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“News from Heaven and Hell”: A Defamatory Narrative of the Earl of Leicester

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ROBERT DUDLEY, Earl of Leicester and favorite of Queen Elizabeth, was a gentleman much maligned, both during and after his lifetime. Whether he deserved such obloquy is another matter, but throughout the reign the retailing of scandalous stories about him, both verbally and in writing, was something of a national pastime. Certainly the most effective and most famous of all the defamations against him is the pamphlet known as *Leicester's Commonwealth*, which was produced in France by a group of Catholic laymen and ex-courtiers in exile who had been defeated by the Earl in factional intrigues at Court. Having appeared in print in September 1584, the tract, as it became scarce, was assiduously copied in manuscript and circulated from hand to hand – over sixty of these survive today, sufficient evidence of the book's popularity.[1] Indeed, in one way or another the *Commonwealth* is at the center of nearly all of the other extant attacks upon Leicester as well. Most of the vices and crimes attributed to him by Julius Briegerus in the anti-Protestant *Flores Calvinistici* of early 1586 are borrowed directly from the *Commonwealth*, as are Cardinal Allen's comments in his *Admonition to the Nobility* (STC 368) of 1588, and Thomas Rogers' rhyme-royal poem *Leicester's Ghost* of about 1605 is in most places merely a versification of the libel's material.[2] Further charges were added to the growing saga of Leicester in a brief essay appended to the *Commonwealth's* 1585 French translation, called *La Vie de Lecestre*, and still more in the manuscript tract of about 1585 called “The Letter of Estate” (P.R.O., State Papers 15/28/113, fols. 369-88v), which is a conscious attempt to imitate the *Commonwealth's* form and manner and to capitalize upon its notoriety. Other writers in whose works signs of the *Commonwealth's* influence reappear include Camden, Naunton, Robert Parsons, Thomas Wilson, [Thomas Nashe], the playwright John Webster, and the author of *The Yorkshire Tragedy*.

Still another of the *Commonwealth's* progeny has largely escaped notice. The Sloane collection in the British Museum contains a brief narrative in manuscript which so far as I know has been cited only once in the past,[3] but which is in some ways an extraordinarily interesting work. Written very shortly after Leicester's death in 1588, it affects to be a report of the Earl's futile attempt to enter heaven and his subsequent reception in hell. Though it lacks the title page which must surely once have been there, several phrases towards the end of the tract (“further in the same occurrents was advertised,” “the last reporte . . . brought by the post”) indicate that a

newsletter format was intended, and in calling it something like “News from Heaven and Hell,” on the analogy of Fr. Parsons’ *News from Spain and Holland*, we shall probably not be far off. The origin of this work is unknown; it has left no traces, either in public records or in subsequent literature, nor is there much to be ascertained about the author from the manuscript itself. We may infer only that he hated Leicester cordially, that he was familiar with the *Commonwealth* among other sources of gossip, that he may have served in the Netherlands, and (from its derisive allusion to the Pope) that he was probably not a Catholic. From his concern with Leicester’s abuse of patronage, we may guess on that slim evidence that he was associated in some capacity with life at court. The manuscript itself is unique, though probably copied from an earlier original, and is bound with miscellaneous items unrelated to its subject, such as recipes for a medicinal ale and a collection of astrological information concerning Saturn.

As a work of literature, “News from Heaven and Hell” is hardly a masterpiece, but it is entertaining in many places. The Earl’s examination before St. Peter is in part a device to permit rehearsing various charges against him, of interest to the student of Elizabethan politics and propaganda because they supply something of an updating of the legend surrounding Leicester from the perfervid years 1584-86. But much else in the narrative is imaginatively satirical, from the hilarious picture of the Earl’s journey sweating and panting up heaven’s causeway in his monogrammed shirt and beaver felt hat to the pornographic scurrility of the arrangements made for his discomfort in Tartaria. The tone is irreverently lighthearted throughout – despite the outrageousness of much of the wit, there is very little of the personal bitterness found in other libels against the Earl – and much of the writing is far from contemptible. Some of it can be a bit tedious, such as the familiar jests on Leicester the bear-whelp, from his crest, the bear chained to a ragged staff, and the catalogue of proposed torments in hell, but other inventions, like the punning use of the French *amie* for Amy, or the perversion of the Queen’s pet name for him to “his Robinship,” will be thought quite clever, and the author’s conception of heaven as a kind of celestial castle or prison is charmingly Elizabethan.

In the content of its defamatory attack, “News” draws most heavily on *Leicester’s Commonwealth*. The general depiction of Leicester as the lecherous, treacherous, brutal, and cunning but finally rather foolish favorite is altogether the conventional one received from the man’s enemies and, it must be said, to some extent from the man himself. Some of the more specific allegations were also part of the familiar tradition even in his own time, and might as easily have come from “common knowledge” as from any one source: among these we may include his alleged murder of his first wife, Amy Robsart (who died in 1560 probably, despite widespread rumors, by accident, by suicide, or by disease), his murder of the first Earl of Essex (who died in 1576, most probably, again despite widespread rumors, by disease), and his adultery during the Earl’s lifetime with Lettice Knollys, the Countess of Essex, whom Leicester subsequently married. But others of the specific charges were less generally current and seem to derive directly or indirectly from the *Commonwealth*, such as the alleged murder of an Italian in his own chamber and the planned marriage of his son by Lady Essex, Robert Lord Denbigh (d. July 19, 1584), to the Lady Arabella Stuart. Still others are new and are not found elsewhere and, as we should expect, these date from the post-*Commonwealth* years, around 1586-87, when Leicester was commanding the English military force and acting as governor in the United Provinces of the Netherlands. Taken together, all of these charges and the character portrait which results contribute not a little to our knowledge of Leicester’s image in his own time.

