell, Essex, see TNA PROB 11/85/53.

RM: T{estamentum} Thome Leveson Ar{migeri}

[f. 197r] In the name of God, Amen. The fifteenth day of April in the year of Our Lord God a thousand five hundred threescore and sixteen and in the eighteenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth etc., I, Thomas Leveson of Halling within the county of Kent, esquire, being at this present sick in body and yet in perfect remembrance, God be thanked, therefore do ordain and make my testament and last will in manner and form following:

First I yield my soul into the hands of Almighty God, trusting assuredly by the merits and death of his dear Son, my only Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, after this life to inherit the life everlasting;

My body I yield to the earth from whence it came, in the church of Cuxton in Kent to be buried as near unto my late wife as conveniently may be if it shall please God there to call me to his mercy, or if elsewhere, then in such convenient place and in such order as to my executor and overseers shall be thought most meet and convenient;

Item, I will there shall be bestowed amongst the poor people which shall be at my burial ten pounds or more at the discretion of my executor and overseers, and amongst the poor people inhabiting within the several parishes of Cuxton and Halling at convenient time when my executor and overseers shall think meet and convenient within one year after my decease in every of the said parishes three pounds six shillings eight pence;

And I will there be bestowed in blacks against my burial or funerals the sum of fifty pounds to be bestowed in coats and gowns amongst my children, coats amongst my servants, and in coats or gowns amongst such other of my friends as my executor and supervisors shall think meet and convenient;

And I will and bequeath unto my younger son, William Leveson, and unto my nine daughters, to every of them two hundred pounds apiece over and besides the legacies of twenty pounds severally devised to four of my children by the last will and testament of Dionyse Leveson, my mother, deceased;

And if my goods and chattels will not extend thereunto, my debts and other legacies paid, then I will that my loving friends Arthur Dawbney of London, Merchant Tailor, Henry Plankeney, Merchant of the Staple, and John Glascock of Roxwell in the county of Essex shall have and take th' issues, revenues and profits of all my manors, lands, tenements and hereditaments with their appurtenances within the counties of Essex, Kent, Staffordshire and London or elsewhere within the realm of England whereof I or any other to my use do stand seised in fee simple at this present until such time as they shall or may have received of the clear issues and profits thereof (all my charges [+and] reprises deducted and allowed) so much as shall suffice to make up the full sum of two thousand pounds, and of the said fourscore pounds of lawful English money, which said two thousand pounds I will shall be bestowed amongst my younger children in manner and form following, that is to say:

To William, my youngest son, two hundred pounds, and to every of my daughters, now being nine in number, two hundred [f. 197v] pounds apiece, to be delivered to them and every of them as followeth, that is to say:

To my said son, William, when he shall have accomplished th' age of twenty-four years, and to my said daughters, to every of them at their several full ages of one and twenty years or at their several marriages, or at such one of them as shall first happen if so much money shall then be received of the issues and profits of the lands and tenements aforesaid or otherwise, or else so soon after as the same may be received, in payment of which said several legacies my meaning is that th' eldest of my said children shall first be paid;

Provided always and my meaning is that if it fortune my said son William or my said daughters or any of them to depart this life before marriage or before they shall severally have accomplished th' age of one and twenty years, then that his, her and their part and portion and legacy so dying before their several times appointed for the receipt of the same shall be equally divided amongst the rest of my younger children then overliving in such manner and form to them severally to be delivered as is aforesaid;

And the said fourscore pounds I will shall be paid and delivered to such of my said children as should have the same in such order as by the last will and testament of the said Dionyse is appointed;

Provided always and my will and meaning is that if my heir at any time after he shall have accomplished th' age of two and twenty years shall and will take upon him the charge and payment of the before-mentioned two thousand and fourscore pounds to my said younger children or so much thereof as then shall be unpaid in such manner and form as is before mentioned, and shall and will yield, make and deliver unto my said loving friends or the survivor or survivors of them, or to th' executors or administrators of the survivor of them, such good and convenient assurance by bond or otherwise in due form of law to be executed and made as to my said loving friends, the survivor or survivors of them, the executors or administrators of the survivor of them, shall be thought meet and convenient, as well for the true answering, paying and discharging of the said several legacies given to my said younger children and of every of them or of as much of them and every of them as then shall remain unsatisfied or paid according to th' intent and meaning of this my present testament and last will, as also for the discharging of the said fourscore pounds given by my said mother to four of my said children;

