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A DRAMATIST, PP. 380-411**

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MICHAEL DRAYTON AS A DRAMATIST

BY

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OF THE NORTH-EAST MANUAL TRAINING SCHOOL OF PHILADELPHIA

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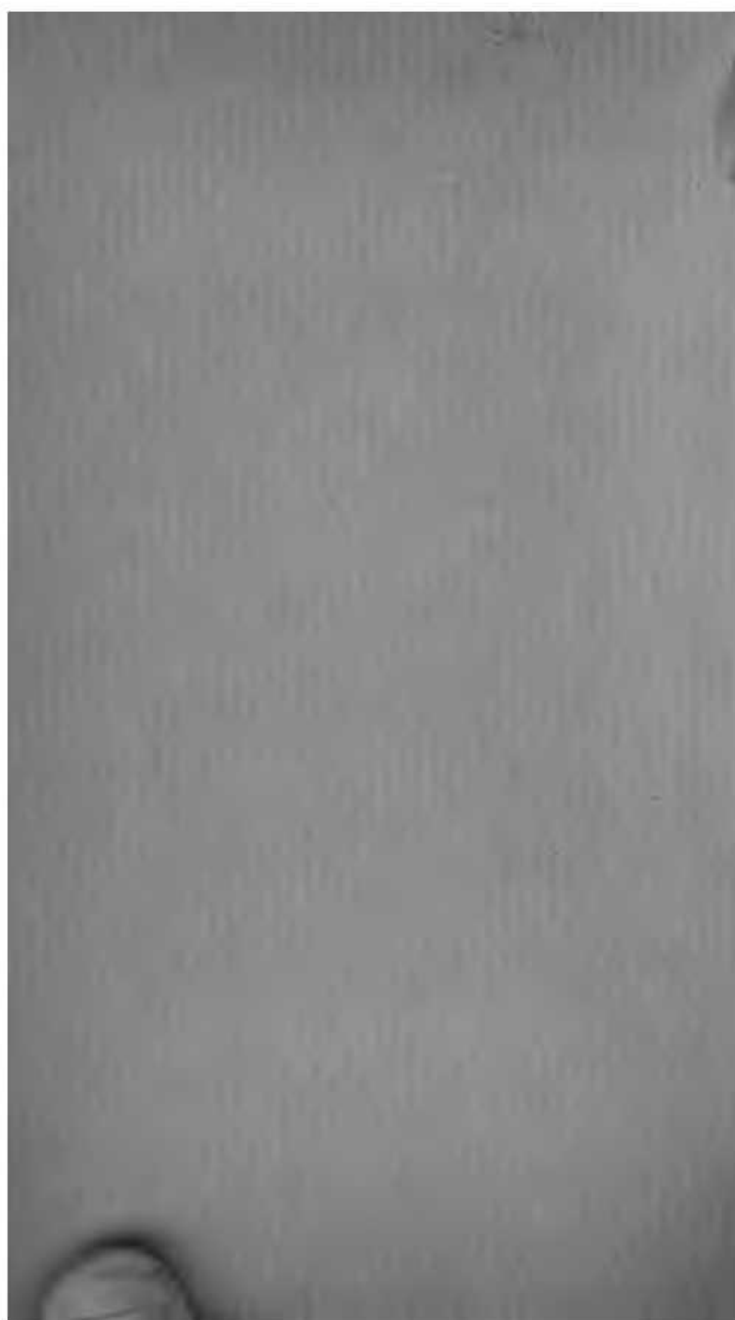
BALTIMORE

THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

1903

This monograph is part of an original study of Drayton during five years of pleasant work in the Graduate Department of the University of Pennsylvania. I am glad of this opportunity to acknowledge my debt to Professor Felix E. Schelling, whose sympathetic and stimulating helpfulness made my work possible.

L. W.



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Heywood said himself that he had "either an entire hand or at least a main finger" in two hundred and twenty plays.¹ Rowley's name is attached to fifty-five plays. Webster wrote seventeen. It becomes an interesting question as to what these plays were worth financially to their authors and collaborators.

When we touch Drayton's group, other interesting questions are suggested. What in general was the relation of author and patron in Elizabethan England? Were dramatic writers really ashamed of their work? Did men of genius or of literary repute hesitate to labor in the drama? Upon some of these topics Drayton's career may throw side-lights.

