

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO. THE FIRST
PART OF SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE: A
HISTORICAL DRAMA;
A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF ARTS AND LITERATURE**

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Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Literature by Michael
Drayton & John Robertson Macarthur

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MICHAEL DRAYTON & JOHN ROBERTSON MACARTHUR

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The University of Chicago
FOUNDED BY JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER

THE FIRST PART OF
SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE

A HISTORICAL DRAMA

BY

MICHAEL DRAYTON,
ANTHONY MUNDAY, RICHARD HATHWAY, AND
ROBERT WILSON

*EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION, CRITICAL TEXT,
AND NOTES*

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND LITERATURE
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO IN CAN-
DIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH)

BY

JOHN ROBERTSON MACARTHUR

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INTRODUCTION

The earliest notice of the play of Sir John Oldcastle is found in the diary of Philip Henslowe and reads as follows:

This 16 of october 99

Received by me, Thomas Downton, of phillip	
Henslow, to pay Mr Monday, Mr Drayton,	
and Mr Wilson and Hathway, for the first	li
pte of the lyfe of Sr Jhon Ouldcasstell, and in	10
earnest of the second pte, for the use of the	
company, ten pownd, I say received	

This record leaves no doubt as to the authorship of our play. The custom of joint authorship was very common, and there are records of as many as six persons collaborating upon a single piece. This custom probably owed its origin to the necessity of preparing plays for the stage with the greatest possible despatch in order to satisfy the demands of the Elizabethan theatre-going public.

The entry given above is followed almost immediately by this one:

Received of Mr Hinchloe, for Mr Munday and	
the Reste of the poets, at the playnge of Sr John	s
Oldcastell, the ferste tyme. As a gefte ¹	x

The record is undated, but occurs between entries of the first and eighth of November, 1599; hence we may assume with Collier that the initial performance of the play took place between those dates. Moreover, it seems that the drama scored an instant success, a circumstance which so pleased the manager, Henslowe, that he bestowed upon the playwrights the present herein mentioned.

There are other records in Henslowe's diary, some relating to the second part of "Sir John Oldcastle"; and some which may refer to the first part, but more probably to the second part. These we shall consider a little later, when we take up the question of the second play, which, as far as we know, has not come down to us.

¹ Henslowe's Diary, p. 158, ed. J. P. Collier, Shaksap. Soc., Vol. VII, L., 1854.

Both parts are mentioned in the following entry from the Stationers' Register under the date of the eleventh of August, 1600:

Thomas pavier Entred for his copies vnder the handes of master
VICARS and the

wardens. These iij copies

viz-

The first parte of the history of the life of

Sir JOHN

OLDCASTELL lord COBHAM.

Item the second and last parte of the history of

Sir

JOHN OLDCASTELL lord COBHAM with his martyrdom

Item ye history of the life and Deathe of Captaine

THOMAS STUCLEY, with his Mariage to ALEXANDER

CURTIS his daughter, and his valiant endinge of his

life at the battell of Alcazar.....xviij d

There were two editions of "The First Part of Sir John Old-castle" printed in 1600. These, for the sake of convenience, we shall designate A. and B.

A, presumably the first, bears the following title:

The first part | of the true & hono | rable history of the Life
of | Sir Iohn Old-castle, the good | Lord Cobham. | As it hath
bene lately acted by the Right | honorable the Earle of Not-
tingham, | Lord High Admirall of England, | his Seruants. |
Written by William Shakespeare. | London printed for
T. P. | 1600.

We have seen that the records in Henslowe's diary prevent our considering Shakspeare the author of the play, despite the fact that his name appears upon the title-page. These records are supported by later entries in the same book, and also by the internal evidence afforded by the play itself. Certain eminent German critics, including Schlegel and Tieck, have confidently claimed the play as Shakspeare's; but the reasons which they advance cannot be considered sufficient. The appearance of the name on the title-page is easy of explanation. Because of the success obtained by the great dramatist, unscrupulous publishers placed his name upon inferior works of other writers in order thereby to increase

¹ Arber, E.: A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554-1640, L., 1876, Vol. III, p. 63.