An Ironical Letter

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One may add that Conchubar was successful with the shield, and conquered Ulster. In return for his success and the potent aid of the druidical charms, he invited Cuilleán (Gullinus) to settle in the Cuailgne district on the shores of Carlingford Lough. Setanta Beg (Cuchullain) appeared later at the court near there and gained his name Cuchullain.

In the early Middle Ages it was common to substitute Christian images for pagan ones in the old stories. Sir John Rhys has pointed out notable examples; so that this latest-noticed example conforms to the type of 'euhemerized' incidents.

I. JACKSON.

NORTHWICH.

'AN IRONICALL LETTER.'

The following letter, which does not appear to have been printed before, occurs in a commonplace-book (now in the Bodleian) kept by Stephen Powle, Clerk to the Crown at the end of Elizabeth's reign. It was written before the capture of Antwerp by Parma in August 1585, and probably belongs to the early part of that year. The letter affords ample material for the most ardent of commentators. Whimsical and ironical in spirit, its many allusions might well have puzzled a contemporary, not in Roberts's immediate circle of acquaintance.

Jack Roberts, the writer of the letter, was probably the gentleman-adventurer who sailed with Raleigh and Whetstone in Sir Humphrey Gilbert's ill-fated expedition of 1579: if so, Churchyard described him appropriately as 'A speciall sparke with present witte'. Sir Roger Williams, to whom the letter was addressed, was a well-known figure in the army of Elizabeth. A Welshman, blunt in his speech and choleric, but of exceptional bravery, the hero of many a brilliant 'service' in France and the Low Countries, he has been called the Fluellen of his day. Leicester wrote of him in 1586 as 'worth his weight in gold', but regretted his habit of walking on the parapet of the trench, in full view of the enemy, 'with a great plume of feathers in his gylt morion'. Old Morgan may have been the captain under whom Williams fought in the Low Countries in 1572, and whom one writer described as a gallant gentleman but 'unfurnished of language', and Charles Herbert may very well be the fiery person of that name whom the Privy Council

¹ *Sir Humfrey Gylberte* (Prince Society, 1903), pp. 252 and 254. T. Churchyard, *A Discourse of The Queenes Maiesties entertainment in Suffolk and Norfolk* (1578), sig. H₄ verso.

² *Leicester Correspondence* (Camden Society), p. 407.

³ Article in *D.N.B.* by R. Dunlop on 'Sir Thomas Morgan.'

bound over to keep the peace in February 1586¹. Captain William Martin absconded with his soldiers' pay early in 1585²: hence their 'wofull complaynt'. Jack Lee and Sylvanus Scory were Low Country soldiers and followers of the Earl of Leicester³, and a Captain Shute had served under Gilbert in Ireland as early as 1569⁴.

Roberts appears to have been as well-informed in the gossip of the navy as in that of the army. Drake was preparing in 1585 for an expedition against Spain, and sailed in September with Jack Hannam as the captain of a company⁵. Grenville had sailed in May of the same year to Virginia, acting as representative of his cousin Raleigh, and accompanied by Philip Amadas as Deputy to the Governor of the Colony⁶. Amyas Preston and John Winter were also well-known sailors of the day.

But the document is chiefly interesting for its references to four men of letters. Churchyard, Rich and Whetstone were all primarily soldiers, who had turned to literature in the hope of obtaining that wealth and preferment which their military prowess alone had failed to win for them. Churchyard is now remembered only for his curiously distinctive personality, and for one or two pieces of good realistic verse⁷. Barnabe Rich, also a voluminous writer, was a competent soldier, but there is no record of his training 'the youth of London in the military truth', and Roberts's statement should not perhaps be taken seriously: in any case Rich had returned to Dublin by November 1585⁸. Shakespeare has given to him and to Whetstone a reflected glory by using their translations of Italian novels in shaping the plots of *Twelfth Night* and *Measure for Measure*. The contemporary reference to John Lyly is interesting. By 1585 he had already produced three plays and was engaged on a fourth—*Endimion*⁹. His allegory, like Spenser's, had a personal and political significance, and, as is hinted below, he made full use of the rich material that presented itself on every side.

¹ *Acts of the P. C.*, 1586–87, pp. 6–7. Like Williams, Roberts was a Monmouthshire man.

² *Cal. S. P. Foreign*, 1584–85, p. 506.

³ *Cal. S. P. Spanish*, 1580–86, p. 556: *Cal. S. P. Foreign*, 1584–85, p. 547: *Acts of the P. C.*, 1586–87, pp. 62 and 138.

⁴ T. Churchyard, *A generall rehearsall of warres* (1579), sig. Q₁.

⁵ J. S. Corbett, *Drake and the Tudor Navy*, II, 13 n. Like Cob in *Every Man in his Humour* (III, 7), Hannam had not 'scap't scot-free' at the Green Lattice.

⁶ E. Edwards, *Life of Raleigh*, I, 87.

⁷ His 'A Fayned Fancye betweene the Spider and the Gowte' (*The Firste parte of Churchyardes Chippes*, 1575, sig. C₂) has the charm of detail to be found in a good Dutch picture of an interior.

⁸ *Cal. S. P. Ireland*, 1574–85, pp. 585–6.

⁹ R. W. Bond, *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, III, 11. A. Feuillerat, *John Lyly* (1910), p. 577.

