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Edited by Fredson Bowers

Excerpt

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THE HONEST MAN'S FORTUNE

edited by

CYRUS HOY

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TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

The Honest Man's Fortune (Greg, *Bibliography*, no. 662) exists in two versions: a manuscript text of the play (MS Dyce 9), now preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the text printed in the 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher Folio. The manuscript is in the hand of the scribe Edward Knight, book-keeper of the King's Company. Its titlepage states that *The Honest Man's Fortune* was 'Plaide In the yeare 1613'. At the end of the manuscript text, in the hand of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, is the statement that 'This Play, being an olde one, and the Originall lost was reallowd by mee this 8. Febru. 1624 Att the Intreaty of Mr .'. The last word has been torn away, but in the margin a different hand has added the word 'Taylor' (i.e. Joseph Taylor, one of the leading actor-managers of the King's Company). The entry in Herbert's office-book re-states this:

For the king's company. An olde play called *The Honest Man's Fortune*, the originall being lost, was re-allowed by mee at Mr Taylor's intreaty, and on condition to give mee a booke, this 8 Februa. 1624.¹

The cast-list printed with the text of the play in the 1679 Beaumont and Fletcher Folio suggests that the original performers were members of Lady Elizabeth's Company.² The six actors named there (Nathan Field, Rob. Benfield, Emanuel Read, Joseph Taylor, Will. Eglestone, Thomas Basse) are all known to have been members of Lady Elizabeth's in 1613, and this confirms the manuscript's statement that the play was 'plaide' (presumably for the first time) in that year. Field, who had been a child actor with the Queen's Revels, had by now become leading man with Lady Elizabeth's and had begun to write plays. Two comedies of his single authorship had appeared (*A Woman is a Weathercock*, c. 1609–10, and *Amends for Ladies*, c. 1610–11). Sometime during the years c. 1612–15 he had written the *Four Plays, or Moral Representations, in One* with Fletcher, and *The Honest Man's Fortune* seems to be a product of the same period. In this case Field turned for aid not only to the more experienced Fletcher, but to a beginning dramatist, Philip Massinger. The three would continue to

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work together after all of them had moved on from Lady Elizabeth's to the King's Company. Their collaboration would produce two more extant plays (*The Knight of Malta* and *The Queen of Corinth*) and a third now lost (*The Jeweller of Amsterdam*) before it ended with Field's death c. 1619–20. The authorial division of *The Honest Man's Fortune* seems to be as follows:³

FIELD: I; II; III.i.144–206, ii; IV

FIELD AND MASSINGER: III.iii

FIELD AND FLETCHER: V.i, iv

MASSINGER: III.i.1–143

FLETCHER: V.ii, iii.

The Honest Man's Fortune, like a number of other plays in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon written originally for Lady Elizabeth's Men, passed eventually into the possession of the King's Men, and it is there that we first hear of it when the company plans to revive it in the early months of 1625. Thereafter, it is rarely heard of again. It is included in the Lord Chamberlain's list (dated 7 August 1641) of plays to be protected for the King's Company against unauthorized publication.⁴ On or around 4 September 1646, it was entered in the Stationers' Register by Humphrey Robinson and Humphrey Moseley in their list of some thirty plays that were to comprise the first Beaumont and Fletcher Folio, published in the following year.

After the Restoration, *The Honest Man's Fortune* is encountered merely as a title. It appears in a list of plays allowed to the Duke's Company under the date of 20 August 1668,⁵ but it seems to have been rarely, if ever, performed in the last four decades of the seventeenth century. It was included for publication in the second Beaumont and Fletcher Folio (1679). Gerard Langbaine, citing Heywood's *History of Women* as its source, includes it among the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher in *Momus Triumphans* (1688, p. 58), and provides a somewhat fuller note on it in *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (1691, p. 209; the importance of this text for establishing the name of the play's principal character will be discussed later in this introduction). Apart from its inclusion in the collected editions of Beaumont and Fletcher published in 1711, 1750 and 1778, *The Honest Man's Fortune* is not otherwise heard of in the eighteenth century until 1790 when Malone reports his possession of the manuscript in his

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Historical Account of the English Stage. In 1836, Alexander Dyce acquired the manuscript at the Heber sales, and his edition of the play (printed in vol. III of his *Works of Beaumont and Fletcher*, 1843) was the first to take into account its important textual variants.