The present text is a transcription of the unique manuscript of “News from Heaven and Hell,” British Library, Sloane MS.1926, fols. 35-43v, anonymous and untitled in the original. The manuscript is in a clear secretary hand, with foreign words written in more ornate printing (here in italics). The original spelling is preserved exactly, except for the customary u/v and i/j modernization’s, but the few conventional abbreviations are silently expanded. The punctuation and capitalization, for the sake of intelligibility, have been conservatively amended to a nearer approximation of modern grammar. Obvious errors remain as they are found, but are corrected in square brackets if ambiguity might result; a few carelessly repeated words are silently dropped. Square brackets are also used to supply several words inadvertently omitted in the original and to indicate the beginning of a new page of the manuscript. The annotations, as well as glossing any words which might give pause, offer only bare information and identification wherever possible, as fuller discussion of the allegations made and persons mentioned would seem more appropriate elsewhere. All references to *Leicester’s Commonwealth* are from the 1584 edition, entitled *The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge*, STC 19399.

LEYSIN, SWITZERLAND

[“NEWS FROM HEAVEN AND HELL”]

The fowrth of September 1588 Robert Suttoun alias Dudly,[4] quandam Earle of Lescester, haveinge to his no small greife left his vaine pompe and glory in this world, adressed him selfe towards heaven, clad very thinly yet in the coloure of innocency, hopeing with shewes to delude the worlde there as he had done here and to perswade them that he came a white and not a blacke gost, for he had upon him only a fine white shirte wrought with the beare and the ragged staffe, a fine white bevor felt, a paier of white buskings, and his Stewards staffe of office in his hande,[5] knowinge that he had a longe and painfull journey to goe he apparelled him selfe accordingly. And haveing passed the lowest region of the eyer [air] and being well entred the middle, there mett him the kynge of that region called *Sarcotheos* and willed him to stay, sayinge that before he departed his countrie he was to doe him a good turne. Sur, quoth his Leysestership, I knowe you not, nether have I deserved any thing at your hands whome I never knew, haveinge deserved so little at there handes in the worlde whome I knew very well and was familiarly acquainted with all. I am, quoth he, *Sarcotheos*, prince of the eayer, whome God apointed to attend upon you as your angell one the earth, which allso I did accordingly and loved you well all the while of your abode there, because I founde in you a greate good disposition continually to performe all thinges agreable to my will during the time of my attendance one you in the flesh, by meanes whereof my troubel about you was the lesse. [fol. 35v] I thinke it reson now you are come into my kingdome to requite with sum kynde of gratitude your continual obsequiousnes unto me. What will you doe for me, quoth his Robinship, will you retorne me into the worlde againe where I lived in all joy and felicitye, littell inferyor to a kynge in atoritye and superioritye, to an emperour in my owen desiers? No, sayde *Sarcotheos*, that is above my power to performe, but I will wright you an embleame upon your forehead which will procure you greate favor at Sainte Petters hande when you cum to heaven gates, because it shall apeare that you are marked by the angel apointed to attend upon you one the earth for one that was alwayes pliable to his will and pleasur. And why, quoth his Dudleship, shall not I be suffred to enter the gates, coming as I doe with my white staffe of office in my hand? No dore in Corte hath bene shut against me heretofore, but all have opened even of there owen accorde, and shall I now be held like a page,

