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HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK.

INTRODUCTION BY F. A. MARSHALL.

NOTES BY F. A. MARSHALL¹ AND ARTHUR SYMONS.



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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark.
 HAMLET, son to the former, and nephew to the present king.
 POLONIUS, Lord-chamberlain.
 HORATIO, friend to Hamlet.
 LAERTES, son to Polonius.
 VOLTIMAND, }
 CORNELIUS, } Courtiers.
 ROSENCRANTZ, }
 GUILDENSTERN, }
 OSRIC, }
 A Gentleman, }
 A Priest.
 MARCELLUS, } Officers.
 BERNARDO, }
 FRANCISCO, a soldier.
 REYNALDO, servant to Polonius.
 Players.
 Two Clowns, grave-diggers.
 FORTINBRAS, Prince of Norway.
 A Captain.
 English Ambassadors.
 GERTRUDE, Queen of Denmark, and mother to Hamlet.
 OPHELIA, daughter to Polonius.
 Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Sailors, Messengers, and other Attendants.
 Ghost of Hamlet's Father.

SCENE—EL SINORE; except in the fourth scene of the fourth act, where it
 is a plain in Denmark.

HISTORIC PERIOD: Supposed about the end of the 9th or the beginning of the 10th century.

TIME OF ACTION.

Mr. Marshall (*Study of Hamlet*, 1875), has the following scheme of time:—

Day 1: Act I. Scenes 1-3.
 Day 2: Act I. Scenes 4 and 5.—Interval, about two
 months.
 Day 3: Act II.
 Day 4: Act III. and Act IV. Scenes 1-3.
 Day 5: Act IV. Scene 4.—Interval, about two months.
 Day 6: Act IV. Scenes 5-7.—Interval, two days.

Day 7: Act V. Scene 1.
 Day 8: Act V. Scene 2.

Mr. Daniel's scheme differs from this only in reducing the Interval between Days 5 and 6 to about a week; he marks no Interval between Days 6 and 7, and gives one Day only for the whole of Act V.

HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK.

INTRODUCTION.

LITERARY HISTORY.

The Literary History of Hamlet is of such great interest, and, at the same time, so full of difficulties and of disputed points, that the most one can do, in the limited space of such an Introduction as this, is to place the chief facts clearly before one's readers, and to point out briefly the deductions which have been or may be made from these facts.

On July 26th, 1602, the Stationers' Register contains the following entry:

James Robertes. Entred for his Copie vnder the handes of master PASFEILD and master **watson** warden A booke called '*the Revenge of HAMLETT Prince [of] Denmarke' as yt was latelie Acted by the Lord Chamberleyne his servantes vjd*

For some reason the publication was deferred; and it was not till 1603 that the first edition of the play was printed with the following title-page:

"THE | Tragicall Historie of | HAMLET
 | *Prince of Denmarke* | By William Shake-
 speare. | As it hath beene diuerse times acted
 by his Highnesse ser- | uants in the Cittie of
 London: as also in the two V- | niuersities
 of Cambridge and Oxford, and else-where |
 At London printed for N. L. and John Trun-
 dell. | 1603." No printer's name is given.
 In 1604 another Quarto (Q. 2) was printed
 with the same title, but: "Newly imprinted
 and enlarged to almost as much | againe as
 it was, according to the true and perfect |
 Coppie. | AT LONDON | Printed by I. R.
 for N. L. and are to be sold at his | shoppe
 under Saint Dunstons Church in | Fleet street.
 1604."

There is little doubt that I. R. is James

Roberts, who had entered the book on the Stationers' Register, 1602; though N. L. (Nicholas Ling) had, in the meantime, in conjunction with Trundell, published a surreptitious edition. This latter Quarto (Q. 2) forms, with the first Folio, the principal authority for the received text of Hamlet; Q. 1 being, as is very generally known, a very imperfect copy of the play, so much so that we cannot profess to give any but a few of the various readings which it contains.