The relation of what has come to be known as the Dyce Manuscript to the text of the 1647 Folio, and the choice of a copy-text, pose the principal issues that face the editor of *The Honest Man's Fortune*. The relation of the two texts is very close. It would appear that both derive from the same manuscript: the foul papers of the three authors who wrote the play. What Herbert refers to as 'the Originall' (meaning, presumably, the original licensed prompt-book) was said to be missing in 1625, and the authorial foul papers appear to have served as the copy from which Knight prepared the new one (now the Dyce Manuscript). They also appear to have served, twenty-two years later, as copy for the printed text in the 1647 Folio. The two most immediately apparent differences between the two texts – MS's omission of one scene (V.iii), and its altered version of the final scene (V.iv.246ff.) – do not call into question the basic identity of the sources from which each derives. F1 gives us the earlier, pre-1625 version of the play; MS gives us a somewhat altered version prepared (presumably) for the 1625 revival, with the unnecessary V.iii cut in the interest of shortening a long play, and the rewritten V.iv.246ff. serving to replace the indelicacy of the original ending.

In preparing a new prompt-book that would be coming under the severe gaze of Sir Henry Herbert, who would need to license it anew if the play were to be revived, Knight and the stage-adaptor (whose hand also appears from time to time in the Dyce MS) seem to have been consciously on guard against the inclusion of material that the censor might find offensive. Thus Herbert's sensitivity on the score of oaths seems to be acknowledged in MS, which regularly uses the word 'Heaven' where F1, twenty-two years later, more boldly uses the name of 'God' (and is probably following the authorial foul papers in doing so). Elsewhere in the F1 text, however, oaths are typically omitted, their omission indicated by a long dash. Since a prompt-book would need to supply words of some sort to be spoken on the stage at these points in the text, MS generally supplies an oath to fill these blanks, but MS oaths are notably mild, and are unlikely to represent the original ones; here the F1 compositors may have acted as their own censors.

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Ironic allusions to established social institutions and references to morally questionable contemporary behaviour are vigorously deleted in the Dyce MS with strokes of the pen intended to render them illegible (but modern scholars have managed to read them). Whether the pen was wielded by Herbert himself (or one of his aids), or by scribe or stage-adaptor anticipating trouble from the censor, is not always clear. In addition to these alterations in the text of the play, MS also exhibits the scribal signs (vertical bars) marking theatrical cuts made to tighten and quicken the pace of the stage action. Most of these probably originated in 1625 when the new prompt-book was being prepared. We cannot know how many of MS's vertical bars enclosing material to be omitted had a precedent in the copy from which it was derived. Whatever the source or the motive, the passages marked in one way or another for omission in the Dyce MS are as follows.

The proposed cuts in Act I are two in number: I.i.222–41 (Longavile's fanciful account of the difficulties and dangers attendant on making one's way into a crowded court-room), and I.iii.2–4 (a play on words that may have been deemed too obscure). At II.i.15–27, Longavile and Duboy's plans for setting up a male brothel is not only marked for omission with the usual vertical line, but deleted by means of a series of loops that cross out each of the twelve lines that comprise the passage (it remains, however, decipherable). Also heavily crossed out (but also still readable) is the slighting reference to a courtier at II.ii.44–6. Both these Act II cuts were evidently made out of deference to the censor.