yea rather like a rogue, out of the gate? Yea, sayde *Sarcotheos*, were you as great a prince as Augustus Ceasor you shalbe stayde and examined at the gate. There shall nether your ragged nor your Stewardest staff stand you in any sted more then if you came with a dishstaff in your hand, for you know *mors septra ligonibus aequat*. [6] Wherefore be not obstynate, refuse not the embleame that I offer you, which you shall finde will make you better knowen to St. Peter then your stewardest staff. What embleame will you geve me? quoth his Earlship. I will, sayd *Sarcotheos*, wright upon your forehead *Amye Lettice*, where bye St. Peter shall knowe that you have bene a good husband in your lief; which I tell you is a pointe that you will be principally examined of; and loved your Lady Lettice so dearly well one earth that you are desierous to beare her name with you on your forehead into heaven. Then his Suttonshipe houled for joy at the remembrance of his dear wief left behinde him [fol. 36] and tolde *Sarcotheos* that he nowe perceaved he loved him and was his freind, seing that he would set upon his forehead the name of her whome he loved much better then ever he loved God, by meanes whereof he should be *Janus Bifrons* [7] and dwell with her in both worldes and so be justified for a singular loveing and faithfull husband both a live and dead, which was a pointe that he himself knew very neadfull for him to be justifiable in when he should come to be examined. Then *Sarcotheos* tooke a penn full of bloode and wrot upon his forehead this Everlasting Embleame, *Amye Lettice*, and then his Lordshipe gave him no smale thankes and was redy to depart. But suddenly it came in his minde to say to him that these wordes wrighten upon his forehead might happely be worne out with his longe travell and much sweating, for he was corpulent and not accustomed to travell, before his arivall at heaven gate. Whereunto *Sarcotheos* a[n]swered that of all thinges he should least neade to feare, for the embleame was wrighten with such a kinde of inke that all the water in the sea would never wash it out. Then his excelency, being *Davus non Edipus*, [8] joyfully departed and as one in whose mynde the ancyent sparkes of earthly ambition were not yet throughly quenched, and gloryed much in himselfe that God had geven him a kyngly angle to attend upon him on the earth whome he now perceaved to have bene the case of all his greatnes whilst he lived here, and the rather because he had not lost him in the world but had justified him by the embleame for a passing good husband when he should cum to heaven gates, which pointe he knew was hard yea impossible for him otherwise then by the creadit of this embleame to make prooffe of. Thus passed he the middle and the hiest region of the eayer, and then of the fier, and so came to the orb of the moone, at the very ettrance whereof is a wonderfull stepe hill, [fol. 36v] and at the tope of the hill a goodly cawsey as smoth as a dye, and at the end of the cawsey heaven gates. *Munsur Fatpanche*, [9] with much trowble haveing clambred the hill all sweating, and the soles of his buskings all worne out with climbinge, and wanting breath, and haveing ne're a page with bole of wine to refresh him nor handkerchife to wipe him nor pantables to put on his feate now at his neade, sat him downe a prety while on the cawsey to refresh him. The cawsey was rayled in on both sides, the rayles whereof were silver, the pillers intermedled of fine cristall and jasper stone, and the flower [10] underfete was graveled with such sand as the rivers of *Ganges* and *Taugus* [11] cary with there violent course into the sea. From the eand of the cawsey Robin here beater might very well beholde heaven gates, which were so adorned with all kinde of pretious stones and gave so gloryous a light that the brightnesse thereof dazelled his sight, though that he were at the least halfe a mile off, wors then ever the beames of any his bewtifull venirus [12] dames, notwithstanding though they were many that had dazeled him upon the earth. After he had rested there a while and his shirte all wet with sweat, his bever hatt on his head with greace of white becam russit, his stewardest staffe in his hande and his tottring buskines one his fete, he adressed him selfe towards the gates, wondrous at the extrem bewty thereof and immagining in

his minde what an unthinkable glory must neades be within that had so bewtifull an entrance without, and further well perseaving now how much he had bene deseaved in time past in thinkeing no place in bewtye to excell his castell of Killingworth[13] in Warwicksheare, which he had bene more carefull to bewtify in his lief then to winne this tryumphante place after his death. Neverthesse, by the helpe of *Sarcotheos* pasporte and the saftie of all sinnes that is repentance, where with [fol. 37] he held him selfe sufficiently stored, he doubted not but to spede well in ought. Nowe you shall understand that without heaven gates standeth St. Peter appointed to examine all that cum thether, and within the gate standes an angell that can here every worde without, and if St. Peter examine th[e] parte well and throughly and open the gates to lett the examine in, the angell suffreth him to passe to the second warde, but if he examine not th[r]oughly and yet open the gate to let him in, the angell suddenly clapeth it to againe and catcheth the parte that entreth in by the member wherein he hath most offended and whereof he hath not yet bene examined, and there holdeth him in that manner whell St. Peter hath examined a new the party so held. St. Peter, haveing discovered our great master Robin, Chamberlyn of Lescester, a far of, sayd to the angell, here cums a gost a far of upon the cawsey. Wery he is and not acustomed to travell it should seme, whereby I presume he hath bene sum great man upon earth. How is he apointed? quoth the angell. Thus and thus, sayd Saint Peter, deskribeing the aparell he cam in and further ading, by his tale and comely statuer he should have bene some great man upon earth. It is, sayd the angell, Robin of Lescester, Stewarde of the Quene of Englands huse. Examine him presisely, for he hath bene a great trowbeller one the earth. What, sayd St. Peter, the Earle of Lester, he that was wount to have all the realme folowe him, cometh he now all alone like a man forlorne? Have all the swarmes of parisites forsaken him and not one of them come with him? What, not his page the barron of Catlige,[14] whome I had though[t] would have folowed him even into hell, or rather have [word omitted] himselfe for him then that he should remaine there. But I perceave there is no *Theseus* nor *Hercules* liveing now upon the earth. [fol. 37v] Oth, quoth the angell, he was called away upon a sudden and no grome of his chamber nor page, no he had not the fortune to dy in any of his owne houses, whereof he had as great store and swarmes as he made knightes in Flanders,[15] no nor to have one licke at his Lady Lettcie [Lettice's] lipes before he toke his leave. Wherefore you must not marvell if he come alone, and thought [though] he had made triall of his supposed freindes assuer your selfe they would have geven him leave to be his owen guide, cumpanion, and page in this viage, for there freinship each to other is not everlasting like to hell fier. Hell fier, says St. Peter, marye, God save the childe. By this time his Robinshipe was come harde to the gate and, knowing St. Peter by his balde head, put of his greasye hatt and did him great reverence, being very desierous for his creadit to have *Sarcotheos* pasporte sene in his forehead, and at the very first metinge besought him for a cupp of drinke to colle his thrist [thirst]. What, quoth St. Peter, think you there is quaffing in heaven as there is in Flanders? Have you in your lief bene so greate a student of *Baccus* bands Itail[i]an tales and have forgotten how the Inquisitur punnished a rude fellow for makeing Christ and his apostles drinkers of wine? Or come you to aske drinke here at a Church mans hand, haveing drunken dry so many Church men on earth and cased the principallest Churchman in England to be imprisoned till he died,[16] and even in the very last atcion of your lief sought to spoile no lesse then fower bishopprickes at a clapp? Na, safte awhile, you must be examined a little better before you can have any relief here. His Earleship, abashed with these rougt wordes, for he was never thus hard charged since he pleaded for him selfe in the Guilde halle,[17] [fol. 38] nether thought he that his offices shoulde have bene thus narrowly ripped up, and considring also that he stud upon triall here, not one but all the jontes

