



# The Duchess replies to the King

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were slight decreases in 1946-47, 1947-48, and 1948-49, because of transfers of duplicates to Lamont, but 1949-50 and 1950-51 showed increases of 296 and 80 volumes respectively, plainly reflecting the buying based on the *Tutorial Bibliography* noted above. On 30 June 1951 the total for the combined Child Memorial and English Tutorial Library stood at 8,888.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Figure kindly supplied by the Office of the Director of the University Library, prior to inclusion in the Director's Report for 1950-51.

For the sake of completeness, mention should be made of one more English library, that located in Warren House and known, until the transformation of English A into a General Education course in 1951, as the English A Library. This library first appears in the Director's Report for 1926-27, where it is listed as the Freshman English Library, 42 Holyoke Street, and is credited with 1,740 volumes. The total for the Warren House Library as of 30 June 1951 was 2,661 (figure again supplied by the Office of the Director). The future of this library is at present under discussion.

The record of growth may not be spectacular, but it is clearly in keeping with the aims and function of the Library envisaged by its founders. If it has not followed exactly the pattern outlined for classroom libraries by Justin Winsor in his report to the President and Fellows in 1892, it is because changing circumstances have brought forth effective responses in other directions; Winsor's pattern has, perhaps, been fulfilled by the Lamont Library in a broader and happier way than he could have foreseen. Yet changing circumstances have not invalidated the record of service to education performed for over fifty years by the Child Memorial Library, a service as alive today as in the nineties, and, it is hoped, as appropriate to the ideals of the great scholar whose name it bears.

JAMES B. MUNN

## The Duchess Replies to the King

**I**N London at the end of February in 1729 (or 1728-9) as they would write it) the newspapers had a good story to print. In our day it would be featured; but in 1729 kings, duchesses, and especially prime ministers had to be considered tenderly, and so the story 'broke' in small fragmentary items. On the second page of the *Universal Spectator* for Saturday 8 March the first item printed under London news was the following:

His Grace the Duke of Queensberry and Dover hath resign'd his Place of Lord Vice-Admiral of Scotland, to which Office is annex'd a Salary of 1000*l.* *per annum.*

In days when 'every man has his price' not even a duke forgoes a place that nets 1000*l.* unless something is very wrong. On the fourth and last page of the journal (a weekly journal!) occur two further items. The first is tactfully impersonal:

The latter End of last Week Mr. Vice-Chamberlain Stanhope waited on a celebrated Dutchess, to forbid her Grace's appearing at Court; and it's said to be about the second Part of the *Beggar's Opera*.

Immediately following is an item couched so as to imply identification of the offending duchess:

Last Monday the Right Honourable Mr. Vice-Chamberlain Stanhope was twice to wait on her Grace the Dutchess of Queensberry, at the Duke's House in Burlington Gardens.

Now Catherine, Duchess of Queensberry, was not a person to exclude from Court lightly. She was a Hyde, and the Hydes were no fools, and her mother had been both a great beauty and a great wit. 'Kitty,' two years before she was married to the Duke, had been celebrated by Matthew Prior as 'the female Phaeton' —

beautiful and young,  
And as a colt untam'd —

who upon incessant begging had won  
the family car on a certain day:

Fondness prevail'd, mamma gave way;  
Kitty, at heart's desire,  
Obtain'd the chariot for a day  
And set the world on fire.

That was in 1718 or earlier, but in 1729 she was still inflammatory. The story of her royal offense is best told in Lord Hervey's *Memoirs*:

Among the remarkable occurrences of this winter I cannot help relating that of the Duchess of Queensberry being forbid the Court, and the occasion of it. One Gay, a poet, had written a ballad opera, which was thought to reflect a little upon the Court, and a good deal upon the Minister [Walpole]. It was called *The Beggars' Opera*, had a prodigious run, and was so extremely pretty in its kind, that even those who were most glanced at in the satire had prudence enough to disguise their resentment by chiming in with the universal applause with which it was performed. Gay, who had attached himself to Mrs. Howard and been disappointed of preferment at Court, finding this couched satire upon those to whom he imputed his disappoint-

ment succeed so well, wrote a second part to this opera [*Polly*], less pretty, but more abusive, and so little disguised, that Sir Robert Walpole resolved, rather than suffer himself to be produced for thirty nights together upon the stage in the person of a highwayman, to make use of his friend the Duke of Grafton's authority as Lord Chamberlain to put a stop to the representation of it. Accordingly this theatrical Craftsman was prohibited at every playhouse. Gay, irritated at this bar thrown in the way both of his interest and his revenge, zested the work with some supplemental invectives, and resolved to print it by subscription. The Duchess of Queensberry set herself at the head of this undertaking, and solicited every mortal that came in her way, or in whose way she could put herself, to subscribe. To a woman of her quality, proverbially beautiful, and at the top of the polite and fashionable world, people were ashamed to refuse a guinea, though they were afraid to give it. Her solicitations were so universal and so pressing, that she came even into the Queen's apartment, went round the drawing-room, and made even the King's servants contribute to the printing of a thing which the King had forbid being recited. The King, when he came into the drawing-room, seeing her Grace very busy in a corner with three or four men, asked her what she had been doing. She answered, what must be agreeable, she was sure, to anybody so humane as His Majesty, for it was an act of charity, and a charity to which she did not despair of bringing His Majesty to contribute. Enough was said for each to understand the other, and though the King did not then (as the Duchess of Queensberry reported) appear at all angry, yet this proceeding of her Grace's, when talked over in private between His Majesty and the Queen, was so resented, that Mr. Stanhope, then Vice-Chamberlain to the King, was sent in form to the Duchess of Queensberry to desire her to forbear

coming to Court. His message was verbal. Her answer, for fear of mistakes, she desired to send in writing, wrote it on the spot . . .

