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The Henry Irving Shakespeare

VOLUME 1

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
EDITED BY HENRY IRVING
AND FRANK A. MARSHALL



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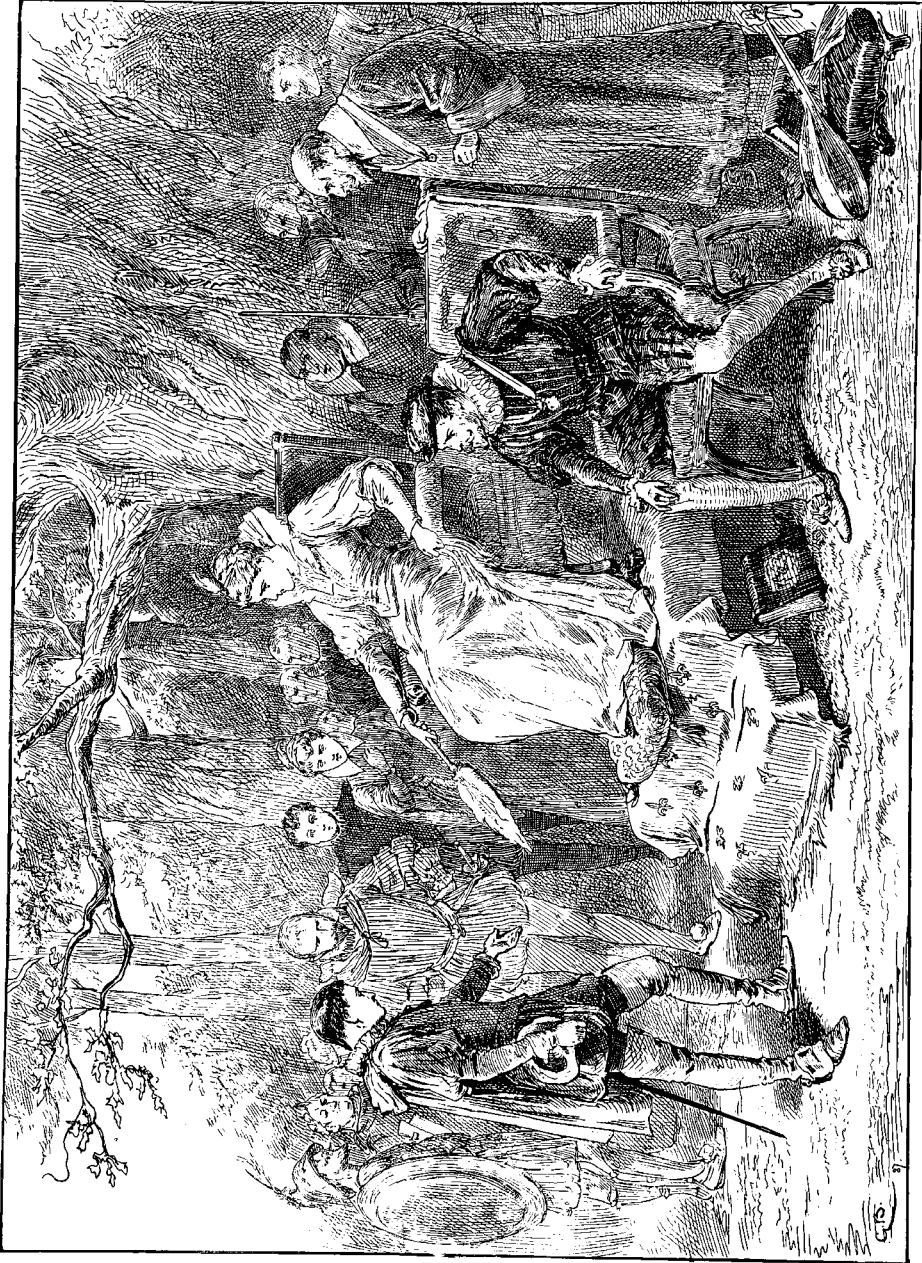
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THE WORKS
OF
SHAKESPEARE.





LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.
Act V. Scene 2. Line 72.

Mercutio. I am sorry madam, for the news I bring
Is heavy in my tongue.

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THE HENRY IRVING SHAKESPEARE.

THE WORKS
OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

EDITED BY

HENRY IRVING AND FRANK A. MARSHALL.

WITH

NOTES AND INTRODUCTIONS TO EACH PLAY BY F. A. MARSHALL
AND OTHER SHAKESPEARIAN SCHOLARS,

AND

NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS BY GORDON BROWNE.