[joints?] of his body and soule could not utter one worde but held his peace, being very desierous still that St. Peter shoulde spye the embleame wrighten upon his forehead and hoping to obtayen as much favor as *Sarcotheos* had promised. St. Peter beheld him stedfastly and much pitied him because of his goodly personage beginninge alreedy to doute of his good suckses. In the end he espied the bloody embleame wrighten upon his forehead and sayde thus unto his honor, what, come you hether with your faltes written on your face? What bludy embleam is that written upon your forehead? What *Cinas* [Cain's?] marke is it? Whoe wrott it and what is the meaninge thereof? To whome goodman Dudley, all joyntes that he had esspying it, answered, it is an embleame that the angell *Sarcotheos*, kynge of the mydle region of the eayer, who was appointed by God to attend upon my personn one the earth, gave me of good will as I passed throught his cuntry because I was allwayes obsequious to him in my lief, promising my [me] thereby to procure your favor heare at heaven gates. It is wrighten with blud because sweat should not wash it away, and the meaning of it is that I was to my wief Lettice so loveing and chast a husband and faythfull a freind one earth that I joy to beare her name one my forehead into heaven, for so signifieth the French word *Amy*. French, quoth St. Peter, nay but as you have bene a common cosennor of men with fayer words on the earth, even so are you now cosened your selfe, for *Sarcotheos* hath made no consience with a Cretion to Cretice,[18] for wee shall finde it neather Freanch of Parris nor yet of Stratforde of the Bowe I feare me but Oxfordsheare French before wee parte. And I wounder much that you have bene so longe Chanseler of Oxford and so ignorant that you understand not neather Greke of the univercity nor French of the cuntry. Why, sur? quoth his lordly worships. [fol. 38v] Mary, sayd St. Peter, I will sone tell you why, and that little to your comferte. *Sarcotheos*, whome you call an angell and who you saye was appointed to attend upon you as your angell on the earth, gave you this embleame for goodwill because of your obcequiousnes to procure you my favor here, is a prince of the midle region of the eayer where the habitation of divels are, and if [is] a prince of divels as his name plainly declareth if you could have understud it, for *Sarcotheos* signifieth the god of the flesh. Trew it is that he attended upon you one the earth, but not by Gods appointment but of his owen accorde to abuse you and to draw you into all delicasy and wantonnes of the flesh, thereby to make you to forgett God, as also he did, for who lived so carnaly as you did or who made the flesh his god so much as you in all the worlde, so that in very truth you were obsequious unto him. For under coler of attendance upon you as an angel deceytfully he drew you into all fl[e]shly lustes like a divell, that is, like himselfe. And even as he abused you in the other worlde under the coler of an angell of light, even so hath he deseaved you in this worlde by his eambleame geven you of good will, and as littel you understand the sence of the French worde *Amye* as you did the signification of the Greake worde *Sarcotheos*. For the meaninge of this eambleme is not as you suppose *Amy Lettice*, that is, that you were a trew husband and a faythfull freind to your wief Lettice, for your owen consience knowes that to be most untrew, for *Sarcotheos* hath wrighten upon your forehead the names of both your wiefs, namely of the Lady Amy your first wief and of the Lady Lettice your last wife, and he hath written them both in blude to shew that you lefte the one and got the other with murder and blude. And there is the trew meaning of this embleame and the favor that your freind *Sarcotheos* hath thereby procured for you heare. Lord Robyn, hearing this all quaking for feare, and bestinkinge the place where he stud, lett fall the staffe of office out of his hand and with much adoe haveing sum what recovered himselfe againe began to deny the charge. [fol. 39] But St. Peter stoped him and sayd plead not not guilty, for the facte is so apparent, for if you were not privy to your first wiefs death, howe chance you prosecuted not the lawe upon them that murdred her? How hapned it you performed not that duty to her with your great credit in the