The history of the discovery of this Quarto is a very curious one. In 1821 Sir Henry Bunbury came into possession of the library of Barton, which had belonged to Sir Thomas Hanmer. Among the volumes was a shabby, ill-bound quarto, barbarously cropped, but of almost priceless value; for it contained not only this then unique copy of the early Hamlet, but also ten other Shakespeare Quartos, dated from 1598 to 1603, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, 1634. The Cambridge editors think this volume had belonged to Sir Thomas Hanmer; but surely he could never have overlooked such a treasure. Sir H. Bunbury says he found it in a closet at Barton, in 1823, and that "it probably was picked up by my grandfather, Sir William Bunbury, who was an ardent collector of old dramas" (see Furness, vol. ii. p. 13). The volume was sold to the Duke of Devonshire, in whose possession it now is. This copy of the 1603 Quarto of Hamlet was long thought to be unique; but in 1856 a bookseller in Dublin, M. W. Rooney, purchased from a student of Trinity College a shabby quarto which he had brought from his home in a midland county of England in 1853. He had taken it from a bundle of old pamphlets as a memento of his family, and had tried in vain to dispose of it. On examining this pamphlet, Mr. Rooney found that it was another

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copy of the supposed unique Quarto of Hamlet, which, though it wanted the title-page, yet had the last leaf, which was wanting in the Duke of Devonshire's copy.¹ It was sold to Mr. Boone for £70, purchased from him for £120 by Mr. Halliwell (Phillipps), and is now in the British Museum. Other Quarto editions of Hamlet were published, one in 1605 (Q. 3) being a mere reprint of Q. 2 by J. R[oberts] for N. L[ing]. On November 19th, 1607, Nicholas Ling transferred all his copyrights to John Smithwicke, who brought out the Quarto printed in 1611 with the title-page substantially the same as that of Q. 3 (except that it is called for the first time *The Tragedy* instead of *The Tragical Historie*) and also another Quarto, without date, said to be "newly imprinted and enlarged." The Cambridge editors call the 1611 Quarto Q. 4, and the undated Quarto Q. 5; though Mr. Collier and some other authorities think that the latter was printed in 1607. For the convenience of reference we shall adopt the same order of numbering as the Cambridge editors. After the publication of the first Folio the sixth Quarto (Q. 6) was published in 1637, and at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century several players' Quartos were published, four of which—those of 1676, 1685, 1695, 1703—have been collated by the Cambridge editors. The Quarto of 1695 contains the cast of the play with Betterton as Hamlet, and the passages omitted on the stage are marked by inverted commas. I have carefully collated this copy with the received text of Hamlet, and some of the most remarkable omissions and alterations will be noticed.

Some time before 1603, as early as 1589, or even 1587 according to others, we find a reference to some play on the subject of Hamlet, in an Epistle to the Gentlemen Students of both Universities, by Thomas Nashe, prefixed to Greene's *Menaphon* (printed in 1589). The passage, so often quoted, contains the following sentence: "he will afford you whole *Hamlets*, I should say, Handfulls of tragical speeches." In 1594 the Lord Chamberlain's men, of whom Shakespeare was one, were acting with the

Lord Admiral's men at Newington Butts under the part management of Henslowe, in whose diary we find the following entry on June 9th: "Rd. at hamlet . . . viiis." This seems to have been an old play; for Henslowe does not put the letters *ne* to it, as he always does in the case of new plays, and the receipts must have been very small if his share only amounted to eight shillings. As we do not find any other record of the performance of Hamlet in Henslowe's Diary, we may conclude that the play, whosoever it was, was not a very popular one; yet in Dr. Thomas Lodge's *Wits Miserie*, and the *Worlds Madnesse* discovering the Devils Incarnate of this age, 1596, we find another reference to it; one of the Devils, speaking of the author, says the Doctor is "a foule lubber, and looks as pale as the visard of y^e ghost, which cried so miserally at y^e theator like an oisterwife, *Hamlet revenge*" (p. 56). Steevens mentions that he had "seen a copy of Speight's edition of Chaucer, which formerly belonged to Dr. Gabriel Harvey" with a note in the latter's handwriting: "The younger sort take much delight in Shakspeare's *Venus and Adonis*; but his *Lucrece*, and his tragedy of *Hamlet Prince of Denmarke*, have it in them to please the wiser sort, 1598" (Var. Ed. vol. vii. p. 168). Malone examined the book in question, and found that it was purchased by Harvey in 1598; but he thought the above note need not have been written until 1600. If it were written when the book was first brought out, it would prove the fact that Shakespeare's name was connected with the play of Hamlet in 1598; though, singular to state, Meres, in the often-quoted passage from *Palladis Tamia*, does not mention Hamlet amongst his tragedies. In Sir Thomas Smith's *Voiage and Entertainment in Russia*, &c. 1605, sig. K. ". . . his fathers Empire and Government we find was but as the *Poeticall Furie in a Stage-action*, compleat yet with horrid and wofull Tragedies: a first, but no second to any *Hamlet*; and that now *Reuenge*, iust *Reuenge* was comming with his Sworde drawne against him, his royall Mother, and dearest Sister, to fill vp those Murdering Sceanes;" and lastly, Samuel Rowlands, 1620, in *The Night Raven* (Sig. p. 2) has:

¹ I take these particulars from a small pamphlet published by Mr. Rooney in 1856.