—
VOLUME I.
—



LONDON;
BLACKIE & SON, 49 & 50 OLD BAILEY, E.C.;
GLASGOW, EDINBURGH, & DUBLIN.
1888.

P R E F A C E.

Although the General Introduction must be left till the completion of the Work, it is necessary to say a few words here with regard to the various distinctive features of this edition, for the invention of which I am chiefly responsible. The guiding principle, which has been kept in view throughout, is the treatment of Shakespeare's work as that of a dramatist, whose plays were intended not to be read as poetical exercises, but to be represented by living men and women before a general audience. Mr. Irving having, in his Introduction, treated Shakespeare as a playwright, that is to say a practical writer of plays, it is not necessary for me to say any more on this point. I would simply point out that, in accordance with this principle, there will be found in this edition more explicit stage directions than there are in other modern editions of Shakespeare. But they are not so many as might be expected; because, after all, Shakespeare's text contains in itself the best stage directions, and because many points bearing upon gesture or by-play of the actor have been pointed out in the notes. Again, before adopting any emendation, the fact that the words have to be spoken and not read has always been borne in mind; and therefore no alteration of the text has been made without considering the requirements, not only of the sense and metre, but also of what may be called the dramatic rhythm; that is to say, the rhythm which the sentiment or passion of the words may require in order to be spoken with due dramatic effect. The superiority of Shakespeare as a dramatist can only be fully appreciated by reading his plays aloud; and therefore every assistance has been given to the reader by marking those words, or syllables, which, contrary to ordinary usage, are to be accented by the speaker.

It is with the object of assisting those who read Shakespeare aloud, either in private or in public, that those passages which may be omitted in the recitation or representation of the plays, as suggested by Mr. Irving, have been marked in a clear and simple manner. Mr. C. Flower of Stratford-on-Avon has published some twenty of the plays separately, in which the passages generally omitted on the stage are printed in a smaller type; but there has been hitherto no edition in which this practice has been adopted throughout. Some of Shakespeare's plays have been already published by Mr. Irving as prepared by him for dramatic purposes; but the passages omitted in this edition will not be found always to correspond with those omitted in Mr. Irving's Lyceum editions, and, of course, the transpositions of scenes cannot be marked. In fact this edition does not pretend to be, as many paragraphs in the newspapers have announced, an acting edition of Shakespeare; but what we do claim for it is that, while giving the whole of Shakespeare's text, anyone with the aid of this edition could easily prepare an acting version of any of the plays either for private or public representation; and also that it affords most necessary help to those who wish to read Shakespeare aloud, either at home or on the platform. It need scarcely be pointed out that these omissions are not merely such as would be made in a so-called "Bowdlerized" edition; but the passages placed between brackets are those which may, without any detriment to the story or action of the play, be left out. Anyone who, without any practical knowledge or stage experience, has tried to arrange a scene of Shakespeare for the purpose of public reading, will know how difficult it is to mark the omissions which are necessary without interrupting the sequence of the story, or obscuring its intelligibility.

The treatment of words ending in *ed* has been slightly different from that employed by most modern editors. The First Folio (1623) has been followed, except in very few instances. With regard to the elision of the final syllable of such words, not only in the verse portions but also in the prose portions of the plays, the greatest care would seem to have been exercised by the editors of the First Folio; a most important point, it need scarcely be said, as far as the actor or speaker of

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the verse is concerned. In the prose portions the final *ed* seems to be generally elided when the speaker is speaking familiarly. It may be therefore as well to note that, wherever it is not elided in this edition, the syllable *ed* is supposed to be pronounced by the reader. Words ending in *ion*, as “action,” “confusion,” &c., must not be pronounced in the usual slovenly way in vogue nowadays, as if they were spelt “acshun,” “confushun,” but as if the *ion* were the two last syllables of a dactyl. If attention is not paid to this rule, some of the lines of Shakespeare will be curtailed of one syllable where the poet did not intend it.

The foot-notes have been confined to the translation of any foreign or Latin words occurring in the text, and to the explanation of such words as would not be readily understood by an *ordinary* reader; the object being to prevent the necessity of turning to the notes, at the end of each play, for explanation of any one word the meaning of which such reader might not know. The number of such foot-notes has been limited as much-as possible; but it was thought better to err on the side of explaining too many words rather than too few, although such explanations will doubtless seem quite unnecessary to those who are well acquainted with the language of Shakespeare.