realme that every meane man would have done for his wief in hanginge with all extremity the murder[er]s of his feers,[19] yea of his owen flesh? But there was all quiet, no examination, no arayment, no execution.[20] The matter was cleane dashted, and why? Becase if they that murdred her, if they had bene t[o]wched they would have t[o]wched your excelency as the most excelent murdere[r] of all the rest, they being but murderers of a woman as you of your wife. Whereunto also I add that you never loved her in all her lief, which makes the matter the more credable that you were desierous to rid her away. Now if you deny the wiked murder of your second wiefs first husband, who knoweth not that you bagged her in his lieftime and destroyed the frute of your travell by *Senior Doctors*?[21] Who is ignorant that the noble man was poisoned by them that stud in feare of him, and who was principaly afeard of him but you that had principaly offended him, and how chance you were so sounne wedded and bedded to her after his death that he was no soner layde in his grave but you were lodged in the midle of his cave, notwithstanding the infamy that you had sustained by her in his lief, had you not bene [so] besotted upon her that you neather cared for God nor man, honor, credit, nor reputation, but made him away that you might the more easily injoye her. If any of these affections had bene in you eather love or feare, the which ar able to make wisemen fooles and simple men starke mad, thinke you when they concur togeather, as in you they did at that time, being both together and not severed they be not able to cary a man headlong into hell? But what, are these all the murdres that you are to be charged with? What say you? What say you to your secret freind poisoned in your house because he should not tell tales?[22] What say you to the Italion that was with you at the Corte in secret conference at twelfe a cloke [fol. 39v] at midnight and was found murdred within tow howers after in his owen chamber?[23] What say you to your sundry murders you committed in Flanders to long to rehearse, especialy one of a pore simple marchant taken from his busines at Flushing, brought to Utrick, imprisoned, and lastly in dicta causa suddenly hanged up he wisht not why him selfe?[24] But if I should stand to rehearse [all] of your murders time would rather faile nether matter, wherefore to pase to your other sinnes, your ambition what did it not breade you? Frist [first], your great credit was founded upon betraing your dearest freind who first brought you in credit, for the which fact all England hath just case to curse you yet.[25] Then your ambition linked you with the Duke of Norfolke and imbarcked you so far into his case that you had as much a doe to winde your selfe out of his busines as you had afterward to untwist your selfe from a lady of his name and blud, I meane the lady with the supported nose.[26] What should I speke of your ambitious attempes to mach your Denbighe with the Lady Arbella, thereby after your fathers plott to make way for the crowen.[27] Your covetiousnes was unsaciabie, no Churchman but you fleased, no bishoppricke but you soght to spoile, no souldier but you robbed, none of your fellowes but you beggred, none of your tennantes but you ronged, no end of your purchaces as thought all the world had bene made for you and your base bratt. Your malise who tasted not of that was but immagined to offend you, at the least if they were within your power to hurt? How could any man live, especialy in Corte, while you lived that refused to be your vassell, yea to like of your embraces as Oliver Lewis his barbor did his?[28] And as for your hindringe of goodmens advansmentes if you did but surmise them to depend upon any other great man then upon you, the number of them is more then can be rehersed. Amonst the rest of your vertues, in matters of religion you were accounted a Promethious camelion, now a Protestant, now a Papist, and lastly a great patron of Purytanes, [fol. 40] makeing religion your coler only to flese bishops liveings and to have converted them to your owen use. Now as towching your worthy exploites in Flanders, your soweing of sedition between the peple and the States, your spoiling of the Quenes treasur, your robbing and stearving of pore

sould[i]ers, your slandering and beling of much better and worthyer men then your selfe, and lastly your placing of traytors, notwithstanding you were warned thereof, in the strong towens and fortes, which were also yealded by them by atorytye of your owen letters,[29] for the which your faultes if the Quene woulde have hard the truth you should have come not as you doe but as St. Dennis did betwixt the t[o]wen of St. Dennis and Parris.[30] I passe the rest baslye and in colers because I se you unable to answere the hundreth part that may be objected against you, wherefore to make an end, what can you say for your selfe why you should not departe hence and troble this place no more? Lorde Robin, finding howe *Sarcotheos* had abused him both in his lief and after his death and his embleame to have procured him hell instead of heaven, and not being able to withstand the least of these accusations objected against him, prodused for him selfe a plea that he had reserved for his last refuge, the which in truth was of such force that it was able to throw open heven gates if the same were liable in his mouth, namely repentance in the blud of Christ. Whereunto St. Peter replied that this plea in dede was above all exceptions if it were trowly aplied, but he doubted much thereof, because repentance beginneth with contrition of harte and end[e]th with amendment of lief, from both the which how far of you have bene, sayth hee, hereby it may easelye apeare, because you never sorowed for all these monstus sinnes, no not iij dayes this xxx yeares, but have lived in continuall delicacies, wantonnes, and pleasing of the flesh more then any man in your time, even till the very last moment of your lief. [fol. 40v] And as towching the reformmation of your manners, what shew have you geven thereof, considring you were growen more cruell, more insolent, more ambitious, and a greater tirante and oppressor of good men in the end of your age then in all your lief before? But because the examination of your repentance whether it be trew or famed appertaineth not to this place but the second warde, I must of necissity because of your stage [sic] plea open you the gate that you may passe to be examined there. And with that he threw open the gate and his Earlishipe most joyfullye pressed forowrdes to enter in, but as he was conveing his bodye in and was in hope to have passed the second warde, suddenly the angell clapped to the gate and caught his marchant Brentencer fast by the pate,[31] wherewith he cryed out as extremly as if his mother consience had bene in his arse. St. Peter then perseving his owen error, namely that his Dudlishipes other offences were so heinous and so many that he had forgotten to examine him of his lechery, wherefore he begane to examine him anew as well of his feates of armes done in his youth in his Lady Amies time and in his widowhod with divers ladies which shall be nameless because they are yet liveing and may amend, as also of his venerous atces dun in his Lady Lettice time. Not forgotten his fowllinge pece in England nor the stretght bodyed landresses in the red peticotes duringe his abode in Flanders beyond the seaes, of all the which Dudlye denyed not one pointe, hoping that St. Peter because of his balde head had bene a goodfellow in times past as well as he him selfe. But to proced, St. Peter sayde unto him, have you repented also of this your lechery as you say you have done of your other faultes? No, in very truth, say[d] Robin, [fol. 41] for it was so swete and I accustomed to it even from my youth, that I held it no sinne, and therefore could never repent me of it nether in youth nor age. Why then, sayd St. Peter, you must not thinke to make your abode here. Yet sur, it standeth not with justis to punnish one member for an other. I desier to have the member only punnished that hath only offended, and let the rest of the body remaine in heaven, and the member that hath offended go to hell to receve punnishment there. Nay, sayd St. Peter, that may not be, for the lawe here is such that no imperfit body may bide in heaven, indeade if you had come hether penitent out of the worlde though with a body imperfit, your imperfections should have bene supplied here, but if men cum hether and lose a member here for sinn, then is here no place for a dismembred bodye, nether cane any fine out of the fine