When her Grace had finished this paper, drawn with more spirit than accuracy, she gave it to Mr. Stanhope, who desired her to think again, asked pardon for being so impertinent as to offer her any advice, but begged she would give him leave to carry an answer less rough than that she had put into his hands. Upon this she wrote another, but so much more disrespectful, that he desired the first again and delivered it. Most people blamed the Court upon this occasion. What the Duchess of Queensberry did was certainly impertinent; but the manner of resenting it was thought impolitic.<sup>1</sup>

The fame of this written reply of the Duchess was at once national. Even from far-off Dublin Dean Swift wrote to Gay: 'You must . . . tell her Grace that she is a general toast among all honest folks here, and particularly at the Deancry, even in the face of my Whig subjects.'<sup>2</sup> As an extempore exercise in verbal flaying the reply was a neat job. Hitherto its text has been known from Lord Hervey's *Memoirs*, but since a copy, in the hand of the Duchess, has recently been added to the Gay Collection in the Harvard College Library, it is here printed from her Grace's own holograph. Unlike Lord Hervey's text it bears no date: he assigned it to 'Feb. 27, 1728-9'—which would be the Friday sennight preceding the newspaper accounts. Otherwise the text is practically, but not exactly, identical

<sup>1</sup> John, Lord Hervey, *Memoirs* (ed. Scdgwick), I, 98-100.

<sup>2</sup> Swift, *Correspondence* (ed. Ball), IV, 133.

with what he printed. She wrote 'on the spot' as follows:

The D<sup>s</sup> of Queensberry is surpris'd, & well pleas'd that y<sup>e</sup> King has given her soe agreeable a command as forbidding her y<sup>e</sup> Court, where She never came for diversion, but to bestow a great Civility on y<sup>e</sup> King & Queen. She hopes y<sup>t</sup> by soe unpresidented an order the King will see as few as he wishes at his Court; particularly such as dare to think, & speak Truth; I dare not do otherwise; & ought not, nor could have imagin'd, y<sup>t</sup> would not have been y<sup>e</sup> highest compliment I could possibly pay y<sup>e</sup> King, to endeavour to support truth & Innocence in his house; when the King & Queen had told me y<sup>t</sup> they had not read M<sup>r</sup> Gay's Play.

C. Queensberry

I have certainly done right then to stand by my own words, rather than his Grace of Grafton's, who has neither made use of Truth, Judgment, or Honour through this whole affair either for himself or Friends.

Thus the noble lady relieved her feelings in a message even more barbed than might appear; for the Hanoverian kings of England did not find their Courts either much frequented or very gay. In 1717 Alexander Pope on a visit to Hampton Court wrote to Martha Blount: 'No lone house in Wales, with a mountain and a rookery, is more contemplative than this Court; and as proof of it, I need only tell you, Mrs. Lepell walked with me three or four hours by moonlight, and we met no creature of any quality but the King, who gave audience all alone to the vice-chamberlain under the garden wall.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Pope, *Works* (ed. Elwin-Courthope), IX, 174.

The Duke and Duchess of Queensberry after 1729 spent more time at Amesbury, with their costly protégé, John Gay. Gay shot partridges; the

Duke dozed; and the Duchess presumably exercised her wit on the dairy maids.

GEORGE SHERBURN

## The Passport Note Attributed to Keats

**P**INNED to Keats's passport, recently acquired by the Harvard Keats Collection, is a small fragment of paper (Plate Ia) on which is written:

the pasport arriverd before we sarterd  
—I dont think I shall be long ill  
God bless you — farewell John Keats

This wording will be recognized as that of the 'letter' published by Harry Buxton Forman in the 1883<sup>1</sup> and later editions of Keats's works with the note: 'The scrap of paper with these few words written upon it bears no date, address, or other indication as to what point of his journey Keats had reached when he wrote it, or as to the person for whom it was destined.' 'These few words' were printed by Maurice Buxton Forman in his 1931 edition of Keats's letters<sup>2</sup> with his father's note, ending 'or for whom it was destined,' and in 1935 and 1947<sup>3</sup> with the same note expanded to include 'but it seems probable that it was for Taylor or Haslam and was written

<sup>1</sup> *The Poetical Works and Other Writings of John Keats Now First Brought Together, Including Poems and Numerous Letters Not Before Published*, ed. Harry Buxton Forman (London, 1883), IV, 104.

<sup>2</sup> *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Maurice Buxton Forman (Oxford, 1931), II, 563.

<sup>3</sup> *The Letters of John Keats*, 2nd ed. [3rd ed.], with revisions and additional letters, ed. Maurice Buxton Forman (Oxford, 1935 [1947]), p. 519.

just before leaving Gravesend,' as well as considerable further information about the departure of the ship not particularly relevant to the note.

At first glance the handwriting in the Harvard copy of the note appears very unlike Keats's well-known neat and legible calligraphy. A comparison of the note with a letter written by his companion, Joseph Severn, at the outset of the voyage reveals that the handwriting in the body of the note is actually Severn's (see Plate Ic). It might be possible that the note, written by Severn, was signed by Keats, but the authenticity of the signature itself is doubtful. The fact that this note is in Severn's hand and that the body of it is quite clearly in no way a conscious imitation of Keats's autograph aroused my curiosity about the copy in the Morgan Library from which the Formans reproduced the letter. The Morgan Library kindly supplied a photograph of their note, with permission to reproduce it. This copy also proves to be in Severn's hand, with a doubtful signature. In the printed version the pen-slips in writing have not been reproduced. The following is the Morgan Library note (Plate Ib) as written:

the paspsport arriverd before we started  
I dont think I shall be long ill.  
God bless you — farewell John Keats

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