For the convenience of the student, as well as of the general reader, the Introductions have been divided into three heads: (1) “The Literary History,” which treats of the various early editions of the plays and the source whence the plot, or dialogue, may have been wholly, or in part, borrowed. (2) “The Stage History,”—which I regret to say is, in many cases, very scanty, as we have so few early records of the representations of Shakespeare’s plays—giving an account of any remarkable stage versions of the plays which may have been produced, as well as some notice of the most remarkable performances and of any notable cast. (3) “The Critical Remarks,” in which I have purposely abstained from quoting the criticisms of others. It appears to me that such a practice is neither advantageous to the reader, nor to the writers from whom such criticism, necessarily more or less mutilated, may be taken; and I venture to presume that an editor who has been studying a play

closely, and living, as it were, with the various characters, ought to have something worth saying on his own account without giving the opinions of others.

For the Time Analysis given at the beginning of each play I am indebted to Mr. P. A. Daniel's work on that subject, for which all students of Shakespeare should feel grateful to the author.

With regard to the text itself it is, as will be seen, no mere reprint of any former edition, though we have taken as our model Dyce (third edition), who seems to hit the just medium between slavish adherence to the old copies and a reckless adoption of modern emendations. The early printed Quartos of Shakespeare's plays, nearly all of which were surreptitiously published, are, no doubt, of great value in correcting some of the errors in the First Folio, and in supplying passages omitted in that edition, which was mainly founded on the copies of the plays that existed in the theatre of which Shakespeare had been part manager. In all cases where the original text either of Quartos or Folios has not been followed, reasons have been given for such a course in the notes; and whenever we have ventured to print any original emendation, the fact has been pointed out in the list of such emendations appended to each play; so that the critical reader may see at once what innovations have been introduced into this text. They will be found to be comparatively few, and we trust, in no case, will be considered rash or unnecessary. Great attention has been paid to the punctuation of the text, a point neglected by some modern editors, especially with regard to the use of commas, which are most important as guides to the reader or reciter, and to the actor are positively necessary.

The maps to be found prefixed to the notes of many of the plays are, it is believed, quite a new feature. They will be found useful for the purposes of reference in the historical plays, and will enable the reader to follow the incidents of those plays with greater ease; while even in the non-historical plays, they will serve to illustrate some of the notes.

As for the notes themselves, I should have liked to have separated those which relate purely to discrepancies or errors in the various texts,

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as well as those which relate to questions of grammar or philology, from the general notes. But it was thought advisable, after mature consideration, not to make any such distinction. No difficulty has been consciously shirked; while it has been borne in mind that the difficulties, which may exist for the general reader who is unacquainted with the literature of the Elizabethan age, might easily escape the notice of those familiar with such literature. In a work like this, intended for the general public, it is better, perhaps, that the notes should be too many rather than too few. In all cases where it is possible, Shakespeare's meaning has been explained by reference to some one or other of his contemporaries; and, whenever practicable, all quotations have been taken from the works of the author quoted, and have been carefully verified. The notes referring to subjects connected with natural history or botany have been made ampler than is usual in most editions; for Shakespeare's references to the animals and plants of his native land cannot but be interesting to the general reader, if only as showing how closely he observed objects in the country, and studied them with as much loving attention as he did the characters of men and women in the town. Many of the popular-superstitions, that existed with regard to the wild animals and flowers in Shakespeare's time, still exist. On this subject my obligation to such writers as Harting and Ellacombe will be sufficiently apparent from the notes.

One word as to the notes on the *Dramatis Personæ*, prefixed to the historical plays. Richard II. had already been printed when, in preparing the notes for King John, it occurred to me that it would be very advantageous to give all the information referring to the *Dramatis Personæ* together at the beginning of the notes. In order to accomplish this the publishers did not hesitate to recast all the notes of Richard II., though they had already been stereotyped. This is only one of many instances in which they have spared neither trouble nor expense to carry out the various details of the plan suggested by me. Mr. George Russell French's excellent book, *Shakespeariana Genealogica*, suggested this idea to me; and if I have been able, by the assistance of other books, to supplement the information given by him in that valuable work, it does

not lessen the obligation which I owe to his labours. No pains have been spared in trying to obtain the utmost accuracy in these notes; but the task of tracing the intermarriages between the various noble families during the Wars of the Roses is one of the greatest difficulty.