office procuer pardon for such a man, but he must depart hence and remaine else where for ever. The angell within the gate, hearing how he had disclaimed in repentance and so coulde not passe to the second warde, thurst him forthwith out of the gate, and claped it fast to. Then rounge St. Peter a little bell and forthwith cam twoe under porters who striped the great Govenor of the United Provinces as naked as my naile, St. Peter at that instant withdrawinge himselfe into heaven, and upon the top of his scorring sticke wrott in azure coler a great L, and beinge demanded by him why they wrot that there they answered to signify that he had bene a great lorde upon earth, but in trueth it was to shew that he was condemned for his lecherye, and that his lording had bene in his lief as stiffe as any steyle. Forthwith they drew him all quaking for colde, for you know he was not wount to goe naked in this worlde, to the further end of the causey where *Sarcotheos* his olde freind, who never failed him at his nead, had apointed to receive him, [fol. 41v] who at the very instant espyed his bellye claper marked with an L and, unde[r]standing the misstery better then ever his barrenship understud the art milytary, clasped his members fast in an iron brake which at each end had a cheane fastoned to it, whereof each feind toke a parte, and so betewen them hois[t]ed him from the cawsey, his privites being on a sudden made so towght to enduer the torment that all the cartes that were wount to attend his cariage one a remove daye could not have drawn the same in sunder. Thus was he dressed like a robin, and went down much faster then he cam up, *Sarcotheos* men, because he was there maisters ould acquaintance, geven [giving] his war[der] now and then an Italyon stabade by the waye as they bare him, to the end he might have sower sace to his swe[et] meates. Oth, dolfull sight for any his beawtyfull ladies and ould familyers to have beheld. But whether these divels car[i]ed him I leave to your charytable wisdomes to waye. Suer one earth you se he is not, and out of heaven you here how he is thrust, and in purgatory I am suer he is not, for the pope, the principal and first founder of purgatory, will of all men never suffer him to enter into his kingdome because undoubtedly he died not in the popes fayth, for if he had he would have geven sum landes or munye to one monnastery or other, thereby to have made satisfaction for his letchery, finding that he could not repent him selfe thereof. Wherefor of necessitye he must neades be in that other place which onlye remaines for him to be in, yea and not in *Campis Elisiis*, where worthy heathen men have lodged in tymes past, and from whence *Hercules* and *Aneas* returned backe again, but he lodged in *infimo inferno ubi nulla redemptio*. [32] Further in the same occurrents was advertised that as sone as his deseite was publish[ed] in Plutos kingdome, [fol. 42] order was forthwith geven that Caron should attend him at the ferryes of the lake of Avernna and of the flame[ing] Phlegiton and that officers should be apointed to attend upon him according to his estate. For you shall understand that the order of Plutoes Corte is that a kinge shalbe attenddead upon with 12 persones, a Duke with 10, and an Earle with 8, according to which order his attendants were apointed unto him. First, Tamworth was apointed at his desent out of the bote to welcome him with an Italyon oration, don Julio was ordeained his phisition for the body, don Adensquier made greate hast after him to be his chapline for the sole, *Herle* had his place for his herbinger, Rokco was his champion, Tarlton his ruffin, and rome was left for Toplief against he shuld come at his owen request to be his grome of his soole [stool]. Likewise there was Johnson apointed to be his chamberlaine. [33] Thus was he attended upon by Plutoes commandment and lodged in a fiery pallace provided for him by his herbinger Mr. Herle, where I warrant you [was] no lacke of fier throughly to heate him nor of stilled water of sulpher to comforte his cold stummacke if he should happen to fainte. Further, after his Suttonshipe was desended into the darke kingdome of Tartaria and lodged in the pallace above mencioned, *Pluto* held a solem[n] assembly with his black Senate to consult what entertainment [his] Lestership should have ther

