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*H. 10. 46*



THE PLAYERS AT NORWICH,

A. D. 1583.

50

CONTEMPORARY DEPOSITIONS

RESPECTING AN AFFRAY AT

NORWICH IN THE

YEAR 1583.

IN WHICH QUEEN ELIZABETH'S COMPANY OF

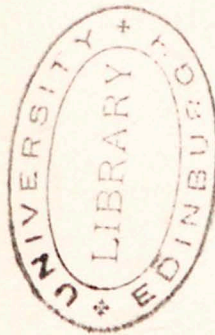
PLAYERS, THEN ACTING AT THE

RED LION INN, WERE

INVOLVED.

EDITED BY

J. O. HALLIWELL, F.R.S.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE EDITOR.

1864.



## PREFACE.

**T**HE following depositions, now for the first time printed, are of singular curiosity in illustration of the history of the early English stage. We gather from them what is so difficult at this day to recover, a fragment of the professional life of men like Tarlton, Bentley and Singer, in whom all who love stage history take a lively interest, and of whom so very little is known. Here is Bentley playing the Duke, in some drama the title of which is not recorded, in the yard of the Red Lion Inn, at Norwich, in company with Tarlton, Singer

and other actors. A person insists upon passing the gate into the yard without paying. The players' gatekeeper resists the informality; Tarlton and Bentley come to the rescue; a scuffle ensues, in which the intruder is killed; and hence arose the necessity of an inquest, at which were taken the depositions here preserved.

An additional interest attaches to these papers, owing to the very recent establishment of the Queen's Company of Players, which took place only two or three months before this occurrence. "In March, 1582-3," observes Malone, "soon after a furious attack had been made on the stage by the Puritans, twelve of the principal comedians of that time, at the earnest request of Sir Francis Walsingham, were selected from the companies then subsisting, under the licence and protection of various noblemen, and were sworn

her majesty's servants." The annual salary of each was £3 6s. 8d. "Comedians and stage-players of former time were very poor and ignorant in respect of these of this time; but being now (in 1583) growne very skilfull and exquisite actors for all matters, they were entertained into the service of divers great lords: out of which companies there were twelve of the best chosen, and, at the request of Sir Francis Walsingham, they were sworn the queenes servants, and were allowed wages and liveries as groomes of the chamber: and untill this yeare 1583, the queene had no players. Among these twelve players were two rare men, viz., Thomas Wilson, for a quicke, delicate, refined, extemporall wit, and Richard Tarleton, for a wondrous plentiful, pleasant, extemporall wit, he was the wonder of his tyme.—He lieth buried in Shoreditch church."—"He was

so beloved," adds the writer in a note, "that men use his picture for their signes." Stow's Chron., published by Howes, sub. ann. 1583, edit. 1615. The above paragraph was not written by Stowe, not being found in the last edition of his Chronicle published in his lifetime, 4to., 1605; but is an interpolation by his continuator, Edmund Howes. The Council Books of 1583 and 1584 are unfortunately missing, so that the truth of Howes' statement cannot readily be verified.



### THE PLAYERS AT NORWICH.

**M**EMORANDUM quod die Veneris proximo post crastinum Sancte Trinitatis isto eodem termino, coram domina Regina apud Westmonasterium, Robertus Sucklyng maior, &c., deliberavit hic in curia quasdam examinaciones coram eo et alijs socijs suis Justiciarijs domine Regine ad pacem, infra civitatem Norwicum captas que sequuntur in hec verba,—

Decimo-quinto die Junij, 1583, on the examynacion of Henrye Browne taken before Mr. Roberte Sucklyng, maior, &c., Thomas Sotherton and Thomas Pecke, justices, &c. This examynate sayeth that he this examynate, beinge at the play this after-

none, word was brought into the play that one of her Majesties servauntes was abused at the gate, whereupon this examynate with others went owt, and one in a blew cote cast stones at Bentley, and brooke his heade, beinge one of her Majesties servantes, whereupon this examynate sayed, "Villan, wilt thou murder the quenes man?" and the fellow called this examynate "villan" agayne, and thereupon this examynate stroke him with his sword, and hyt hym on the legg. Nowe this blowe was geyen at Bloomes back gate betwene the Red Lyon and Mr. Davyes howse.