The lists of words peculiar to each play—that is to say, the words which are found only in that play, or in the poems of Shakespeare—will, I trust, prove not merely interesting but useful to students of the language of Shakespeare. It will be seen that the proportion of such words is much larger in some plays than in others, and in those plays (the three parts of Henry VI. for instance), of which we know Shakespeare to have been only part author, it is possible that, through the medium of the words distinctly peculiar which occur in those plays, we may be assisted in the solution of the vexed question as to who were his collaborators. We may be able also, through the examination of these words, to trace, in some measure, under what literary influence Shakespeare was when writing any particular play; and by distinguishing between those words which are merely incidental to any particular character,—such, for instance, as the affected pedant Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost*—and those which are employed by the author, when writing as a poet rather than as a dramatist, one may arrive at some interesting internal evidence as to the period of Shakespeare's career to which the various plays belong. For instance, if we find in any play several words used, which occur more than once in the Sonnets or the Poems, we may assign such a play more confidently, if the other evidence, external or internal, coincides, to his earlier period.

The plays have been arranged in this edition, as nearly as possible in the order in which they are supposed to have been written by Shakespeare. But, as is well known, the opinions of the best authorities differ very much as to what the exact order of such an arrangement ought to be. Our object has been to give in each volume as much variety as is possible, consistent with those principles, to which we consider we shall have sufficiently adhered, if we have kept together those plays which belong to the three periods into which Shakespeare's literary career is generally divided, viz. the early, the middle, and the last period.

PREFACE.

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For the delay which has occurred in the production of this long-promised edition I fear I must be held responsible. The causes which have led to such delay have been various; but it is not necessary for me to specify them. The publishers have been fortunate enough to secure the hearty co-operation of more than one Shakespearian scholar, whose names will be a sufficient guarantee of the excellence of their work, and without whose aid I could not have had any hope of bringing the work to a conclusion for some years to come.

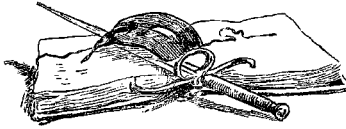
It only remains for me to express my heartiest thanks for the kind and courteous help afforded me by such distinguished editors of Shakespeare as Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps and Dr. Furnivall, and others, to whom grateful acknowledgment will be more fitly made at the conclusion of the work.

Finally, as gratitude is said to be "a lively sense of favours to come," I will thank, by anticipation, those who shall be kind enough to correct any errors they may detect in this edition, or to supply any information on points left partially or wholly unexplained. Any communications addressed either to the publishers or to me shall receive the fullest attention.

F. A. MARSHALL.

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PASSAGES AND SCENES ILLUSTRATED.

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

<p>Act I. scene 1. lines 119, 120, 7 <i>Biron [reads].</i> "Item, that no woman shall come within a mile of my court."</p> <p>Act I. scene 1. lines 189, 190, 10 <i>Dull.</i> . . There's villany abroad: this letter will tell you more.</p> <p>Act I. scene 2. lines 146, 147, 13 <i>Arm.</i> I love thee. <i>Jaq.</i> So I heard you say.</p> <p>Act II. scene 1. line 1, 15 <i>Boyet.</i> Now, madam, summon up your dearest spirits.</p> <p>Act III. scene 1. lines 1, 2, 19 <i>Arm.</i> Warble, child; make passionate my sense of hearing.</p> <p>Act III. scene 1. lines 162, 163, 21 <i>Biron.</i> Hark, slave, it is but this.</p> <p>Act IV. scene 2. line 13, 25 <i>Hol.</i> Most barbarous intimation!</p> <p>Act IV. scene 3. lines 129, 130, 29 <i>Long. [advancing].</i> . . You may look pale, but I should blush, I know, To be o'erheard, and taken napping to.</p>	<p>Act IV. scene 3. line 152, 31 <i>Biron [advancing].</i> . . Ah, good my liege, I pray thee, pardon me!</p> <p>Act V. scene 1. line 37, 34 <i>Arm.</i> Men of peace, well encountered.</p> <p>Act V. scene 2. line 29, 37 <i>Prin.</i> Well bantied both; a set of wit well play'd.</p> <p>Act V. scene 2. lines 94, 95, 39 <i>Boyet.</i> I stole into a neighbour thicket by, And overheard what you shall overhear.</p> <p>Act V. scene 2. line 230, 40 <i>Biron.</i> White-handed mistress, one sweet word with thee.</p> <p>Act V. scene 2. lines 383, 384, 43 <i>Biron.</i> O, I am yours, and all that I possess! <i>Ros.</i> All the fool mine?</p> <p>Act V. scene 2. lines 723-725, (<i>Etching</i>) 48 <i>Mer.</i> God save you, madam! <i>Prin.</i> Welcome, Mercade, but that thou interruptest our merriment.</p> <p>Tailpiece, Returning from the Revels, 51</p>
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THE COMEDY OF ERRORS.