amonge those fiery feindes, wherein there sentences varied much, for sum were of opinion that his harte should be pressed through with a hott iron, because it had alwayes burnd with a greedy desier to reveng, sum would that downen his throte should be powred continually an unquenshable streame of fiery sulphur and scolding lead, because in his lief he had made it a gaping gulfe of all gluttony, drunkennes, and riott. [fol. 42v] Sum devised that an aspe should continually hang upon his tong to sting it and venome it, because he had caried the poison of adders in it all his lief and therewith had stung, slandred, and backbitten many vallent men, sum that his hands and fete should be loked in a paier of stokes and manackels which should be made all fiery, of purpose because his handes had bene alwayes geven to rapine and his feete swift to shed innocent blude. Sum thout it mete that his flesh should be stung with scorpions, because in his lieftime he had pamperd it with all kyndes of delycasses and wantonnes, sum others that the fylthy birdes harpepies [Harpies] should feade upon his head because in the pride of his conseate he lifted up his head even into heaven, and ever bene fliing with the winges of vaine glory to all kinde of ambitious attempes. Sum would that his body should be hersed full of vipers, to punnish thereby his ingratitude to his best freinds, and other sum that a camelion should feade upon his brains, because he had bene full of colors, juglinges, and dissimulations in all his actions. Thus every one haveing delivered his advice, last of all spake Pluto and sayde that he culd not but very well like of all there opinions and therefore would [ad][34] *intervalla*, namely upon great feativall dayes, alter his Robinships entertainment in such sorte that by an everlasting revolution he should passe and repasse by degrees through all these severall tormentes set downen by every on of them. So for his parte he thought it most agreable to the order of Justice that a setled and an ordinary paine should be prefixed for him, and the member wherewith he had most offended and which above all other cam marked downen from heaven gates should of all the rest be most chastised, wherefore his ordinance should be a naked feind in the forme of a lady with the supported nose should bend this bere whelp in an iron cheane by the midle and that she should be so directly placed against him that the gate of hir porticke conjunctcion should be full oposit to the gase of his retoricke speculation,[35] [fol. 43] so that he could not chose but have a perfit aspect of the full pointe of her bettelbroude urchin[36] in the triumphant pride and gaping glory thereof. Now there was no doubt made but that this pleasant sight, together with the remembrance of his wounted delight, would make his teath so to water and geve him such an edge that he could not forbear, especialy haveing bene all his lief a valient cavilere in armes, to geve a charge with his lance of lust against the [ce]nter of her target of proffe, and rune his ingredience up to the hard hiltes into the unserchable botome of her gaping g[u]llfe. And if he should not be disposed there unto of his owen accorde, it was ordained that every smale t[o]wch of the cheane should drowen the member of his virillitye in the bottomeless barrell of her virginnitye, through which runeth a felde of unquenchable fier which at every gioneing to gether did so hisse his humanytye, that he was in continuall danger to lose the tope of his standord of steele and covert his feminine suppository into his consortes bage. Yea he was forced to offer dayly to his god Priapus upon a supalter of here[37] a burnd sacrifice, and his pece was so heated with continuall shouting at this fiery brech, or brich I would say,[38] that he would have geven his barony of Denbight for his phisition Doctor Julio with a cannon of thre handefules longe to have shott an ounce of copris water[39] into the conducte of his fiery pipe at pointe blanke, thereby to have delaid the great heate of the *sulphurus* flud and the extreame heate of the *aqua dabis* and *rosa soros*[40] that flamed continually in his fiery flanke, yea he would have geven his Earldome of Lecsester that he might have departed and so have lost her. [fol. 43v] Thus was his paradise turned into his purgatory, his fine furred gape into a flaminge trape, his place of pleasure into a gulfe of

vengeance, and his pricke of desier into a pillor of fier. I was purposed here to have made an end, but I must tell you first that commandement was geven that over the gate of his pallice his armes should be set, which were those that his father and mother gave. This was the last reporte of his entertainment in hell brought by the post, wherefore not loking nor yet caring to here any more newes of him hereafter, I will here make an end, committing his body and soule to the divell, his welth left behind him to all waste, his posterytye to all ignominy, and the remembrance of his name to all infamy and reproch for ever and ever. Amen.

News from Heaven and Hell, endnotes

1. A critical edition of this book and related documents is being prepared by Prof P.R. Roberts of Canterbury and myself. It will contain more detailed investigations of many matters which are opened here.
2. See the edition by Franklin B. Williams Jr., *Leicester's Ghost*, R.E.T.S. iv (Chicago, 1972).
3. By Franklin B. Williams Jr., "Leicester's Ghost," *Harvard Studies and Notes*, 18 (1935), 272.
4. Leicester's family claimed descent from the Suttons, ancient lords of Dudley Castle; this old-fashioned use of the name confirms rather than denies that claim to noble ancestry.
5. Leicester was made Lord Steward of the Queen's Household in 1584.
6. "Death makes equal both kings' scepters and farmers' hoes" ("*septra*", *sceptra*).
7. "Janus Two-faced," traditional name of the Roman god who looked in both directions; presumably Leicester would wish to be a philanderer and at the same time appear to be a faithful husband.
8. Obscure; perhaps "a cunning knave (like Terence's stock-character Davus), not a wise man (like Oedipus)," though "Davus" could as well be read "Danus."
9. I.e., Monsieur Fatpaunch.
10. I.e., floor.
11. The Ganges in India and the Tagus in Spain and Portugal; the sand is presumably gold.
12. I.e., venerous, libidinous.
13. I.e., Kenilworth Castle, granted to Dudley on June 9, 1563.
14. An obscure reference. J. A. van Dorsten kindly suggests that the allusion may be to Jan van

der Does, lord of Katwijk, a strong supporter of Leicester in the Low Countries.

15. Leicester knighted at least fifty men between 1586 and 1588 (Arthur F. Kinney, *Titled Elizabethans* [Hamden, Conn., 1973], pp. 70-80). His death occurred at Cornbury on September 4, 1588, as he was traveling towards Kenilworth and the baths at Buxton.

16. The fall of Archbishop Edmund Grindal, who remained sequestered from his duties from 1577 to his death in July 1583, was popularly (and wrongly) attributed to Leicester's revenge after Grindal's unfavorable decision in the case of Dr. Julio's bigamous marriage.

17. On January 22, 1554, when he was tried belatedly and sentenced to death for his part in his father the Duke of Northumberland's attempted coup d'état the preceding July.

18. Cretans were traditionally associated with cozeners, that is, liars and deceivers.

19. I.e., fere, spouse.

20. Actually, there is evidence that Dudley, anxious for his own reputation, pressed to ensure a full investigation by the coroner's jury, which, however, returned a verdict of accidental death. Dudley's own man on the scene, Thomas Blount, seems to have believed the lady had committed suicide. Modern opinion, following the research of Ian Aird (*English Historical Review*, 71 [1956], 69-79), seems to be inclining, perhaps too hastily, to the view that she died of the cancer which had troubled her for several years.

