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## A Letter from Sir Philip Sidney to Christopher Plantin

**A**MONG several letters of Sir Philip Sidney not known to Albert Feuillerat when he compiled the correspondence in Volume III of Sidney's *Complete Works* (Cambridge, 1923) is one preserved in the Locker-Warburg-Grimson album now in the Harvard College Library.<sup>1</sup> Its text has not previously been published fully and accurately.<sup>2</sup> It is of particular interest because it enables us to date more precisely an undated published letter whose chronology has already been the subject of some discussion. It also provides another of the rare glimpses of Sidney as a book collector.

The letter is written on one side of a folio leaf measuring 8½ by 13 inches. If there was once a conjugate leaf or another leaf bearing the direction, it has vanished without a trace; internal

<sup>1</sup> Professor William A. Ringler, Jr. of George Washington University, notes in a letter to the present writer that another letter unknown to Feuillerat is included by Hajo Brugmans in *Correspondentie van Robert Dudley* (Werken uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap, 3rd ser., No. 56; Utrecht, 1931), I, 115—his No. 50 (17 April 1586).

<sup>2</sup> In Frederick Locker's *Rowfant Catalogue* of 1886 the letter is listed with a one-line summary of its contents; the addressee is not identified. About 1900 the album containing the letter passed into the hands of Dodd, Mead & Co. of New York, who advertised the collection for sale in an undated catalogue entitled *The Rowfant Autographs*, a copy of which is in the Harvard College Library. The anonymous cataloguer identified the addressee as Christopher Plantin and provided an extremely inaccurate transcription which omitted without sign words which the transcriber was unable to read.

evidence alone points to the person to whom the letter was probably addressed. The body of the letter is in the hand of an unknown scribe, the signature alone being autograph. An eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century hand has docketed the verso, 'Lettre de Ph: Sidney, Utrecht. 7. Avril. 1586.' The minute signature of Frederick Locker also appears on the verso, together with a printed slip describing the letter as item 75 in an unidentified French bookseller's catalogue. The text of the letter itself reads:

Monsieur, Comme le Seigneur Thomas henuts est desireux d'auoir ung Ortelius de la plus fresche et mellieure edition, le luy ay bien voulu complaire en cecy et permectre quil tire de voz mains celluy que Ianoy faict relier et apprester pour moy, enquoy ne ferez aucune difficulte reseruant pour moy l'exemplaire que led<sup>t</sup>. S<sup>r</sup>. henutz auoit achepté pour soy-mesmes dont le me passeraj Iusques a mellieure commodite, Et surce Dieu vous ayt en sa S<sup>te</sup>. et digne garde, De Vtrecht le 7 de April<sup>3</sup> 1586 stil. nouo

Vostre bien bon amij

PH. SIDNEY

Without much doubt the recipient was Christopher Plantin, the celebrated printer and publisher, for the letter is obviously related to Feuillerat's No. XLIII (p. 134), addressed to Plantin, which contains an order for (among other books) 'Les mappes de Iortelius

<sup>3</sup> The month was originally written 'Ma(. . .)' and corrected by the scribe by overwriting 'April.'

en la plus nouvelle edition.' This must be identical with "celuy que Iauoy faict relier et apprester pour moy," and consequently the undated letter printed by Feuillerat must now be re-located in March or early April of 1586, five years later than its position in the published correspondence would imply.

The letter known to Feuillerat is in the Pierpont Morgan Library, to which it came eventually from an album in the Philipps Collection. It appears actually to be the close of a longer letter whose opening has been lost. Mr Curt F. Bühler of the Morgan staff made it the subject of a note<sup>4</sup> in which an ingenious analysis of the books ordered by Sidney from Plantin pointed to the summer of 1585 as the earliest likely date. Only by additional evidence such as that now supplied by the letter at Harvard could Bühler's dating be improved upon.

The 'Seigneur Thomas henuts' to whom Sidney granted the right to purchase his Ortellus was Sir Thomas Heneage, Elizabeth's special envoy to the Low Countries. His name presented obvious orthographical difficulties to the Netherlanders, who resorted to various phonetic spellings like that in the present letter. 'Hannits' and 'Henints' are other variants.<sup>5</sup> The latest atlas would of course be indispensable to him in his official position.

Heneage arrived on the scene in the Netherlands on 3 March 1586.<sup>6</sup> His

immediate mission was to put a curb on the Earl of Leicester, who had aroused Elizabeth's rage by accepting from the States General, without prior consultation, the position of absolute governor. Cooler heads had persuaded the Queen to moderate her original intention of forcing Leicester to resign, and Heneage came with considerable latitude of discretion. In fact he temporized, and it was probably his failure to act decisively either for Leicester or against him which prompted Sidney to criticize Heneage in the second of the only two references to him in the published correspondence.