Act I. scene 1. lines 95, 96, 79	Act III. scene 2. lines 71, 72, 93
<i>Ege.</i> O, let me say no more! Gather the sequel by that went before.	<i>Ant. S.</i> Why, how now, Dromio! where runn'st thou so fast?
Act I. scene 2. line 91, 82	Act IV. scene 2. line 32, 97
<i>Ant. S.</i> What, wilt thou flout me thus unto my face?	<i>Dre. S.</i> No, he's in Tartar limbo, worse than hell.
Act II. scene 1. lines 87, 88, 85	Act IV. scene 4. line 110, (<i>Etching</i>) 101
<i>Adr.</i> His company must do his minions grace, Whilst I at home starve for a merry look.	<i>Pinch.</i> More company!—The fiend is strong within him.
Act III. scene 1. lines 32, 33, 89	Act V. scene 1. line 133, 104
<i>Dro. S.</i> Mome, malt-horse, capon, coxcomb, idiot, patch! Either get thee from the door, or sit down at the hatch.	<i>Adr.</i> Justice, most sacred duke, against the abbess!
Act III. scene 2. line 29, 91	Act V. scene 2. lines 423, 425, 108
<i>Ant. S.</i> Sweet mistress,—what your name is else, I know not.	<i>Dro. E.</i> Nay, then, thus: . . . let's go hand in hand, not one before another.

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

Act V. scene 4. lines 1–3, 127	Act III. scene 1. lines 4, 5, 145
<i>Val.</i> How use doth breed a habit in a man! These shadowy, desert, unfrequented woods, I better brook than flourishing peopled towns.	<i>Pro.</i> My gracious lord, that which I would discover The law of friendship bids me to conceal.
Act I. scene 1. lines 61, 62, 129	Act III. scene 1. lines 157, 158, 147
<i>Pro.</i> All happiness bechance to thee in Milan! <i>Val.</i> As much to you at home! and so, farewell.	<i>Duke.</i> Go, base intruder! overweening slave! Bestow thy fawning smiles on equal mates.
Act I. scene 2. line 108, 132	Act IV. scene 1. line 3, 152
<i>Jul.</i> I'll kiss each several paper for amends.	<i>Third Out.</i> Stand, sir, and throw us that you have about ye.
Act I. scene 3. lines 84, 85, 133	Act IV. scene 4. line 29, 156
<i>Pro.</i> O, how this spring of love resembleth The uncertain glory of an April day.	<i>Launce.</i> "Friend," quoth I, "you mean to whip the dog?" "Ay, marry, do I," quoth he.
Act II. scene 3. lines 16–18, 137	Act IV. scene 4. lines 203, 204, 159
<i>Launce.</i> Nay, I'll show you the manner of it. This shoe is my father: no, this left shoe is my father.	<i>Jul.</i> O thou senseless form Thou shalt be worshipp'd, kiss'd, lov'd and ador'd!
Act II. scene 4. lines 23–26, 139	Act V. scene 4. lines 60, 61, (<i>Etching</i>) 161
<i>Sil.</i> What, angry, Sir Thurio! do you change colour? <i>Val.</i> Give him leave, madam; he is a kind of chameleon.	<i>Val.</i> Ruffian, let go that rude uncivil touch, Thou friend of an ill fashion!
Act II. scene 5. lines 40, 41, 142	
<i>Launce.</i> Thou shalt never get such a secret from me but by a parable.	

ROMEO AND JULIET.

Act I. scene 1. line 74, 185	Act I. scene 3. line 5, 192
<i>Tyb.</i> Turn thee, Benvolio, look upon thy death.	<i>Enter JULIET.</i>
Act I. scene 1. line 51, 186	Act I. scene 4. line 53, (<i>Etching</i>) 194
<i>Abt.</i> Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?	<i>Mer.</i> O, then, I see, Queen Mab hath been with you.
Act I. scene 1. line 231, 189	Act II. scene 2. line 33, 199
<i>Ben.</i> Be rul'd by me, forget to think of her.	<i>Jul.</i> O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?

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Act II. scene 4. lines 150, 151,	205	Act IV. scene 3. line 58,	225
<i>Mer.</i> Farewell, ancient lady; farewell.—[<i>singing</i>] lady, lady, lady.		<i>Jul.</i> Romeo! I come. This do I drink to thee.	
Act III. scene 1. line 130,	210	Act V. scene 1. line 37,	229
<i>Rom.</i> Now, Tybalt, take the "villain" back again.		<i>Rom.</i> I do remember an apothecary.	
Act III. scene 3. lines 74, 75,	215	Act V. scene 3. line 72,	231
<i>Fri. L.</i> Romeo, arise!—Thou wilt be taken.		<i>Par.</i> O, I am slain!	
Act III. scene 5. line 51,	218	Act V. scene 3. line 121,	233
<i>Jul.</i> O, think'st thou we shall ever meet again?		<i>Fri. L.</i> Saint Francis be my speed!	
Act IV. scene 1. line 121,	223	Act V. scene 3. lines 309, 310,	235
<i>Jul.</i> Give me, give me! O, tell not me of fear!		<i>Prince.</i> For never was a story of more woe Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.	