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I will not cry *Hamlet Revenge* my greeves,
But I will call *Hang-man Revenge* on theeves.

All these passages are generally held to allude to the old play; but, though this may be true of the earlier allusions before 1600, I do not see any reason to believe that the later ones, because they happen to contain the words *Hamlet Revenge*, should not refer to Shakespeare's play. It is no uncommon thing for persons who quote from memory to make mistakes; and the words *Hamlet Revenge* may simply be a recollection of the line spoken by the Ghost, i. 5. 25:

Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

This same sentence, "Hamlet Revenge," taken out of the old play, is perhaps referred to in the following passage in the Induction to *The Warning for Faire Women*, where Comedy says:

How some damn'd tyrant to obtain a crown
Stabs, hangs, impoisons, smothers, cutteth throats:

Then, too, a filthy whining ghost,
Lapt in some foul sheet, or a leather pilch,
Comes screaming like a pig half stick't,
And cries, *Vindicta!* Revenge, Revenge!
—Simpson's *School of Shakspeare*, vol. ii. pp. 242, 243.

This last allusion is, to say the least, a doubtful one. It may have referred to one of the many ghosts in the old plays of the period before Shakespeare began to write for the stage. But these same two words, "Hamlet, Revenge," are quoted in Dekker's *Satiromastix*, 1602: "my name 's *Hamlet, revenge*," where the speaker, Tucca, is followed on to the stage by his boy, "with *two pictures* under his cloak;" and again in *Westward Hoe*, 1607. We undoubtedly have a quotation as early as 1604 in Marston's *Malcontent*, iii. 3: "Illo, ho, ho, ho! arte there, olde true penny?" (*Works*, ed. Halliwell's, vol. ii. p. 249).

We come now to the most difficult and important question, on which there has been such a great difference of opinion, What does this Quarto of 1603 represent? (1) Is it an early version of Shakespeare's play? or (2) is it a mutilated copy, disfigured by blunders of the copyist or the enterprising publisher who annexed it, of the same play from which the

Quarto of 1604 was printed? or (3) is it, as the Clarendon editors suggest in their preface, the old play partly revised and rewritten by Shakespeare? That there was an old play, founded on the prose history of Hamlet (to be mentioned hereafter), I think is almost indisputable; and though personally I venture to differ from the authorities on this point, believing that Hamlet in its first rough edition was one of Shakespeare's earliest dramatic efforts, yet it is scarcely possible to maintain that the play, referred to by Nash as one well known in 1589, could have been by Shakespeare, who was then only in his twenty-fifth year. But that Shakespeare had written a version of Hamlet some time before 1603 I firmly believe.

That the Quarto edition, surreptitiously published for N. L. (Nicholas Ling), represents this early version to a certain extent, allowing for mistakes of the copyist and printer—and, most important of all, for excisions and perhaps some interpolations made by the company or companies who had acted the tragedy—there is little doubt. Space will not allow me here to enter into an elaborate analysis of the differences between Q. 1 and Q. 2; but, after examining and re-examining, and comparing the two texts together from a literary and dramatic point of view, it seems impossible to believe that, whether obtained partly from actors' parts and partly transcribed from memory, or taken down in shorthand, the Quarto of 1603 was derived from the same version of the play as the Quarto of 1604, or from the MS. from which the play was printed in F. 1. On the other hand, there is too much of Shakespeare's Hamlet, as we know it, in the Quarto of 1603, for us to admit that it was the old play, only partly revised by him. The more and more one studies the differences, both great and small, between the two Quarto editions of the play, the more one comes to the conclusion that the first was a corrupt and incorrect copy of the play as first put together by its author. In that monumental work, Furness's *New Variorum* edition of Shakespeare, there will be found, admirably summed up, the various arguments on this point (vol. ii. pp. 14–33). No doubt