21. *Leicester's Commonwealth* tells of "the yong childe in her belly, which she was enforced to make away (cruelly & unnaturalie) for clearing the house against the goodmans arrivall" (p. 29).

22. Perhaps an allusion to Sir Nicholas Throgmorton, whose alleged poisoning while dining upon salads at Leicester's house in London, on February 25, 1571, is told in the *Commonwealth* (p. 32-33) and retold by Camden (Elizabeth [tr. 1630], II, 14).

23. "For we heare of one Salvatore, a straunger, long used in great mysteries of base affaires and dishonest actions, who afterward . . . sustained a hard fortune, for being late with my Lord in his studie, well neare untill midnight . . . went home to his chambre, and the next morning was found slayne in his bed" (*Commonwealth*, p. 56); this is probably Bartolome Salvariccia, a Genoese who in June 1583 sought the Spanish ambassador's protection from Leicester and Walsingham.

24. Probably a reference to the events of March and April 1586, at which time Leicester and the government of Utrecht mounted a campaign against the practice followed by merchants of many Holland and Zealand towns of trading with the enemy; the Earl's letter of April 3 from Utrecht reports several hangings there consequent upon this prohibition (John Bruce, ed., *Leicester Correspondence* [1844], p.212). "In dicta causa," in the said cause; "wisht," wist, knew.

25. It is difficult to guess who may be meant; Norfolk would have been the best choice.

26. The fall of Thomas Howard, fourth Duke of Norfolk, in 1569 and his execution in 1572 were

regularly attributed to Leicester's agency, and with some justice; he seems to have encouraged the unhappy Duke in his schemes, and then panicked, damaging the Duke further by his testimony. The lady of Howard's name is his cousin Douglass, called Lady Sheffield, who bore at least one child to Leicester and later claimed that he had married her in 1574, then tried to poison her when she refused a bribe to disclaim the marriage. The "supported nose," Prof F. B. Williams Jr. kindly suggests, is an allusion to "bungled drastic treatment for syphilis"; nothing else in the lady's history, however, confirms this aspersion. For Norfolk, see *Commonwealth*, pp.163-65; for Lady Sheffield, pp.27, 28, 35, 40.

27. "I meane of the mariage betwene yong Denbigh & the litle daughter of Lenox, wherby the father in lawe, the grandmother, & the uncle of the new designed Queene have conceyved to them selves a singular tryumphant reigne. . . . Is ther nothing of the olde plot of Duke John of Northumberland in this?" (*Commonwealth*, p.105; also p.101). These negotiations between Leicester and Arabella's grandmother, the Countess of Shrewsbury (the "uncle" is Gilbert Talbot), occurred in 1582-83 and excited the apprehension of the Queen of Scots, King James, Ambassador Mendoza, and most of the Catholic courtiers, as the girl's claim to the throne could have rivaled Queen Mary's.

28. According to Commynes, Louis XI, King of France, raised his barber Oliver to the Earldom of Dunoyes.

29. Leicester installed Sir William Stanley and Rowland Yorke in command of Deventer and the Zutphen sconce, despite the strenuous objections of John Norris, whom the Earl hated, and the States-General; in January 1587 they surrendered both positions to the Spanish (but not, presumably, by Leicester's authority).

30. That is, he would have been beheaded, as St. Denis was by the Romans in A.D. 275.

31. Obviously a phallic euphemism. *Anser Brendinus* ("Brent-goose") is a goose common to England (*OED*, citing contemporary uses), and "goose" was common slang for a whore; thus the meaning may be "his whore-merchant."

32. "The lowest hell, where nothing is set free."

33. Tamworth may be John Tamworth (d. 1569), Walsingham's brother-in-law, a member of the Queen's household. Dr. Julio (Giulio Borgarucci, d. ca.1581) was an Italian Protestant, physician first to Leicester and then to the Queen, popularly reputed to be Leicester's agent for poisoning. "Adensquier" (one or two words in the Ms) may be Adam Squire, who was one of the Puritan preachers ("learned but fantastical": Wood) in Leicestershire sheltered by Leicester's brother-in-law Huntingdon during the suppression of prophesyings in 1577, and who may have been deceased when his living was presented to another in 1588 (the prefix "don," however, seems to indicate that a foreigner is intended). William Herle (d. summer 1588), a professed agent of Lord Burghley's, had surreptitious connections with Leicester's service in his last years. "Rokco" is probably Rocco Bonetti, an Italian courier who dabbled in espionage for the Walsingham faction. Richard Tarlton (bur. Sept. 3, 1588) is the well-known comic actor. "Toplief" is probably Richard Topcliffe, the notorious rackmaster, *homo sordidissimus* as he was called, for

whom room is left because he was yet alive and lived on for many years. Johnson is unidentified-
-several of that name served with Leicester in the Low Countries.

34. An abbreviation, like a capital H set half below the line.

35. I.e., his view while retorqued, turned backwards.

36. I.e., beetle-browed urchin, another anatomical euphemism.

37. I.e., an altar(?) of hair.

38. I.e., "breach," a break in a fortified wall caused by shooting cannons, or "britch," breech, buttocks.

39. I.e., copperas water.

40. Presumably acids; neither is common in alchemical treatises.