Henrye Browne being further examyned the sevententh day of June, 1583, before Mr. Thomas Gleane, maior, Mr. Robert Sucklinge, Mr. Thomas Sotherton, Mr. Thomas Peck, Mr. Thomas Layer, Mr. Symone Bowde, and Mr. Christofer Layer, justices, &c., sayeth as followethe,—Beinge examyned how manye of the players went from of the stage on Satturdaye to stryke the man wyche was slayne, he sayeth there were but two of the players wich went, viz., Bentley and one

other in a black dublyt called Synger, and Tarleton also was going, but he was stayed by the way, and being examyned whoe dyd stryke the man wiche was killed besydes this examynate, hee sayethe the other man wyche went owte with Bentley strake the man with an armynge-sworde one blowe uppon the shoulder, and followed the fellowe wiche fled from the Whyte-Horse gate in St. Stephens unto Mr. Roberte Davyes howse.

Henrye Browne, further examyned the sayed day and yere, saeth that after that he this examynate had stricken the man, Synger dyd stricke the man, and this examynate sayed to him, "Give hym noe more," for he dowted he had ynoughe already, and wen they came frome the man agayn, Synger sayed to this examynate, "Be of good chere, for yf all this matter bee layed on the, thowe shalt have what frendshipe we can procure thee;" and he further sayeth, before he dyd strycke the man he dyd see Bentley thrust at hym twice with his naked raper; the one

thrust was about thee knee, but hee knoweth not where the other thrust was.

The examynacion of William Kylbye of Pockthorpe, worsted wever, taken the seven-tenth daye of June, 1583, before the said maior and justices. Fyrst, this examynate sayeth that on Satturnday last in the after noone, he was at a play in the yard at the Red Lyon in St. Stephens, and he dyd see three of the players ronne of the staige with there swordes in there handes, being in the scaberdes, and hard a noyse of skufflinge at the Lyon gate, whereupon this examynate went out of the gate to se what the matter was, and he dyd see a man at Mr. Robert Davyes howse leaninge agaynst a stone bledinge, wiche, as this examynate dyd then here say, was hurt in the skufflinge, wiche was at the Lyon gate, and one Edmunde Kerrie towld this examynate that two of the players dyd ronne after the man withe there wepons drawn, and Kerrie tooke one of the players in his armes, and woold have stayed hym, but

one ran at hym with his sworde, and he, feering some daunger to hymselfe, lett thother goe, and fled hymselfe. Being demaunded whether they were in there play or noe, he sayeth they had begonne the play, and one of them ran owt in his playing apparell, but he knoweth not the names of the players.

Thomas Holland of Norwiche, caryer, examyned the sayd day and yere, sayeth that on Satturdaye last in the afternoone, he, beinge without the Red Lyon gate, dyd see one of the Quenes players in his playing apparell in the gate-house stricke a man upon the heade withe the hyltes of his sworde, and brake his heade, but what his name was whose heade was broken he knoweth not, but, as he hard, he was called Mr. Wynsdon; and the sayde Wynsdon and a man in a blew cote went from the gate and stode over the way, and the people standing at the gate dyd stay the quenes servaunte, and desyred hym to be content, whereupon he, havinge his raper drawn out of the



skaberd, dyd put yt up, and sayd he had doone, and withdrawing hymselfe a lyttle frome the people, ran over the way towardes Wynsdon, and hym that had the blewe cote, and they ran away, but the player overtooke hym that had the blewe cote at the Cockey, nere Mr. Davyes howse, with his raper drawn, and thrust at hym that had the blew cote into the legg, whereat hee that had the blew cote cryed, "Oh! you have mayned me," and at the Cockey tooke up a stone and therwe at the quenes servaunt, but whether he dyd hurt hym or not he knoweth not; but then came one Browne, Sir William Pastons servaunt, and strake a blow at hym that had the blew cote with his sworde drawn, but whether he dyd hurt hym or not he knoweth not. Then agaynst Mr. Davyes corner one in a black dublet with an arminge-sword drawnen straike at hym in the blew cote uppon the shoulder, whereupon he that had the blew cote came backe agayne, and Browne sayde to the other two, "hee is sped, I war-

rant hym;" and the other two men sayed, "whatsoever thou hast doen, wee will bere the out."

Edmunde Brown of Norwich, draper, examyned the sayd day and yere, sayeth that on Satturday last he was at the play at the Redd Lyon, and while the players were in playeng, one Wynsdon would have intred in at the gate, but wold not have payed untyll he had been within, and thereupon the gate-keper and hee stryvynge, Tarleton came out of the stayge, and would have thrust hym out at the gate, but in the meane tyme one Bentley, he wich played the Duke, came of the stage, and with his hiltes of his sworde he strooke Wynsdon upon the heade, and offered hym another strype, but Tarleton defended yt, whereupon Wynsdon fled out of the gate, and Bentley pursued hym; and then he in the blacke dublet wich kept the gate ran up into the stayge, and brought an armyng-sworde, and as he was goinge out at the gate, he drew the sworde, and ran out

at the gate, and this examynate went out to see the matter, and in the strete almoste at Mr. Robert Davyes howse he dyd see the man in the blacke dublett stricke twoe blowes upon the showder of the man in a blewe cote, but this examynate, searchinge the man, dyd see his cote out but not his fleshe in that place, but he sayeth that he that had the blew cote had received his deathes wounde before blacke dublet strooke hym, but whoe gave hym hys deathes wounde he knoweth not; and he sayeth the wounde whereof he supposeth the man dyeth was a thrust above his knee.