As an appendix to this article there is a table of the Henslowe group of plays. From this table we learn that Drayton was concerned in at least twenty-four pieces. These twenty-four plays cost Henslowe £133, 9s, or an average of £5, 10s per play.² There is of course an element of error. I think we may safely state that six pounds in money was the average price. The Diary states this sum to have been the contract price for *William Longsword*, *Mother Redcap*, *Henry I.*, *Mad Man's Morris*, *Hannibal and Hermes*, *Chance Medley*. The three parts of the *Civic Wars in France*, *Connan*, and *Wolsey*, each cost six pounds. And when we have a full record of other plays, their price varies not much from this sum.³

We notice also that most of this work was done by Drayton in 1598. He began late in 1597 with *Mother Redcap*. In this year we have seventeen plays. After this he seems to have given up dramatic work. During 1599 he has only three plays; in 1600, one play; in 1601, one play, and that upon a subject especially attractive to Drayton; and in 1602 he is credited with two plays, one of them upon the

¹ Heywood, Introduction to *The English Traveller*.

² Fleay, *Chronicle*, 1, p. 125. The price of *Patient Grisell* was £6.

³ Henslowe, p. xxv, has additional figures on the price of plays.

popular theme of Julius Caesar. Drayton seldom went beyond Britain for his themes.

During 1598, Drayton earned about forty pounds with his dramatic work. If we estimate the value of money as five times what it is to-day, we have the sum of one thousand dollars. The year before, Drayton had published his most popular and successful work, *England's Heroical Epistles*. This was one of the great literary successes of the day. It must have yielded him some money. Hence, at this particular period we find Drayton with many patrons, hosts of friends, a splendid literary reputation, and probably a fair income. Moreover, he must have been a very busy man. For, as we shall see farther on, he was engaged upon other literary ventures while he was working at the drama.

Drayton's own part in these twenty-four plays it is impossible to determine, since nearly all of them have perished. He is credited as the sole author of the play *Longsword* or *Longberd*. He was to receive six pounds for it. We are not positive that these two names refer to the same play. I have regarded the entries as of one play upon which five pounds were paid. The play is not extant, and Henslowe has entered no record that it was ever completed. All the other plays were in collaboration.

Drayton had eight collaborators. In 1598 he worked with Antony Munady, Thomas Dekker, Henry Chettle, and Robert Wilson, Jr. In 1599 and 1600, Richard Hathway joined in the production of *Tudor* and *Constance*. In 1601 Wentworth Smith worked with him upon *Wolsley*. And as late as 1602 we find our author writing in partnership with Webster and Middleton. His association with Munady, Dekker, and Chettle began early and lasted long. Wilson does not appear after 1599. Mr. Fleay says this was Robert Wilson, Jr., who was buried at Cripplegate, November 20, 1600. Of Wentworth Smith nothing is known outside of Henslowe's Diary, and the only play in which any of this Smith's work has come down to us is Heywood's *Royal King*

and *Loyal Subject*. Hathway also is known only from the *Diary*.

With these Henslowe plays as a starting point, some of Drayton's biographers, notably Mr. Fleay, who is followed by Mr. Elton, indulge in speculations that invite study. They assert that about 1597 Drayton lost his patrons; for four or five years, from 1599 to 1602, he produced nothing for the press; he became very poor, and perforce associated with Philip Henslowe for the sake of bread and butter. That this is a period when Drayton seems to have been in financial distress. That after 1598 he wrote for another company in addition to Henslowe's, and so we have the Fleay group of plays from his pen. That in 1602 he met Sir Walter Aston, and thereupon his prospects began to brighten and his fortunes to mend. Then he quit play-writing, because it was to him a degradation. And because of this antipathy he never published any of his dramatic work. Let me quote at length from Mr. Fleay:—

"In 1597 we reach a distinct epoch in Drayton's career. He was at this time driven by necessity and the failure of his patron's promises to write for the theatre. He continued to do so for five years; and not till after the accession of James, and his meeting with a new patron in Sir W. Aston, was he able to give up this, to him, unpalatable occupation.

"It is specially to be noted that he, like Beaumont, never allowed his name to appear in print as an author for the stage. The only published play in which we positively know him to have been concerned (*Sir John Oldcastle*) bore on its title-page 'by William Shakespeare.' As no play by Monday, Wilson, or Hathway, his co-adjutors in this one, was ever attributed to Shakespeare, and as Drayton was the only one of the four ever connected with Shakespeare's company of players, it becomes a matter of great interest to investigate what connexion Drayton may have had with other plays wrongly attributed by publishers or tradition to the great dramatist. For if this attribution of the *Oldcastle* play was