

**SHAKESPEARE AS A
GROOM OF
THE CHAMBER**

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Shakespeare as a Groom of the Chamber by Ernest Law

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ERNEST LAW

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THE CHAMBER**

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BY

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ILLUSTRATED

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PREFACE

THE pages that follow speak for themselves, and are, moreover, scarcely numerous enough, or important enough, to need much of a preface. Nevertheless, as they contain one or two references to the views of the late Dr. Furnivall on the topics discussed in them, it should, perhaps, be observed that they were written some eighteen months before his death, at a time when he was still in the full and marvellous vigour of his mind and body, and apparently likely long to continue in our midst.

No one who is interested in our old English literature, and in Shakespeare in particular, and who knows how much that great scholar did to encourage its appreciation and study, but must sincerely deplore that his labours are over. No one who came, however remotely, within the influence of his inspiring enthusiasm, but must feel his loss almost as keenly as a personal sorrow.

To the present writer it is a matter of deep regret that his own insignificant researches in a small corner of the

field of Shakespearean lore—as set forth in this little tract—can now never be submitted to him for his ever acute and generous criticism.

One other observation only may, incidentally, be made here, which is, that some of the facts recorded in these pages about James I.'s coronation and funeral processions, might serve as a hint to those who have the ordering of such ceremonies in the present day. They might serve to remind them that the social history of Tudor and Stuart times affords precedents more worthy of being followed in these things, and more in accordance with modern conditions and ideas, than those of a pompous etiquette imported into England by the early Hanoverians, and derived from the narrow aloofness of a small German court. The free cordial relations that exist in our day between the Sovereign and his people—as they existed likewise in the happier years of the Stuart, as well as during the whole Tudor, period—might surely be given expression to, in all State ceremonies of a national character—the more so that, contrary to the usual and uncontradicted assertion, there are to be found ample precedents in favour of such a course.

There can, indeed, be little doubt that were the

Coronation procession of King George V. in charge of those who organized that of King James I., it would embrace not only representatives of every phase of our national life, and every sphere of activity within the King's dominions, whether in the British Isles or across the seas, but also of every profession, business, trade, handicraft and calling in England—as did the funeral procession of our first Stuart Sovereign.

Even were it to include a few playwrights and players, it would be the flunkey of the twentieth century who would stand disgusted and dismayed, rather than the official of the Court of King James, to see marching in the King's train representatives of the twin arts practised and adorned by the genius of William Shakespeare.

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
<p>1. ENTRY IN THE "ACCOMPTE OF SIR GEO. HOWME, KNIGHT, MASTER OF THE GREAT WAREDEROBE," OF THE GRANT OF RED CLOTH TO SHAKESPEARE AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE KING'S COMPANY OF PLAYERS IN MARCH 1604. (Lord Chamberlain's Books, ix. 4 (5)</p>	8
<p><i>Reduced facsimile, photographed by permission of the Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records.</i></p>	
<p>2. THE RIVER FRONT OF OLD SOMERSET HOUSE, AS IT APPEARED IN SHAKESPEARE'S TIME</p>	18
<p><i>After the original Picture in the Dutch Gallery. Photographed by permission of the Governors of Alleyn's College of God's Gift.</i></p>	
<p>3. ENTRY IN THE ACCOUNTS OF THE "TREASURER OF THE CHAMBER" OF THE PAYMENT MADE TO HIS MAJESTY'S PLAYERS FOR WAITING AND ATTENDING ON THE CONSTABLE OF CASTILE, IN AUGUST 1604</p>	21
<p><i>Reduced facsimile, photographed by permission of the Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records.</i></p>	
<p>4. THE PRINCIPAL COURT OF OLD SOMERSET HOUSE, VERY MUCH AS IT APPEARED IN SHAKESPEARE'S TIME</p>	43
<p><i>After the Print by G. W. Moss, 1777.</i></p>	
<p>5. THE CONFERENCE OF ENGLISH AND SPANISH COMMISSIONERS ASSEMBLED AT OLD SOMERSET HOUSE IN AUGUST 1604, WHEN SHAKESPEARE WAS IN WAITING</p>	49
<p><i>From the Picture in the National Portrait Gallery, attributed to Marc Gheeraerts.</i></p>	
<p>6. THE STRAND FRONT OF OLD SOMERSET HOUSE, AS IT APPEARED IN SHAKESPEARE'S TIME</p>	54
<p><i>Photographed from the original Drawing of the Architect, John Thorpe, preserved in the Soane Museum, by permission of the Trustees and Curator.</i></p>	

SHAKESPEARE

As a Groom of the Chamber.

ALTHOUGH it has long been known—since April 1864,* in fact—that Shakespeare and his fellow members of King James's Company of Players were each given, at the charge of "the Master of the Great Wardrobe," four and a half yards of "red cloth, against his Majesties Royall Proceeding through the Citie of London," on March 15th, 1604, the inference sometimes drawn from this, that Shakespeare (whose name, by the by, spelt as here, comes first in the list) with the rest of them marched in the Royal Procession from the Tower to Whitehall, has by no means been satisfactorily established. That devoted searcher into every nook and corner, where anything could be gleaned relating to our dramatist's life—the late Mr. Halliwell-Phillips—declared without hesitation that they did; and he has been followed by the most balanced and reasonable of all the modern biographers of Shakespeare, Mr. Sidney Lee, and by many others also, including Mr. Israel Gollancz in the "Larger Temple Shakespeare."

* "The Athenæum," April 30th.