Tanner MS. 169, ff. 69^v and 70.

Jack Robertes ire to S^r Roger Wiffms.

[John Winters ire to Jack Robertes¹.]

Don Rogero. J haue receaued aīre from {you} by John Winter, & openinge of it, J thought it to be some ould debt & reckoninge of Jacke Hannam for abreast of veale mutton and Onions at the greene lettice: or the wofull complaynt of Wiffim Martins souldiers for leauinge them behind him: or the last will and testament of father Lyster. M^r Groome hath obtayned of y^e state of *Venice* the last of this moneth; the mayntenance of .2. ordinary tables, and y^e releife of *Mun Felton* and v: whores. Captayne *Shoute*, [Captayne *Shewet*,] Captayne *Churchyard*, and Captayne *Scory*, haue sworne solemnely either to rayse y^e seige at *Anwerpe* or to loue good wine and a Taverne so longe as they live: Indeed Captayne *Churchyard* should haue bene withdrawne out of this Aċcon; to be secretary to *Amias Preston* in M^r *Rawleys* voyage. A Captayne who though he speake ill, yet he writes but badly. Owld *Morgan*, M^r *Herbert*, and father *Lister* are resolute: whether S^r *Francis Drake*, {and} S^r *Richard Greenefeild* goe forward in their voyage, or noe, They will drinke burnt sacke. And owld *Morgan* tould *Harbert* playnely, y^t a man is a man. And M^r *Harbert* is of opinion that owld Sacke is better then newe, & father *Lyster* maynetayneth yt. Captayne Rich hath gotten duringe life by helpe of the Recorder, that no man whatsoeuer he be, shall haue to doe wth Midsommer watch, or Mylend greene service, but him selfe. George Whetstone M^r *Skidmore* & *Guy* of *Cardife* stooode to be his liuetennantes: Whetstone was favored because he was a Poet, M^r *Skidmore* serued in fīleestreete, and Smythfeild, these .13. or .14. yeeeres vppon his owne chardges: But for all that *Guy* of *Cardife* carried yt away, because he did weare a red scarfe vppon his left arme. Jn truth M^r *Skidmore* tooke yt so vnkyndly that he fell into a Taverne, and {presently} one goblet was gone. The garrison and soldiers of *Barwick* were in a muteny for .2. causes: Because they are forbidden to weare their blue scarfes and white feathers. And the Recorder goinge to *Paris* garden vppon Sunday last commanded the drumme to sound a *Barwick* martch, and set .3. dogges vppon the greate beare. Surely afoule matter had fallen out, if the Maiars sword bearer, and the Recorders mule had not shewen greate

¹ Deletions are printed within square brackets, interlineations within curly brackets. Beneath the deleted superscription Powle has written 'An ironical letter'. The letter itself was probably transcribed by one of his clerks. It is in the English script, except for a few names (here printed in italics) in the Italian script.

valor. M^r *Thomas Somersset* hath given away all y^t he hath to y^e poore people, and is a Preist in litle *Amadas* shipp in this voyage. Captayne *Richards* hath written advertisment to y^e Counsell that Jack Lee neuer washt his face since his beinge at *Anwerpe*. And owld *Morris* dronke a Carous wth his sword by his side. Heere where J am there is no newes but that owld *Gume*¹ of the Castle ware vppon [Christmas] {Newyeers} day an owld blue sattyn doblet of the Earle of *Pembroke*. And *Nicholas Smyth* saieth that then he could haue done some [thinge] {what}: and *Charles Herbert* tells, Let men say what they will: yf he haue a fforrest bill and a Javelyn, or a sword and Buckler: a rapier and dagger haue no great oddes of him. J pray you take heed and beware of my Lord of Oxenfordes man called *Lyllie*, for if he see this tre, he will put it in print, or make y^e boyes in *Poules* play it vppon astage. John Winter comendes him vnto yo^u hartely, And J loue nobody but my best frendes. George & yo^u, when yo^u will rebell J am ready. And thus farewell from Cepons at the worldes end, where *Water Pan* was either taken for agood Musitian or Phisitian. J knowe not what day, but a iuket day, a friday, a fishe day.

F. P. WILSON.

BIRMINGHAM.

THREE NOTES ON THOMAS DEKKER.

I. *His Death.*

It has been written that 'Of Thomas Dekker we know no date, no fact, no anecdote, nothing at all, except that by his own statement in 1637 he was threescore or thereabouts'. This sweeping statement is doubly unfortunate, for not only do we know from his own writings and from other sources much of Dekker's manner of life and of the conditions under which he worked, but the one fact given as the sum-total of our knowledge is demonstrably false. It is true that in *English Villanies Seven Severall Times Prest to Death by the Printers* (1638)² there is a reference to Dekker's 'threescore yeeres', but this passage had already appeared in his *English Villanies Six Severall Times Prest to Death by the Printers*, which was printed in 1632³.

¹ Possibly *Guine*.

² The imprimatur is dated 27 February 1637, i.e. N.S. 1638.

³ This was conjectured by Fleay (*Biographical Chronicle*, i, 118) and by some later writers. It has been supposed that no copy of the 1632 edition has survived, but there is one in the Dyce Library. The 1638 edition is a reprint of the 1632 edition.