Edmunde Knee of Yelverton in the countye of Norfolk, yoman, examyned the sayde day and yere, before the sayd maior and justices, sayeth that on Satturnday last he was at the play at the Red Lyon in St. Stephens, and there was one Mr. Wynsdon who wold have come in at the gate, agaynst the will of the gate-keeper, and, in thrusting, spilt the monye out of the gate-keepers hand, as this

examynate dyd here reported, but this examynate sayeth that he dyd see the monye when yt laye upon the grounde, and was in gathering up, whereupon one Bentley, whoe played the Duke in the play, having a raper in his hand, being upon the stage, and understanding of the stryffe at the gate, went of the stage, and one Tarleton another of the players went of the stage also, and on in a black dublett and another in a tawnye cote, but Wynsdon ran out of the gate into the strete toward Mr. Robert Davyes, and Bentley pursued hym with his raper drawn, but Tarleton would have stayed Bentley; and when he was without the gate Tarleton stayed, but the man in the blacke dublytt and he in the tawnye cote ran after Bentley, but between the Lyon back gate and Mr. Davyes backe gate he dyd see a man in a blewe cote cast stones, but he dyd not see the stones hyt anye man, but he dyd see Bentlyes head bleed, and he dyd also see bothe the man in the black dublett and hym in the tawnye

cote stricke with there naked swords, and the man in the tawnye cote dyd stricke at his legg, but whether he dyd hurte the man in the blew cote or noe he knoweth not, because this examynate stode so far of as he could not well deserne yt. Being asked what men they were in the blacke dublett and tawnye cote, hee sayeth he knoweth not his name in the blacke dublett, but he in the tawnye cote is Mr. Pastons man, whose name is Henry Browne. Alsoe this examynate dyd heare say that Browne comeng from the hurt man should saye that he had sped hym, and he wiche told hym this is Thomas Osborne of Kyrbye Bydon gent.

Elizabeth the wyff of Robert Davy of Norwiche, grosser, examyned the sayed yere and daye, sayeth that on Satturnday in the after-noone there was a man hurt and wounded at her gate, whome for pyttye sake shee tooke in to comforte hym, and there cam in a woman whoe, as yt was sayed, was fermor to the manns master, and shee called hym

George, and the sayde George sayed he would fayne speake with his master, and the woman desyred this examynate to see well to hym and his charges should be answered; and one Mr. Wynsden comen after cam in, and he denyeth hym to be his maister, but sayed he had been his servaunte aboute xv. or xvj. yeres past; and the sayed George says it was not he, but yt was his other Master; and after a whyle one of the other Wynsdons cam to hym, and he allso sayed he was not hys servaunte, but he had been with hym aboute three or iiij<sup>or</sup> dayes. Shee sayeth he had two woundes or prickes, but shee knoweth not whoe dyd hurt hym.

Margerye, the wyff of Thomas Bloome, examyned the sayed daye and yere, sayeth that on Satturnday in the after noone she founde a man in a blewe cote bleedinge at Mr. Atkyns' back gate, and shee went to hym, and stopped hys wounde with her fynger, and then sent for a surgeon, and after hee spake and called for his maister, wich was one

Wynsdon; she sayeth she asked hym whoe dyd hurt hym, and he sayd a fellowe in a red cote, and she saieth that he had two woundes or prickes, but she dyd see noe man hurt hym, but sayeth when hee sayed yt was a red cote that dyd hurt hym, she thought yt had been one of the quenes servauntes, but none of them had one there cotes at that tyme.

Nicholas Thurston examyned before the said maior and Justices; that beinge at the play on Satturnday, and seinge one of the players wich played the Duke of the staige, he followed after, and in the strete nighe the Cockey by Mr. Roberte Davyes howse this examine, standinge by Mr. Davides back gate, he dyd see the sayd player pricke at the man wich was slane, but whether he dyd hurt hym or noe he knoweth not.