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the theory, so ably set forth by Messrs. Clark and Wright in the Clarendon Press edition, is a very plausible one; and it is quite possible that Shakespeare may have left here and there, in his earlier version of Hamlet, more lines of the old play than he thought fit to retain on maturer consideration; and, in confirmation of this, it is only fair to notice that there are more rhymed couplets in the Quarto of 1603 than in the subsequent edition. The scene between the Queen and Horatio, which is peculiar to the Quarto of 1603, and seems afterwards to have been expanded by the author into the first portion of act v. scene 2, between Hamlet and Horatio, also has the appearance of belonging to the old play; but still the presence of this scene in the first sketch may be accounted for, as being part and parcel of the design to put the Queen's character in a favourable light, which is one of the characteristics of Q. 1. In act i. scene 2 Hamlet's speech beginning:

My lord, tis not the sable sute I weare;

is addressed to the King and not to his mother. In Q. 2 it commences thus:

Seemes Maddam, nay it is, I know not seemes.

Again, in Hamlet's soliloquy after the interview with the ghost, act i. 5. 105, the words

O most pernicious woman

are omitted in Q. 1; and we have instead:

Murderous, bawdy, smiling damned villaine,

applied to Claudius. The fact of the names Corambis and Montano being given to Polonius and Reynaldo in Q. 1 has been noticed by every commentator; but not the difference between Rossencraft and Gilderstone (Q. 1) and Gylldersterne and Rosencrans in Q. 2. That Q. 1 was partly made up of copies of actors' parts seems indicated by the fact that, in most cases, the cues of the various speeches are printed correctly. If any reader will examine Q. 1 carefully, he will find that the dialogue assigned to some of the characters is printed very correctly in certain portions of the play, and very incorrectly in others; which looks as if the copyist had sometimes written with the MS. before him, and sometimes from the

memory either of himself or that of others. The wretched hash that is made of some of the soliloquies may be accounted for by the fact that, in a theatre copy used by a travelling company, the text may have not have been set down in full, but only the latter portions or cues of the long speeches. Some of the alterations may have been made by the actors; and this conjecture is confirmed by an examination of the Players' Quarto of 1695, which, as I have already said, represents the version used by Betterton. If, after Hamlet had become almost a classic, an actor of Betterton's intelligence, playing before an audience containing a large number of educated persons more or less familiar with the text of Shakespeare, could venture to mutilate Shakespeare's poetry as he did in Hamlet's first soliloquy, e.g. in the following passage:

So excellent a King,
So loving to my Mother. (*sic*)
That he permitted not the Winds of Heaven
Visit her Face too roughly;

or thus, in a speech of Hamlet which occurs before:

'Tis not alone this *mourning* cloke could smother;

or again, to change the beautiful line,

I do not set my life at a pin's fee,

to the bald and prosaic:

I do not value my life;

or in the great soliloquy commencing: "To be, or not to be," to substitute for the lines:

And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,

the following:

And thus the healthful face of resolution
Shews sick and pale with thought;

if Betterton in his time venture to sanction at least, if not to invent, such mutilations of the text, what would not actors dare at a time when Shakespeare was only one of the many dramatic authors of the day, when his pre-eminence had not as yet been recognized save by a very few?

It is time, however, to set before our readers the theory as to the Quarto of 1603, which,

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after long and careful study of it, has grown up in my mind. It is, of course, mere conjecture; but then conjecture has been allowed, of late, to play such fantastic tricks with Shakespeare's very existence, that one may be excused, perhaps, if one ventures to employ it to a more practical end. I would suggest that Shakespeare, at an early period of his career, formed the idea of writing a play in which the chief character should be a person of Hamlet's disposition, through whose mouth he would have the opportunity of speaking many of the secret thoughts of his young heart; one whose lot should be cast amid the most uncongenial surroundings. Some of the speeches, such as the soliloquy, "To be, or not to be," he might have sketched out roughly before he had even decided upon the plot of the play. In his youth, at Stratford-on-Avon, he must have heard a great deal of the terrible scandal relating to the Earl of Leicester's marriage with the widow of the Earl of Essex, after having, as was generally reported, poisoned her husband; and this "tragedy in private life" was surely in his mind when he was writing Hamlet. Indeed, when one comes to examine his character, Claudius with his utterly unscrupulous ambition, his nauseous plausibility, his skilful intrigues to gain popularity, his sensual bonhomie, his cunning employment of courtiers as tools for his infamous designs, is as lifelike a portrait of Robert Dudley as Shakespeare would have ventured to draw.¹