A number of passages are marked for omission in Act III: part of Lamira and Lady Orleans' discussion of marriage at III.i.34–50; Veramour's laboured speech at III.i.80–87; Veramour's offer to sing, Lady Orleans' acceptance of the offer, and the stage-direction for a song at III.i.137–43.1 (there was apparently no provision for music in the 1625 revival). What was evidently deemed an offensive reference to a lord's arrest at III.ii.54–5 is heavily crossed out (but has proved to be decipherable). Laverdure, La-poope and Mallicorne's discussion of the prevalence and the inevitability of bribery and corruption in the Court and the City at III.iii.9–37 is curtailed. Laverdure's indelicate reference at III.iii.156–8 to ladies who mistake their horse-keepers for their husbands is to be omitted.

Act IV is the most heavily cut: nine moralizing lines of the twenty-

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two that comprise Montaigne's opening soliloquy are marked for omission at IV.i.8–16; soon some twenty-one lines of the sentimental exchange between Montaigne and Veramour that follows are marked to go, at IV.i.27–48, and more cuts are marked at IV.i.72–80, 103–7 (a rude remark about women). Charlotte's elaborate sixteen-and-a-half line speech to Montaigne in praise of patience under adversity at IV.i.168–84 loses all but its last crucial line and a half ('Will you . . . marry me . . .?'). Another rude remark about women is to be cut at IV.i.270–2. At V.ii.84–5, two lines of a speech of Mallicorne's are cut for no apparent reason. The scene of the four servants gossiping about the events of the play as they prepare to serve a banquet (V.iii) is omitted altogether from MS (as has already been noted). At V.iv.67, La-poope's reference to 'a Psalme of mercy' was evidently considered irreverent and deleted (but remains legible). A bit later, the same character's 'Pray God' has been crossed out and replaced with 'I wish' in MS at V.iv.98, and it is presumably Herbert's sensitivity on the subject of oaths that causes Laverdure's 'Troth tis wondrous hot, God blesse us from him' to be cut at V.iv.153–4. MS's more restrained ending (V.iv.246ff.) replaces F1's boisterous finale.

Many years ago, W. W. Greg drew attention to the manner in which cuts are sometimes signalled in this play by the use of repeated words that serve for cues to bridge an omitted passage.⁶ Three passages displaying repetitions of this sort have been noted in the F1 text: at I.i.222–41 (marked for omission in MS); I.i.298–316 (no indication of a cut in MS); IV.ii.84–8 (MS version of this passage, unlike MS versions of the other two, contains the repeated phrase that marks the cut, but one occurrence of it has been deleted). That there are signs for cuts in both the F1 and MS texts of the first and third of these passages contributes to the evidence that both texts were printed from the same manuscript. All three passages are discussed in the Textual Notes for this edition.

The Dyce MS provides what, on balance, is a text that is verbally superior to that of F1, but it is sophisticated, and it would be a mistake to select it as the copy-text for an old-spelling edition of the play. Though it is the earlier of the two texts, and so closer to the date of the play's original composition and performance, it is doubtful that it is the more trustworthy witness to the accidentals – the spelling and the punctuation – of the authorial foul papers that presumably served as

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copy for both it and F1. Sometimes what seem unusual spellings of particular words are found in both texts (*e.g.*, 'Sawsiges' at II.iv.136), and a distinctive manner of pointing a given passage will appear in each; these things occur frequently enough to suggest a common manuscript source for both the Dyce MS and F1; but these occurrences do not obscure the fact that the spelling and punctuation of each text is *sui generis*. The spelling and punctuation of the text of the Dyce MS is essentially that of the scribe Edward Knight, a professional who knew how to prepare a theatrical prompt-book; and the Dyce MS shows us the text of *The Honest Man's Fortune* in the process of being prepared for the stage. At II.ii.90, Knight has corrected the authorial slip that, in F1, gives the name 'Annabella' to the character elsewhere known as Lamira. MS shows plans for casting the 1625 revival: stage-directions at I.i.316, I.ii.0.1, and I.ii.96.1 contain the names of three actors (George Vernon, John Rhodes and George Rickner) who would be playing minor roles (see Historical Collation).⁷