KING HENRY VI.—PART I.

Act I. scene 1. line 18,	265	Act III. scene 3. line 1,	290
<i>Exe.</i> Henry is dead, and never shall revive.		<i>Puc.</i> Dismay not, princes, at this accident.	
Act I. scene 2. lines 76-78,	269	Act IV. scene 1. lines 45, 46,	295
<i>Puc.</i> Lo, whilst I waited on my tender lambs, And to sun's parching heat display'd my cheeks, God's mother deigned to appear to me.		<i>King.</i> Stain to thy countrymen, thou hear'st thy doom! Be packing, therefore, thou that wast a knight.	
Act I. scene 3. lines 45-47,	271	Act IV. scene 5. lines 1, 2,	298
<i>Glo.</i> What! am I dar'd and bearded to my face? Draw, men, for all this privileged place: Blue coats to tawny.—Priest, beware your beard.		<i>Tal.</i> O young John Talbot! I did send for thee To tutor thee in stratagems of war.	
Act I. scene 4. line 11,	273	Act IV. scene 7. line 32,	302
<i>M. Gun.</i> In yonder tower, to o'erpeer the city.		<i>Tal.</i> Now my old arms are young John Talbot's grave.	
Act II. scene 1. lines 26, 27,	277	Act V. scene 3. lines 110, 111, (<i>Etching</i>)	306
<i>Tal.</i> God is our fortress, in whose conquering name Let us resolve to scale their flinty bulwarks.		<i>Suf.</i> Say, gentle princess, would you not suppose Your bondage happy, to be made a queen?	
Act II. scene 3. lines 16, 17,	280	Act V. scene 5. lines 1, 2,	310
<i>Coun.</i> Is this the Talbot, so much fear'd abroad That with his name the mothers still their babes?		<i>King.</i> Your wondrous rare description, noble earl, Of beauteous Margaret hath astonish'd me.	
Act II. scene 5. line 122,	284	Act V. scene 5. line 103,	311
<i>Plan.</i> Here dies the dusky torch of Mortimer.		<i>Suf.</i> Thus Suffolk hath prevail'd.	

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SHAKESPEARE AS A PLAYWRIGHT.



I daresay that it will appear to some readers a profanation of the name of Shakespeare to couple with it the title of playwright. But I have chosen this title for my introduction because I am anxious to show that with the mighty genius of the poet was united, in a remarkable degree, the capacity for writing plays intended to be acted as well as read. One often finds that the very persons who claim most to reverence Shakespeare, not only as a poet but also as a dramatist, carry that reverence to such an extent that they would almost forbid the representation of his plays upon the stage, except under conditions which are, if not impossible, certainly impracticable.

Shakespeare was one of the most practical dramatists which the world has ever seen, and this notwithstanding that he lived in an age when the drawbacks which existed to the proper representation of stage plays were very many. It must not be thought that in claiming for him this quality one necessarily detracts, in the slightest degree, from his greater qualities as a poet. But surely the end of all plays is to be acted, and not to be simply read in the study. It is no reproach against a dramatist, whose object it is to produce plays, that he should prove himself a good playwright; for that is only equivalent to saying that he does his work well. Indeed there is no reason why we should praise him as a dramatist if his plays will not bear acting. During his lifetime Shakespeare took extraordinary pains to prevent his plays being published; not that he feared the literary test, but because it diminished their value as works for the stage, inasmuch as it enabled other companies, in which he was not interested, to act them without his deriving any profit. It is quite possible that, had Shakespeare lived,

he would have brought out an edition of his plays as literary works, and would have bestowed upon their revision the greatest care. But, unfortunately, if such was his purpose, he did not live to fulfil it; and the consequence is that to the actors, and not to the ingenious publishers who "conveyed" his plays into print, we owe the preservation of the complete dramatic works of William Shakespeare. If his plays had not been successful in the staging, if they had not been frequently represented in action, we may venture to say that only a very few of them would have come down to us. It was surely on account of their popularity as acting plays that they were published without the author's consent. There can be no better test of the skill of a playwright than that his work should be popular, not only in his own time, but also with posterity, and in countries where the language in which he wrote is almost unknown. It must be admitted that Beaumont and Fletcher, and Ben Jonson, were considered superior to Shakespeare by many persons, both during his lifetime and for some considerable time after his death. Yet, as far as we can discover, in his own day, Shakespeare more than held his own; and, with the exception of a period after the Restoration, when the worst taste in dramatic literature prevailed, Shakespeare's popularity has ever since increased; while that of Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Marlowe, Chapman, and all his other contemporaries, has declined, till, at the present time, their plays have almost ceased to be represented on the stage.