In a letter to Sir Francis Walsingham written on the day of Heneage's arrival (Feuillerat's No. LXXXIV, p. 164), Sidney characterized him as 'a most carefu[l] gentleman both of the caws and of the hon[or] of my Lord as fur as his duty will pe[rmit] him.' Evidently the extent of Heneage's discretionary powers was well known, at least to Sidney; but when he had exercised them, or failed to exercise them, Sidney wrote to Burghley (18 March, No. LXXXVI, p. 165) that Heneage 'hath with as much honesty in my opinion done as much hurt as any man this twelvemonth hath done with naughtines.'

Although Sir Philip considered Heneage's course of action to be mistaken, he retained his esteem and affection for him as a man. A provision in Sidney's will reads: 'I will, that

he found in Volume III of Conyers Read's *Mr Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth* (Cambridge, 1925), where these particular dealings are discussed on p. 131 and following.

<sup>4</sup> *Review of English Studies*, XII (1936), 67-71.

<sup>5</sup> *Resolutien der Staten-Generaal van 1576 tot 1609*, ed. Nicolaas Japikse, V (Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën, XLVII; 's-Gravenhage, 1921), 256; *Correspondentie van Robert Dudley*, I, 160.

<sup>6</sup> An excellent account of English diplomacy in the Netherlands in this period is to



a Jewell, of twenty Pounds Value, be bought and presented in like Manner by [Sir Henry Goodier], to my singular good Friend, Sir Thomas Hen-

nage, in Token of my great Love unto him.' <sup>7</sup>

WILLIAM H. BOND

<sup>7</sup> Feuillerat, III, 375.

## Some Early English Playbills

THE Harvard Theatre Collection contains a few early English playbills that are both interesting and unique. In a preceding issue of this BULLETIN I reproduced one that I believe to be of the Commonwealth era.<sup>1</sup> Herewith are reproduced and discussed three more, two of them of the late seventeenth century, the third of the early eighteenth.<sup>2</sup>

The first (Plate I) is a striking poster<sup>3</sup> announcing a performance of

<sup>1</sup> William Van Lennep, 'The Earliest Known English Playbill,' HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN, I (1947), 382-385. In a recent article Mr George Speaight questions such an early dating of this playbill and implies that it belongs to the eighteenth century ('The Earliest Known English Playbill,' *Theatre Notebook*, VI, 1952, 34). Both its paper and its format are seventeenth-century, and I repeat that I know of no other seventeenth-century theatrical broadside that carries neither the royal arms at the top nor the loyal flourish below the text. Moreover, the John Harris whose booth at Bartholomew Fair was advertised in the bill was almost certainly the actor of that name who was a member of the King's Revels Company before 1642; no other John Harris connected with the stage between 1635 and 1735 has been traced.

<sup>2</sup> Still another at Harvard, advertising a performance of Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* at Drury Lane on 18 May 1703, has the distinction of being the earliest Queen Anne playbill extant and the first playbill to be printed in two colors. For a reproduction of it in red and black, see Alwin Thaler, *Shakspeare to Sheridan* (Cambridge, Mass., 1912), p. 262.

<sup>3</sup> Mounted in a special copy, extra-illustrated by the author, of the largest-paper edition of Augustin Daly's *Woffington* (Philadelphia, 1888). This copy, No. 1 of twenty-five, extended to two volumes by

Robert Howard's popular Restoration comedy, *The Committee*, 'At the New Theatre, in Little Lincolns-Inn Fields, this present Wensday the 27th of October.' As was customary in the seventeenth century, Howard's name, the cast, and the year do not appear on the bill. The cast unfortunately cannot be reconstructed, although it is likely that Cave Underhill enacted his famous part of Obadiah, but the year is readily determined as 1697. The royal arms with the letters 'WR' at the top and the loyal flourish 'Vivat Rex' at the bottom indicate that the bill belongs to the period of 1695-1702, when William III ruled alone after the death of Mary, and 1697 was the only year during that time in which October 27 fell on Wednesday.

The playbill refers to the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre as new. It was then in its third year, having opened under royal license on 30 April 1695. Somewhat damaged and obviously trimmed, the bill measures 15 5/16 by 11 7/16 inches and is similar in size and format

the insertion of over 450 illustrations, including many rare playbills and a superb series of theatrical mezzotints, was sold as lot 726 in the Daly sale in New York 20 March 1900 and was acquired by Harvard in 1952. In addition, two extra-illustrated copies of the large-paper edition of this work (also twenty-five copies) are at Harvard, one in the Theatre Collection (No. 3, in three volumes, lot 723, acquired by Robert Gould Shaw, the founder of the Collection), and the other in the Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Collection (No. 1, lot 725).

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## CORRIGENDUM

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In the article entitled 'The Harvard Collection of Hugo von Hofmannsthal,' p. 61, the year of accession of the collection of printed works of Hofmannsthal presented by Mr Gilbert H. Montague, '01, should read '1949,' and not '1947' as printed.