The F1 text of the play, on the contrary, often seems maddeningly unprofessional. It is a wretched job of printing. Yet the compositors who set the 1647 Folio text of the play were probably truer to its accidentals in their blundering fashion than Knight, who was generally inclined to impose his own personal preferences in these matters. In justice to the F1 compositors, it must be said that the presumptive foul papers serving as their copy posed serious difficulties. Even the capable Knight had problems with them in 1625; by 1647 they seem to have been in an even more ruinous condition. Not only did the various authorial hands pose problems of legibility that resulted in the omission of words and phrases due to eye-skip, and the often egregious verbal blunders that reduce much of the F1 text to imbecility; the hands often seem to have been altogether illegible, at which points the compositors resort to the long dashes that occur throughout the text. These are not dashes put to any conventional use, such as punctuating an interrupted sentence (though that is sometimes the case, as at I.i.115); often the dashes indicate a suppressed oath (as has been noted); most often they are used simply as a sign of defeat: either the copy was defective at that point, or it was illegible.

Fortunately, MS can usually be depended on to supply the missing F1 readings at such points. At other times, when it is evident from the nature of MS/F1 variants that something more than manuscript

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illegibility or compositorial misreading is involved, the evidence of MS will frequently show that either the scribe or the stage-adaptor has altered it for some reason: to straighten out the grammar or the syntax of the authors, to adjust the dialogue in order to accommodate a projected cut, to modify a word or phrase that might seem to give offence. MS variants that do not correct an F1 misreading must be treated with caution. They might indeed be authorial revisions; usually they are alterations, sophistications introduced by scribe or stage-adaptor. Thus the best policy for the editor of the play is to follow Greg's classic instructions regarding the choice of copy-text for old-spelling editions: to base his edition on that one of the early texts that best preserves the spelling and punctuation of the authors, and to introduce into this, from such other contemporary texts as are available, such substantive emendations as are necessary.⁸ The copy-text for the present edition is, then, the 1647 Folio, emended at practically every line with substantive readings from MS.

The Honest Man's Fortune was printed in Section 5 of the 1647 Folio, the section assigned to Edward Griffin. It occupies sigs. 5T1 to 5X4v (the latter half of sig. 5X4v contains Fletcher's verses 'Upon an Honest Mans Fortune'). The evidence of running-titles suggests three-skeleton work for the three quires, with three verso and three recto titles appearing in an orderly sequence:

Verso: I 5T1v, 5V1v, 5V2v, 5X3v
 III 5T2v, 5T4v, 5V4v, 5X2v, 5X4v
 V 5T3v, 5V3v, 5X1v
 Recto: II 5T2, 5V2, 5X4
 IV 5T3, 5V1, 5X1, 5X3
 VI 5T4, 5V3, 5V4, 5X2

Editors of the six plays printed by Griffin that have previously appeared in these volumes have discovered all of them to have been set by three compositors (designated *A*, *B* and *C*) whose preferences in spellings and contractions have differed sufficiently to make it possible to identify the work of each.⁹ Of the three, Compositor *B* has regularly exhibited the most clearly defined spelling practices (he tends, for example, to set *Ile* or *ile* rather than *I'le* or *i'le*; *do* and *go* rather than *doe* and *goe*; *tis*, *twas*, *twill* rather than *'tis*; *'twas*, *'twill*; *Country* rather than *Country*). Compositors *A* and *C* share a number of spelling habits, however, and neither has ever displayed such a

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readily identifiable set of spelling characteristics as are available in the case of Compositor *B*, but in all six of the Griffin plays previously edited in these volumes, spelling tendencies augmented by other evidence (variant contracted forms for speech-prefixes, for example) have made it possible to differentiate the work of Compositors *A* and *C*, and to recognize the ways in which it relates to the more readily recognizable work of Compositor *B*.

In the case of *The Honest Man's Fortune*, the share of Compositor *B* is, as usual, readily apparent. He set exactly half of the F1 text (one page of each two-page forme) as follows:

Compositor B: 5T1–5T2v (I.i.o.1–I.ii.20); 5V1–5V2v (II.ii.231–III.ii.7); 5X1–5X2v (IV.i.145–V.ii.33).