It is fortunate that we have the means of practically testing Shakespeare's excellence as a playwright by comparing his work with the old plays which he used as materials. Take, for example, "The Taming of the Shrew," in which, as Shakespeare's adaptation resembles the original so very closely both in plot and in the principal characters, we have a very good opportunity of judging his capacity by reading the old play side by side with his own. In Mr. Marshall's notes to this edition there will be found many instances of the skill which Shakespeare has shown, not only in important modifications in the language of that play, but also in the action. In King John

and *King Lear* it is scarcely possible to recognize the crude originals as transformed by Shakespeare's genius. There are, indeed, many plays which, though not suggested by the work of other dramatists, as far as we know, were founded on stories which fortunately have been preserved to us. In these we can see with what unerring tact Shakespeare selected the most effective incidents for treatment on the stage, with what wide and deep knowledge of human nature he brought to life the characters of history, and how thoroughly he knew the greatest secret of a successful dramatist—how to enlist the sympathies of an audience for his hero or heroine, without making them prodigies of consistent virtue. It is with Shakespeare's heroes and heroines, as it is in real life; those we love the best have the least pretension to perfection; we love them all the more for their inconsistencies and their faults; perhaps because their very defects make us acknowledge them the more readily as our fellow-creatures. In this human imperfection of character lies much of the fascination of *Hamlet*. Equally striking is the effective use which Shakespeare makes of a situation, when he finds one in the story on which he has founded his plot, or invents one for himself. In nothing is the instinct of a true dramatist more forcibly exemplified. It is a common experience that a play which is excellent in all other respects, often falls short of success because the writer either fails to recognise a situation, when it naturally occurs, or, if he do recognise it, is unable to turn it to the best account.

Of the stage traditions of Shakespeare we know nothing, though we are told they descended from Burbage, Taylor, and Lowin to Davenant, and were given by him to Betterton. For fifty years Betterton held the position of the greatest actor of his day; and during that half-century, although the prejudices and predilections of the literary taste of the day were alike hostile to Shakespeare's works, Betterton had only to appear in *Mercutio*, *Macbeth*, or, above all, in *Hamlet* to draw the town. It was not till after the Restoration that the idea seems generally to have prevailed that Shakespeare wanted improving: that, in order to be acted, his plays must be adapted

by some literary genius of that day. Even Dryden, great poet as he was, and sincere admirer of Shakespeare, did his best to spoil *The Tempest*; while such inferior men as Davenant, Crowne, and, later on, Cibber, found a congenial task in degrading as much as possible the poetry of Shakespeare to the level of commonplace. Anyone who is interested in these labours will find the fruits of them in such pieces as Davenant's *Law against Lovers* (a fusion of *Measure for Measure* and *Much Ado*), and his version of *Macbeth*; Crowne's *Miseries of Civil War* (*Henry VI.*); Colley Cibber's *Papal Tyranny* (*King John*), and his bombastic *Richard III.* Even in Garrick's day the public, which eagerly applauded his acting, and welcomed his purer and wholesomer style of dramatic art, continued to tolerate mutilated versions of the works of our greatest dramatist; Garrick himself supplying a version of *Romeo and Juliet*. There is an old engraving representing Mr. Holman and Miss Brunton in the scene at Capulet's tomb. Underneath this picture are these lines:—

Juliet.—You fright me . . . Speak . . . O, let me hear some voice
 Besides my own in this drear vault of death,
 Or I shall faint. . . Support me . . .
Romeo.— . . . O, I cannot . . . I have no strength . . . but want
 Thy feeble aid. . . Cruel poison!

SHAKESPEARE.

It will puzzle the reader to find this passage in any edition of the dramatist; and yet there is no doubt that many persons in all innocence accepted these words as having been written by Shakespeare.

It is well known that for many years Cibber's *Richard III.* was the only version of that play with which the majority of Englishmen were acquainted; indeed, Porson said that for one man who knew Shakespeare's play there were more than ten who knew only Cibber's; and the inflated commonplaces of the latter were accepted as the work of the great poet himself.

