

**A CHRONICLE OF ENGLAND
DURING THE REIGNS OF
THE TUDORS, FROM A.D.
1485 TO 1559; VOLUME I**

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A Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors, from A.D. 1485 to 1559; Volume I by
Charles Wriothesley & Windsor Herald

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CHARLES WRIOTHESLEY & WINDSOR HERALD

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DURING THE REIGNS OF THE TUDORS,

FROM A.D. 1485 TO 1569.

BY
CHARLES WRIOTHESLEY, WINDSOR HERALD.

EDITED,
FROM A MS. IN THE POSSESSION OF
LIEUT.-GENERAL LORD HENRY H. M. PERCY, K.C.B., V.C., F.R.G.S.,
BY

WILLIAM DOUGLAS HAMILTON, F.S.A.

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INTRODUCTION.

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IN its main features this History may be described as a continuation of "The Customes of London," by Richard Arnold, from which the earlier portion, *i. e.* as far as the 11th year of Henry VIII., is a mere plagiarism. After that date the Chronicle becomes original, and contains much valuable information. From internal evidence it would appear to be the work of a scholar, and to have been written contemporaneously, the events being jotted down from day to day as they occurred. The characteristic of City Chronicles is maintained throughout by the adoption of the civic year, marking the term of office of each Lord Mayor instead of the regnal year of the sovereign, thus causing an apparent confusion in the chronology. This form was probably adopted by our author as he found it already employed by Richard Arnold, whose reign of Henry VII. he made the commencement of his history, with but slight variations, for the reasons subsequently explained. It has therefore been thought advisable to retain this peculiar division of the year in the text, but in the margin the Anno Domini and regnal years have been added in their correct places, so that the reader will experience but little inconvenience from this deviation from the ordinary chronology. Whether the author of the Chronicle placed the regnal year in its present position in the text as synonymous with Lord Mayor's Day, or whether it was afterwards transferred thither from the margin by the copyist, is an open question. In the earlier editions of most City Chronicles the name of the new Lord Mayor and sheriffs for the succeeding year are inserted in a blank space in the text left for this purpose in the

month of November ; but, when such chronicles or histories became more widely known, the editor or transcriber frequently omitted the names of these civic dignitaries, and inserted in their stead the regnal year of the sovereign, thus giving a rough approximation to the chronology, for in no instance did the accession of the sovereign occur exactly on the same day of the month as Lord Mayor's Day.

It is not necessary to follow this investigation further, but the mention of it was essential as affording the first step in the evidence as to the authenticity and authorship of the Chronicle. There is no doubt then as to its being one of those numerous City Chronicles which were at this period so often kept by intelligent Londoners for their own satisfaction and the perusal of their friends and descendants, without any ulterior intention of publication. In this instance, the MS., which has been preserved amongst the family archives of the noble house of Percy, is not the original but a transcript of the time of James I. bearing no trace of the author's name, or indication of the time at which he lived. We are consequently compelled to fall back on internal evidence, and fortunately several incidental allusions made by the author to his own family connections furnish us with the desired information. The most direct and valuable of these is a passage in which he claims relationship with the great statesman of Henry the Eighth's reign, Lord Chancellor Wriothesley, afterwards, on 16th February, 1547, created Earl of Southampton: "This yeare [1540], in Aprill, my cosin Mr. Thomas Wriosley was made the Kinges Secretarie, and Mr. Sadler, of the Privie Chamber, joyned with him, and were booth made knightes also."

It is likewise very clear from the context that the writer held some official post, which brought him into contact with the Earl Marshal's and Lord Steward's departments, for he not only particularises which of the Heralds took part in certain public ceremonies, and the names and precedence of the illustrious guests who were present at the city and court banquets, but specifies the

number of dishes and even the dress of the ladies. Such information could only be acquired by one who was present to witness these proceedings. Now such opportunity was enjoyed by the members of the College of Arms, who, as we are informed by Noble,^a had a stage appropriated to their use, at the "right end" of the table, at all banquets.

We can thus have little difficulty in determining the name of the author of the Chronicle, who was also a resident of the City of London. On turning to the list of Heralds in the reign of Henry VIII. we find that Sir Thomas Wrythe or Wriothesley was Garter Principal King at Arms from 26th Jan. 1505 till 24th Nov. 1534, and that his son Charles Wriothesley was created Windsor Herald on Christmas Day 1534, by patent dated 1st Jan. following. Whilst the latter held this office, says Noble,^b he saw four sovereigns upon the English throne; these were Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, in the second year of whose reign this Chronicle terminates. He succeeded Thomas Wall as Rouge-croix pursuivant in 1524, a short time after he had been appointed Berwick pursuivant, and, as he was born in 1508, he must have been under sixteen years of age when he entered on his public career.

According to the custom of those times, our author attached himself to the person or service of Lord Chancellor Audley, whom he looked up to as his patron, of which circumstance we are informed by his reference to that statesman on several occasions as "his lord and master," and of whom the last mention occurs at page 147, where our author writes "The 30th day of Aprill, 1544, Sir Thomas Awdley, knight, Lord of Walden and Chancellor of England, my late lord and master, departed this worldly life at his place of Christes Church in London." Subsequently we meet with such expressions as "my lord great master," "my great master," and "my great master's house;" but these are to be understood as only designating the Lord Steward of the King's household,

^a Hist. College of Arms, p. 103.

^b Page 121.