Thomas Holland confesseth that one of the quenes men runninge out of there play, for that there was a quarrelling at the gate, the Quenes man drew his raper at one that stood a lyttle from the gate, wiche he perceving

run awaye, and the quenes man following hym, thrust hym into the legg, and the fellow sayed, "O! thou hast mayned mee;" but recovering hymselfe agayne, threw a stone at the quenes man, and hyt hym, and after that the quenes man run after hym, and thrust at hym, and Henry Browne following, stoke hym on the legg, and turned backe agayne, and sayed to the quenes man, "I have sped hym;" and the quenes man sayed, "Well don, boy! we will beare the out in yt;" and one other in a black dublett dyd stricke at hym before that on the backe, but he this examynate knoweth not hym that stroke hym on the backe.

Edmunde Browne confesseth that hee see one in a blacke dublett strycke the man in the blew cote on the shoulder, but the fellowe fell not downe, and this examynate sayed to hym, "you have done ill to cut the man;" and he sayed, "no, I have not cut hym."

George Jackson of Norwiche, beere-bruer, sworne and examyned the xvijth daye of

June, 1583, before Mr. Robert Davye and Mr. Lawrence Wood, coroners of the city of Norwiche, sayeth and deposeth, that on Satturnday last, being the xvth day of this instant June, he went toward the Red Lyon in St. Stephans, and he dyd se a man runninge hastylye out of the Lyon gate, and another man in a blacke dublytt dyd rune owte of the same gate after hym with a sworde or raper drawen in his hand, and running styll after the partye about the Cockey by Mr. Davyes howse, because he could not overtake the partye, he pricked his weapon out of his hand at the partye, but he dyd not hurt hym; he sayeth he knoweth neyther of the sayd partyes. After hym came one of the players in his players apperell with a players berd uppon his face, with a sworde or a raper in his hand drawen, as far as the backe gate of Thomas Bloome, and there a straunge man in a blew cote (as he remembreth) fell at wordes, and the sayde man fled frome the player, and he ran after hym and

stroke hym with his sworde, but whether he dyd hurt hym or noe he knoweth not, but thereupon he that had the blew cote, when he had got almost to the Cockey, toke up a stone, and threwe at the player, and the player dyd gyve two or three thrustes with his sword at the man, and hit hym, but whether he drew blode or noe he knoweth not, but he that had the blewe cote ran from hym untyll he came almost at Mr. Davyes corner, the player still pursuinge hym, and one Brown alsoe with his drawen sworde ran after the sayd man, and Brown strake a blowe at the legg of hym that had the sayd blew cote, and further he cannot saye.

William Drake of Norwiche, grosser, sworne and examyned the sayd day and yere, sayethe that his brother Stephane Drake, being at the play on Satturday last, dyd tell this examynate that there was a man slayne, and this examynate asked him how yt came to passe, and he sayed that a man in a white hat misused the players, and was thrust out at

the dores, and dyd owt-run the players; and the man wiche was slayne dyd quarrell with the players; and threw stones at hym, and, as he thought, the player was dazeled, for he could not stricke hym, whereupon one of Mr. Paston's servauntes sayed, "wilt thou misuse the quenes men?" and therewith ran after the man, and strake hym as he ran from hym, whereupon the people cryed out to Mr. Pastons man, saying, "Browne, houghe hym not;" then he turned his blowe to a thrust, and gave hym that thrust, and one other with his naked sworde, and this examynate sayeth that his brother sayed he never sawe man bleed so much as hee dyd after Mr. Pastons man had pricked hym; he sayeth his brother dyd not know Browne, nor whose servaunte he was, but three or fower of Mr. Pastons servauntes comynge by this examynates howse, his brother sayed that he wich kyllled the man had suche a cognoscence, and further he sayeth not.

Symon Sumpter of Norwiche, baker,

sworne and examyned the sayed day and yere, sayeth that Stephan Drake dyd tell hym all the matter in suche sorte as William Drake hath above declared.

Thomas Crowe of Horton confeseth that one in a tawny cote and a cognoscence on his sleve stroke at hym that is deade, and hit hym on the knee, and after that blud followed, and after that one of the quens men hit hym on the back, and thrust hym twyce or thryce under the syde, and thereupon the fellow cryed, "O! Lorde, I am mayned!"

Stephen Drake sayeth that one in a tawney cote thruste hym that is deade into the legg with his sworde, and that his legg bledd presentlye uppon the same thruste, and that the fellowe in the tawny cote, myndinge to stricke at hym, lyftinge up his sworde to fetcche the blowe, some cryed to hym, "Oh! houghe hym not;" and with that he drew backe his sworde, and dyd not stricke hym, but thrust hym into the legg.

These two were sworne and examyned before the coroners at the tyme of the takinge of the inquyscion uppon the vew of the dead bodye.



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*Ten selected copies only preserved.  
The rest destroyed by me, 11 Jan. 1865.  
J. O. H.*

*Number Four.*