And for the better acquitting and discharging of my said loving friends and every of them and of the executors & administrators of every of them against my said children and every of them for the same, then my will and meaning is that from thenceforth my said heir shall have and enjoy to him and to his heirs forever all and singular my manors, lands, tenements and hereditaments before limited or appointed to my said loving friends, the great house in Lime Street and the four tenements thereunto adjoining thereunto with their appurtenances only excepted, which said great house with their appurtenances together with the said four tenements thereunto adjoining, except such parcels of the said great house as now been in the occupation of me, the said Thomas Leveson, after such time as my said children shall be satisfied of their said legacies I will unto William Leveson, my younger son, and to his heirs forever;

And if my heir do not take upon him the charge and payment of the said several legacies before mentioned devised to my said younger children in manner and form aforesaid, together with the payment of the said fourscore pounds, then my will is that after so much money levied of the issues and profits of the premises as before is meant and devised to be bestowed amongst my younger children, all issues, charges and reprises deducted, that my son, William, shall have my said great tenement with the appurtenances in Lime

Street together with my said four tenements thereunto adjoining, except such parcels of the said great tenement as are before excepted, to him and his heirs forever;

Item, I will that all such my tenants as now been my servants or heretofore have been my servants shall have such lands and tenements as they hold of mine for such yearly rent as they now pay for the same and under the covenants and agreements as they are charged unto until such time as my heir shall have accomplished th' age of two and twenty years, keeping the same in good repair and paying and performing the rents, customs, services and covenants due for the same and using themselves towards my heir as becometh tenants to do;

Item, I give to every of my servants dwelling with me in my house or wearing my livery of my gift at the time of my death, that is to say, to every manservant forty shillings apiece and to every woman-servant twenty shillings apiece;

And in consideration that my son, John Leveson, shall perform and suffer to be performed this my last will and testament in all points according to th' intent and true meaning of these presents, and also pay my debts and discharge my funerals, I give unto my said son all other my goods chattels and debts whatsoever, which said John Leveson, my son, I ordain and make th' only executor of this my testament and last will;

And I ordain and make my loving brother-in-law, John Gresham, and William Leveson, my brother, my overseers of the same, and do give to every of them for their pains, over and besides all their ordinary charges that they shall be at about this my will, to them to be allowed ten pounds apiece, whose advice and discretion my will is my said heir shall use, trusting they will as faithfully advise him as they would receive advice in any case of theirs;

And I revoke all former wills by me made, and if it happen me to depart this life, my son and heir, [f. 198r] John Leveson, being within age, then I will that my overseers above-named shall take the charge of th' execution of this my will and testament for my said son until he come to the age of one and twenty years, and they then to deliver all things into his hands and to make account of all that they shall have dealt withal, and upon their account and delivery of all things to my said son to be from thenceforth discharged, not doubting but they will deal as faithfully for me and him therein as they would be dealt withal themselves in the like cause;

And in witness that this is my whole last will and testament I have hereunto subscribed and put to my seal in the presence of Edmund Calthorpe, Thomas Cattell, clerk, Henry Plankney, William Leveson and Joseph Man the day and year aforesaid.

Probatum fuit Testamentu{m} h{uius}mo{d}i coram Mag{ist}ro Will{el}mo Drewrie Legu{m} doctore Curie P{re}roga{tiue} Cantuarien{sis} Commissario apud London tricesimo die mens{is} octobris Anno d{omi}ni Mill{es}imo quingen{tes}imo

Septuagesimo sexto Iuramento Mag^{ist}ri Georgij Harrison Notarij publici Procuratoris Iohannis Leveson Executoris &c Cui comissa fuit Admiⁿⁱstracⁱo &c de bene &c ac de pleno et fideli Inuentario &c Necnon de plano et vero Computo &c Iuratⁱ

[=The same testament was proved before Master William Drury, Doctor of the Laws, Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, at London on the thirtieth day of the month of October in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred seventy-sixth by the oath of Master George Harrison, notary public, proctor of John Leveson, executor etc., to whom administration was granted etc., sworn to well etc., and [+to prepare] a full and faithful inventory etc., and also [+to render] a plain and true account etc.]