The other half of the text presents a *mélange* of spellings and contracted forms common to both Compositors *A* and *C* with no discernible pattern of occurrences that would serve to separate the work of one from that of the other. It could be the work of a single compositor (and if so, Compositor *C* seems the more likely), but the possibility that Compositor *A* shared in the work ought not to be ruled out. What is clear is that work on the text of *The Honest Man's Fortune* was evenly divided between Compositor *B* on the one hand, and Compositor *A* and/or Compositor *C* on the other. The section of the text not set by Compositor *B* corresponds exactly in length to Compositor *B*'s own share.

Compositor A and/or *C*: T3–T4v (I.ii.21–II.ii.231); V3–V4v (III.ii.8–IV.i.145); X3–X4v (V.ii.34–V.iv.272).

There are at least two sufficient reasons why evidence from spellings and contractions of the sort that has previously served to differentiate the work of Compositors *A* and *C* might break down in the case of a text like *The Honest Man's Fortune*. One is bibliographic: copy was cast off for the two compositorial shares, and the exigencies of space often required a good deal of compression to fit a given stretch of text into a given folio signature. Verse is often set as prose, and the spelling of words is often clipped whenever possible. Thus spellings such as *do*, *go*, *bin*, *yong*, *wil*, *believe*, *Mistris*, which previous editors of the Griffin plays have found to be characteristic of Compositor *C*, appear in *The Honest Man's Fortune* on the same folio signature, often

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in the same folio column, with spellings that have hitherto been thought of as representative of Compositor *A* (*doe, goe, been, young, will, beleeve, Mistresse*).

The other reason why certain features of the evidence for compositor identification is obscured in this case is the nature of the copy from which the 1647 Folio text was printed. This consisted of the foul papers of at least three different authors. By the time they were used for F1 printers' copy they were some thirty-five years old. That they posed difficulties for the compositors is evident from the many confusions and misreadings in the F1 text; that they were often illegible or otherwise defective is evident from the many occasions in the F1 text when the compositors resort to the use (already noted) of long dashes to indicate gaps in the manuscript copy, or readings that they cannot decipher. But precisely because their copy was proving so difficult, they seem to have done their best to follow it, even to the suppression of their own usual habits of spelling and contraction; thus, some of the eccentric spellings and abbreviations that they produce would seem to result not only from repeated attempts to read an all but illegible hand, but also from an effort to reproduce the sundry forms that names and their abbreviations seem to have taken in what were, presumably, the manuscript papers of the various authors.

Here, as in the F1 text of *The Sea Voyage*, the efforts on the part of Griffin's compositors to read an all but illegible hand often result in a blizzard of variant spellings for the names of the play's characters. All the occurrences of the spelling *Duboyes* (sigs. T1, T1v, T2, T2v, V1, V1v, V2, X1v) are the work of Compositor *B*. In the non-*B* sections of the text, the character's name is spelled more variously: *Duboyes* (sigs. T3v, T4v), *Duboies* (sig. T4v), *Dubois* (sigs. T3v, T4v, V3, X3). Speech-prefixes for this character are always given as *Dub.* except on sig. T4v, where six occurrences of *Du.* appear. Compositor *B* normally sets the name *Longueville* (sigs. T1, T2, X1, X1v, X2), but he sometimes sets *Longeville* (sigs. T2v, V2v); and the spellings *Longaville* (sigs. T3v, V1, X1, X2) and *Longavile* (sigs. T4v, X3, X3v) appear in both the text's compositorial divisions. The name of the page-boy is correctly given as *Veramour* at various points throughout the text (sigs. V2, V3v, V4v, X1, X4), but along the way we also have *Voramor* (sig. T1), *Vercamor* (sig. T3), *Viramour* (sig. V2v) and *Viramor* (sig. V4). His speech-prefixes are normally printed