

**ON PHILP MASSINGER. A
DISSERTATION FOR THE
ACQUISITION OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY FROM
THE UNIVERSITY OF LEIPSIC**

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On Philp Massinger. A dissertation for the acquisition of the degree of doctor of philosophy from the university of leipsic by James Phelan

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JAMES PHELAN

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BY

JAMES PHELAN

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CORRECTIONS.

- Pag. 5, Note 1. The apostrophe should be at the end of l. 23, not in the beginning of l. 24.
- " 10, l. 3 from bottom. Dele and.
- " 11, l. 7 from bottom. Dele apostrophe after done.
- " 13, l. 15 from top. Dele to after to evade.
- " 19, l. 8 from top. For Martyrs read Martyr.
- " 20, l. 7 from top. Add an apostrophe after conclusions.
- " 23, l. 4 from top. For works read words.
- " 31, l. 13 from bottom. For litterary read literary.
- " 32, Note 1, l. 3 from bottom. For me read him.
- " ibid. l. 2 from bottom. Dele apostrophe after Fogo.
- " 33, l. 10 from top. For suffieiently read sufficient.
- " 35, l. 17 from top. Dele comma after grounds.
- " 38, l. 9 from bottom. For shot read spot.
- " 39, l. 14 from top. For Sydney read Sidney.
- " 48, l. 48 from bottom. Dele apostrophe after it.
- " 51, Note 1. Strike out the words with the plays.
- " 56, l. 15 from bottom. Put in an apostrophe after Acter.
- " 58, Note 1. Dele as after Literature.
- " 61, l. 11 from bottom. Dele comma after unnaturalness.
- " ibid. l. 6 from bottom. Add an apostrophe after mentions.
- " 62, l. 11 from top. Put in an apostrophe after century.

PHILIP MASSINGER.

I. Life of Philip Massinger.

Philip Massinger, one of the greatest English dramatic poets, was born in the year 1584, in or near Salisbury and Gifford¹⁾ conjectures, at Wilton, the country-seat of Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. His father's name was Arthur, his mother's Ann.²⁾ The family was originally from Gloucester.³⁾ According to Massinger's own testimony⁴⁾, his father was a servant to the Herbert family, in the service of whose honourable house he 'spent many years happily'. In the first edition of *'The Bondman'* the name of his father is given as Arthur Massinger; through ignorance, or most probably carelessness, the name is printed in the second edition, which appeared fourteen years later, about the time of Massinger's death, Philip. This change caused much confusion until the time of Oldys⁵⁾, who first pointed out that the real name was Arthur. Gifford⁶⁾ of course chastises the previous editors of Massinger for their carelessness in not having noticed the discrepancy. Considering that of the large amount of evidence which proves the name to have been Arthur, Gifford knew but

¹⁾ *The Plays of Philip Massinger, with notes critical and explanatory*, by William Gifford Esq. 4 vols. London 1805: vol. I. Introduction p. III.

²⁾ We learn the name of his mother who was buried in Gloucester, from an inscription in the cathedral church, given in *'A new History of Gloucestershire*, by Samuel Rudden, Cirencester 1779. p. 173'.

³⁾ For an accurate history of the Massinger family, see *'Genealogy of the Massinger family*, by Geo. W. Messinger', published in Boston.

⁴⁾ Dedication of *'The Bondman'* and *'A new Way to pay Old Debts'*.

⁵⁾ MS. notes to Langbaine, in British Museum.

⁶⁾ Introduction p. I. note.

the first edition of *'The Bondman'*, the punishment seems undeservedly severe, coming from him.

