

The Prefatory Pages of Shakespeare's First Folio.  
The First Folio Dedication (note dated, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1997)



TO THE MOST NOBLE  
AND  
INCOMPARABLE PAIRE  
OF BRETHREN.

WILLIAM  
Earle of Pembroke, &c. Lord Chamberlaine to the  
*Kings most Excellent Maiesty.*

AND

PHILIP  
Earle of Montgomery, &c. Gentleman of his Maiesties  
Bed-Chamber. Both Knights of the most Noble Order  
of the Garter, and our singular good  
LORDS.

Right Honourable,

**W**Hilst we studie to be thankfull in our particular, for  
the many fauors we haue receiued from your L.L.  
we are false upon the ill fortune, to mingle  
two the most diuerse things that can bee, feare,  
and rashnesse; rashnesse in the enterprize, and  
feare of the sucresse. For, when we vallow the places your H.H.  
sustaine, we cannot but know their dignity greater, then to descend  
to the reading of these trifles: and, while we name them trifles, we haue  
depru'd our selues of the defence of our Dedication. But since your  
L.L. haue bene pleas'd to thinke these trifles some-thing, heereto-  
fore; and haue prosecuted both them, and their Authour liuing,  
with so much fauour: we hope, that (they out-liuing him, and he not  
hauing the fate, common with some, to be exequitor to his owne wri-  
tings) you will vse the like indulgence toward them, you haue done

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vnto

The Epistle Dedicatorie.

unto their parent. There is a great difference, whether any Booke choose his Patrones, or finde them: This hath done both. For, so much were your L. L. likings of the severall parts, when they were acted, as before they were published, the Volume ask'd to be yours. We haue but collected them, and done an office to the dead, to procure his Orphanes, Guardians; without ambition either of selfe-profit, or fame: onely to keepe the memory of so worthy a Friend, & Fellow aliue, as was our SHAKESPEARE, by humble offer of his playes, to your most noble patronage. Wherein, as we haue iustly obserued, no man to come neere your L. L. but with a kind of religious addressse; it hath bin the height of our care, who are the Presenters, to make the present worthy of your H. H. by the perfection. But, there we must also craue our abilities to be considerd, my Lords. We cannot go beyond our owne powers. Country hands reach forth milke, creame, fruites, or what they haue: and many Nations (we haue heard) that had not gummes & incense, obtained their requests with a leauened Cake. It vvas no fault to approch their Gods, by what meanes they could: And the most, though meanest, of things are made more precious, when they are dedicated to Temples. In that name therefore, we most humbly consecrate to your H. H. these remaines of your seruant Shakespeare; that what delight is in them, may be euer your L. L. the reputation his, & the faults ours, if any be committed, by a payre so carefull to shew their gratitude both to the liuing, and the dead, as is

Your Lordshippes most bounden,

IOHN HEMINGE.  
HENRY CONDELL.

On the dedication at the beginning of the First Folio to the Most Noble and Incomparable Pair of Brethren. That is to William and Philip, successive Earls of Pembroke whose portraits hang on either side of the fireplace in the Double Cube room at Wilton House.

Several years ago I made the observation that the printing of the first page of this dedication coincides with the plan of the Double Cube room at Wilton House, which was thought to be designed by Inigo Jones. When one reads the actual words of the dedication on both sides, which seem to carry flattery of the Earls to an almost absurd extreme, one may find other interesting hints. For instance, on page 2 just after Hemming and Condell have claimed they have no self interest in collecting and publishing Shakespeare's plays, we come to the words:

*Wherein, as we have justly observed, no man to come neere your L.L. but with a kind of religious addresse; it hath bin the height of our care, who are the Presenters, to make the present worthy of your H.H. by the perfection.*

What does it mean, 'a kind of religious addresse'; that everyone who encounters William or Philip should bow down as if genuflecting to an altar? On the face of it this is preposterous! On the other hand, taken by themselves the words, 'a kind of religious addresse', are suggestive of a church, a cathedral, an abbey, a monastery. Then we may remember that Wilton House is built on the site of a former priory or nunnery which was disbanded I think by King Henry VIII. The words then seem to be another way of saying, 'In order to reach you lordships people need to come to Wilton House, which is a kind of religious address.' Finally there is that strange passage about the kind of offerings that are made at temples by humble hands.