All the principal comedies were, at one time or other, most recklessly manipulated; while of the tragedies, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Lear*, and *Macbeth* suffered much from these improvers of our poet. Perhaps, if we were asked to name the ideal representative of *Hamlet*, we should say

Betterton was the actor who seems to have satisfied most fully the fastidious requirements of such intellectual lights as Dryden, Steele, and Pope, and who enjoyed the advantage, as has already been said, of having received, only at second hand, the poet's own ideas as to the mode of realizing on the stage his great creation. Yet to those who have always been ready to believe that Betterton, even when comparatively an old man, was the best representative of Hamlet, it is humiliating to find, on examining the acting text which was in use at his theatre, that the greatest liberties were taken with the author's language. In many plays of Shakespeare the omission of passages, the modification of certain words or phrases, and the transposition of some scenes, are all absolutely necessary before they can be acted; but the popular taste nowadays would not permit an actor to take such liberties with the text as were once thought not only pardonable but commendable; and indeed, the more the actor plays Shakespeare, the more he must be convinced that to attempt to improve the language of our greatest dramatist is a very hopeless task.

Much objection has been made to the employment of the sister arts of music and painting in the stage representation of Shakespeare, and to the elaborate illustrations of the countries in which the various scenes are laid, or of the dress and surroundings of the different characters. I do not contend that a play, fairly acted, cannot be fully effective without any of these aids and adjuncts. But, practically, their value has ceased to be a matter of opinion; they have become necessary. They are dictated by the public taste of the day—not by the desire for mere scenic display, but that demand for finish in details which has grown with the development of art in all its phases. A painter who should neglect truthful detail, however broad and powerful his method, would nowadays be exposed to severe criticism. This is not a proof of decadence; it is a striving after completeness. The stage has become not only a mirror of the passions, but also a nursery of the arts, for here students of the past learn the form and colour of the costumes and the decorations of distant ages. To all this there are clear limits. It is not always possible to reproduce an historic period with exactness.

Macbeth, and Lear, and Hamlet belong to history too remote for fidelity of costume. But a period has, in such cases, to be chosen and followed with conscientious thoroughness, tempered by discrimination. Above all, the resources of the picturesque must be wholly subordinate to the play. Mere pageant apart from the story has no place in Shakespeare, although there may be a succession of truthful and harmonious pictures which shall neither hamper the natural action, nor distract the judgment from the actor's art. In fine, there is no occasion to apologize for the system of decoration. True criticism begins when the manager carries ornament to excess, for then he sins against the laws of beauty as well as against the poet. Tried by this standard, a successful representation of a Shakespeare play may be ranked as a worthy tribute to the genius which commands the homage of all art, and which has laid on us the memorable injunction of "an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine."—(Hamlet, ii. 2. 165–167.)

I suppose the vexed question whether Shakespeare disliked his vocation as an actor will never pass out of the region of controversy. We shall always be told that the lament in the Sonnets over the "public means which public manners breeds" marked the poet's sense of his own degradation on the stage. But against this theory I would enter an earnest protest. First, because it is by no means established that the allusions in the Sonnets are personal to Shakespeare; and, secondly, because they are wholly inconsistent with his masterly exposition of the actor's art in Hamlet's well-known speech to the players. On the first point there is undeniably a conflict of cultivated opinion; on the second there is not, and cannot be, any dispute whatever. The players are "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time." It is their noble function to "hold the mirror up to nature;" and the whole scope and subtlety of their art receive from Shakespeare the most apt, eloquent, and comprehensive definition. No player, who despised his calling, and solemnly charged fortune with the "harmful deeds" which that calling compelled him to commit, could have put upon immortal record this vindication of the art which was both his pride and his livelihood. No doubtful expres-

sion which escaped him can be set against the weight of his own authority. You might as well say that Macbeth's

poor player
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
 And then is heard no more.

—Macbeth, v. 5. 24–26.

is a fit companion for the “idiot,” in the same speech, whose tale is “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing,” and that such symbols are appropriate to the undying fame of Roscius or Burbage, of David Garrick or Edmund Kean. “If there is amongst the defective records of the poet's life,” says Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, “one feature demanding special respect, it is the unflinching courage with which, notwithstanding his desire for social position, he braved public opinion in favour of a continued adherence to that which he felt was in itself a noble profession, and this at a time when it was not merely despised but surrounded by an aggressive fanaticism that prohibited its exercise even in his own native town.” The stage cannot be dissociated from Shakespeare, either as the poet or as the man. It was the lever with which he moved the world; and, while we accord to him the supremacy of literature, it is but just to remember the practical aid he derived from his judgment and experience as playwright and player.

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