The exact position which Arthur Massinger held under the Herberts, has not been accurately ascertained. It can be placed beyond doubt, that it was not only not menial, but one highly honourable. The writers on the poet all agree as regards this point, but give scarcely sufficient reason for their belief. There is a great amount of evidence, which they have neglected. It is well to be clear on this point as it throws much light on several points of Massinger's life, and settles at least one very disputed question. The dispute turns to a great extent upon the meaning of the word 'servant'.¹⁾

We have four different authorities and several facts, as regards the rank of Philip Massinger by birth, that is, the position of his father in the service of the Pembroke family, which prove that this service could not have been menial. Langbaine²⁾ says 'Massinger was son to Philip Massinger, a Gentleman belonging to the Earl of Montgomery'. As shown above, Philip should read Arthur. Anthony a Wood, whom Gifford³⁾ styles a drudge, speaks of Philip's father as being a servant belonging to the Pembrochian family.⁴⁾ He was matriculated at the University of Oxford as '*generosi filius*', the son of a gentleman. He himself says his father was a 'servant' to the Earl of Pembroke's family. By comparing these four statements it will be seen that Langbaine makes his assertion upon the authority of the matriculation, or at least, that the two agree. Wood rests his upon the dedication of *'The Bondman'*. That Wood's knowledge of Massinger rests almost entirely upon those works of the poet, which he himself saw,

¹⁾ Massinger speaks of his father having been 'a servant' to the Herbert family. The Earl, in one or two of his letters mentions his 'servant Massinger'.

²⁾ *An account of the English Dramatick Poets*, by Gerard Langbaine, 2 vols. Oxford 1691. vol. II. p. 352. This is a mistake of Langbaine's as to the title of 'Earl of Montgomery', as this title was first conferred on Philip Herbert, the younger son of the patron of Massinger's father. First pointed out by Davies.

³⁾ He calls him a 'tasteless but useful drudge'. Introduction p. VI.

⁴⁾ *Athenae Oxonienses*. By Anthony a Wood. Edited by Philip Bliss. 4 vols. London 1815. vol. III. p. 654.

seems clear enough, as the following facts may show. He, as many others who followed him, had seen but the second edition of *'The Bondman'*, and makes the usual mistake as regards the name of the poet's father. Furthermore he makes a most startling mistake as to the age of young Massinger on entering the University, one still more inexplicable as to the year of his entrance. He seems to rest his assertion that Massinger left without the honour of a degree, upon the statement that he devoted too little time to 'logic and philosophy'. He attributes to Massinger a work which was not his, because it had P. M. on the title-page.

We have then Wood's statement founded upon the dedication of *'The Bondman'*, which says his father was a servant to the Herbert family, and Langbaine's, which agrees with the matriculation: two different, and as it appears at first glance, two dissimilar statements. Though apparently dissimilar, they in reality coincide.

The matriculation as well as the dedication comes from Massinger, he styling himself as he matriculated, the son of a gentleman. As both come from Massinger, they must necessarily agree; hence all solutions and explanations of the two which may be offered and which do not end in the same result, are necessarily false. If either the dedication or matriculation be false, then Massinger is unreliable, which is of course absurd.

Under the old feudal system, when a nobleman trusted more to himself and his retainers to obtain what he considered his dues, than to a sheriff and his posse, the lesser knights, unable to protect themselves, placed themselves under the protection of more powerful Lords, and for this protection and other concomitant rights, the knight who had so bound himself was obliged to do military service. He lived on the most intimate terms with his senior, in the house of the latter, and was consulted on all important occasions. It was in those times considered no disgrace or dishonor to be so bound to a great Lord; the Knights were esteemed and respected, and took rank among others of the same class according with the greatness and power of their Feudal Lord. In the time of Arthur Massinger, the form and conditions of service had been, were being modified, greatly so. Yet the same ideas which