*But, there we must also crave our abilities to be considerd, my Lords. We cannot go beyond our owne powers. Country hands reach forth milke, creame, fruities, or what they have : and many Nations (we have heard) that had not gummes & incense, obtained their requests with a leavened Cake. It was no fault to approach their Gods, by what meanes they could: And the most, though meanest, of thins are made more precious, when they are dedicated to Temples.*

'Country hands' is to me suggestive, for in the plays Shakespeare often uses the word 'country' meaning 'count-ry' and it has to do with counting. A leavened cake is also suggestive since I have come to the conclusion that the Geometrical Figures, all planetary circles of different kinds, must surely have been inscribed upon some imperishable material - if they were inscribed at all - and would therefore have taken the form of disks or shields which would surely be stored secretly somewhere. A leavened cake I imagine would be a round cake and the word 'leavened' reminds one of the word

'leaden'. From other evidence, found recently in 'The Tempest', I have become convinced that these disks or shield are hidden below the cellars of Wilton House, in line with the chimney of the Double Cube Room. Lead, if not gold would be as damp-proof as possible. The word 'trifles' is used three times:

*For, when we valem the places your H.H. sustaine, we cannot but know their dignity greater, then to descend to the reading of these trifles: and, while we name them trifles, we have depriv'd our selves of the defence of our Dedication. But since your L.L. have beene pleas'd to thinke these trifles some-thing, heeretofore; and have prosequuted both them, and their Authour living, with so much favour: we hope, that (they out-living him, and he not having the fate, common with some, to be exequutor to his owne writings) you will use the like indulgence toward them, you have done unto their parent.*

If we look up the meanings of 'trifles' in the Oxford English Dictionary we come at last across one that seems to be a maverick: 'Trifle, a kind of pewter of moderate hardness'. Pewter is defined in the same dictionary as a mixture of tin and lead and since it is only of moderate hardness presumably 'trifle' must contain a high proportion of lead. Tin of course rusts. What about pewter? Or do Hemming and Condell just use the word, 'trifle', referring in fact to lead; and would there be any advantage in inscribing a geometrical figure on pewter rather than lead? Would greater detail be possible perhaps? Other hints in this dedication point perhaps to a link with Freemasonry. And though I am by no means convinced that Shakespeare was the founder of Freemasonry<sup>1</sup>. It seems entirely possible that he was a Freemason. Also that William and Philip were Freemasons.

Near the end of the dedication we find the words,

*And the most, though meanest, of thins are made more precious, when they are dedicated to Temples'. In that name therefore, we most humbly consecrate to your H.H. these remaines of your servant Shakespeare;...*

In what 'name? It can only be in the name 'Temple'; and in the context of Freemasonry 'temple' must mean the Temple of Jerusalem and the geometrical implications that go with that. Another strange thing is the scattering of the initials, H.H. among the more rational ones: L.L. What else could H.H. mean but Highnesses. So is this dedication addressed to King James and his family? But how extraordinary that it should start off by talking of William and Philip then as an additional

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<sup>1</sup> Sylvia is here referring to the book: 'Shakespeare Creator of Freemasonry', by Alfred Dodds.

afterthought mention the Royal family; this surely would be highly disrespectful. I Believe that L.L. and H.H. are both titles of honour referring to William and Philip but are, so to speak, titles referring to them according to the 'hat' that they are thought to wear. They are L.L. when they are being thought of as the British aristocracy and H.H. in another context and I think this must be in the context of Freemasonry. Is there such a title as 'Highness' within the Freemasonry hierarchy or some other title starting with H? This needs to be looked into. H.H. comes first in the second sentence:

*For, when we valem the places your H.H. sustaine, we cannot but know their dignity greater, then to descend to the reading of these trifles: and, while we name them trifles, we have depriv'd our selves of the defence of our Dedication.*

Can they be saying that a mere lord is surely above the reading of a good play? Surely not a mere lord, but a high-ranking Freemason. Then comes: *'to make the present worthy of your H.H. by the perfection'*; again this indicates some special quality in *'your H.H.'* Finally, *'In that name therefore, we most humbly consecrate to your H.H. these remaines of your servant Shakespeare'*. *'Humbly consecrate'* and they're talking about temples? I will look in my book, 'Shakespeare, the Creator of Freemasonry' to see if H.H. means anything.

I see that *'your H.H.'* can mean 'your Honours' – could the brothers have had the function of judges in a local court? Is a Lord Chamberlain a kind of a judge? But hardly a Gentleman of the Bedchamber, that's Philip. I must find out to whom the expression, 'Your Honour', might apply other than to a judge.