attached to the former more military service, were now becoming general in their application to the civil service, where the servant or one serving held his position at the will of the greater Lord. This latter, who only chose those agreeable to himself and of whose honourable character or birth, or both, according to circumstances, he could be certain, was also responsible for the conduct of those who received a position outside of his own household on his recommendation. The word Knight-service was then in general use. Gifford¹⁾ points out, that at that time 'servant' was synonymous with lover. A Knight was a servant of his Lord, or more properly speaking, a servant to his Lord, that is, in the service of his Lord. Such was the position of Arthur Massinger. There are besides this several manuscripts and letters extant which show how high the father of our poet stood in the favour of the Earl of Pembroke. 'Mr. Massinger' is recommended by the Earl of Pembroke, in a letter dated March 28th 1587²⁾ to the Lord Treasurer or to Queen Elisabeth, for the 'Reversion of Examiner's Office' in the 'Court of the Marches of Wales'. In a letter³⁾ dated August 11th 1590, written by the Earl to Lord Burghley concerning a suspected conspiracy in the Marches of Wales, the Earl acknowledges the receipt of the declaration of one Philip Hall, and then continues, 'I was also made acquainted by this said Hall with a matter concerning the said Herbert, and with many other things (the particulars whereof I refer to my servant Massinger's report).' At the end of the MS. a part has been torn away. He says something however about his servant's report, and desires his Lordship to credit him, that is Arthur Massinger. Again in a letter⁴⁾ written as the above at Wilton, and dated 11th September of the same year, the Earl says 'I have none but my servant Massinger to attend your Lordship (Lord Burghley) for those causes concerning the councillors in the Marches etc.' This is also a confidential communication.

¹⁾ In a note to '*The Unnatural Combat*'. vol. I. p. 185.

²⁾ *Calendar of State Papers*. London 1581—90. *Domestic Series*. London 1865. p. 398.

³⁾ Lansdowne Collection of MSS. in the British Museum. 1590, fol. 63, No. 74.

⁴⁾ Fol. 63, No. 77 of the same Collection of MSS.

Arthur Massinger was called upon in 1591 by the Lords of Her Majesty's Privy Council at the Star Chamber, to answer a petition which had been presented against the Earl of Pembroke.¹⁾

In another letter²⁾ written September 3rd 1597, Lord Pembroke writes to Lord Burghley: 'My servant Massinger has delivered your most kind letters and acquainted me in reference to the intended marriage between my eldest son and the Lady Bridget'.

In the *Sidney Letters*, first quoted by Oldys,³⁾ 'our Mr. Massinger' is spoken of, as having been sent by the Earl of Pembroke to Queen Elisabeth to request her permission for

¹⁾ Lansdowne Collection of MSS. fol. 67, 8. On the back of two petitions, or copies of petitions has been written: 'The copies of the petition exhibited by Sir Henry Barkley to the Lords of the Privy Council against the Earl of Pembroke, and the answer of Arthur Massinger servant to the said Earl, on his Lord and Master's behalf'. The petition is titled, '*The Humble petition of Sir Henry Barkley*', in which the Knight begs that the Earl of Pembroke should not be allowed to remove him from command of a regiment of men in the County of Somerset and sets forth the reasons wherefore not. Endorsed: 'The Earl of Pembroke's servant Mr. Massinger is ordered to answer on his behalf to the Lords of the Council with all expedition. At Star Chamber the 7th of May 1591. A. Ashley.'

Then follows 'The answer of Arthur Massinger servant to the Earl of Pembroke, on his Lord and Master's behalf, to a petition exhibited by Sir Henry Barkley Knight, which petition the said Arthur Massinger by order from the Lords of Her Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council was commanded to answer.' And then the answer, which is written in such a manner as shows Arthur Massinger was a man of education, which is necessarily presupposed by the fact that he was selected to answer the petition. The framers of the Catalogue to the Lansdowne Collection make a mistake as regards Arthur Massinger's position. They say on p. 125 of Catalogue, No. 67. 8. 'Sir Henry Barkleys petition with an answer of Arthur Massinger Deputy Lieutenant 'The compiler has overlooked the name of Francis Hastings, who was Deputy Lieutenant, and whose notes are annexed, as is stated in the 'Answer'.

²⁾ *Calendar of State Papers. Domestic Series 1595-97*. London 1869, p. 497. There are several letters written by the Earl on this subject. Another besides the one given above, is also in the same calendar, written in August of the same year.

³⁾ MS. Notes to Langbaine, in the British Museum.