When Shakespeare was acting, with the rest of "my Lorde chamberlen men," under Henslowe's management, in 1594, the old play of Hamlet was represented, in which it is possible that he found the germ of a great tragedy suited to his purpose; the principal character of which could well be developed into a self-analysing hero, oppressed by the uncongeniality of his surroundings, such as he had already pictured in his mind. As soon as he had leisure he took the subject in hand, and

wrote his first idea of the play. With this he was not himself satisfied; but, by some means or other, a copy of this first draft got into the hands of a travelling company, who played it with success in different towns, and the two universities of Cambridge and Oxford.² That the actors themselves ventured to make some alterations in the play is extremely probable, and when, some time in the dramatic season 1601-2, Shakespeare had elaborated his first draft into what was substantially the play as we have it in the Quarto of 1604, and had produced it with great success and with his own company, the enterprising pirate publisher stepped in, and, being unable to procure the genuine play, obtained from the travelling company the faulty MS. which they had used, and printed it, as Shakespeare's play, in 1603.

In the Stationers' Register, under date July 26th, 1602, is the entry to James Robertes, [already given above]. In his admirable Forewords to Griggs's Facsimile of the Quarto of 1603 Dr. Furnivall thinks that this entry refers to the pirated edition published in the next year; but on the title-page of the First Quarto no printer's name is given, and on that of the genuine Quarto, 1604, we have "Printed by I. R[oberts] for N. L. and are to be sold at his shoppe under Saint Dunstons Church in Fleet street." It will be noticed that no address is given on the title-page by the publishers of Q. 1. Is it not possible—if my theory as to the date of Shakespeare's revision of his first draft be the right one—that Roberts had obtained the promise of the genuine MS., but that the negotiation having fallen through, N. L. [Nicholas Ling] and John Trundell meanwhile published their spurious edition; and that Shakespeare then, disgusted that such a maimed copy of his great work should be palmed off upon the public, consented to let Roberts have the full and correct manuscript to print from; a manuscript which contained at least one superb passage, the soliloquy in act iv. scene 4, which was not in the theatre copy as printed afterwards in the First Folio, or, if there originally, had been subsequently

¹ How deep an impression this story made upon many people of the time may be gathered from the Secret Memoirs of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, first published in 1706, and privately reprinted by Messrs. E. & G. Goldsmid, Edinburgh, 1887.

² See title-page of Quarto 1603.

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cut out? It is generally presumed that the N. L. of both the First and Second Quartos was Nicholas Ling; but it is quite possible that the transactions as to the publication of the genuine MS. may have taken place only with Roberts, in whose name, as will be seen from the entry quoted above, the book had first been entered on the Stationers' Register. In the interval between the publication of the pirated Quarto and that of the genuine one in 1604 Shakespeare may have made some further improvements and alterations in the play. But to whatever circumstances we owe its publication, I fully agree with Dr. Furnivall that we have in the Quarto of 1604 the most complete and the best text of Hamlet; and it is quite possible that, but for the dishonest action of N. L. and John Trundell, we should have had to rest content with the much inferior text of the First Folio.

According to my theory, then, we must suppose that the First Quarto (1603) represents Shakespeare's first draft of the play, *minus* the passages cut out by the actors, and *plus* the alterations they chose to make, in addition to the errors of the transcriber and printer.

This may seem to be a very far-fetched theory, and there is no doubt that it will be scouted by many Shakespeareanscholars whose authority is worthy of the very highest respect; but I would submit that the title-page of Q. 1 is peculiar in more respects than one. It is the only title-page of any Quarto edition of Shakespeare's plays, as far as I know, which has the statement "As it hath bene diuerse times acted by his Highnesse seruants in the Cittie of London." Now, what does this mean? Who were "his Highnesse seruants?" The Lord Chamberlain's servants we know; they were the company to which Shakespeare belonged in 1597. The First Quarto of Romeo and Juliet says that it was often played by "the Right Honourable the Lord of Hunsdon his servants." After 1603 or 1604 we have "by his Majesty's servants," *e.g.* in the entry in the Stationers' Register of King Lear of November 26th, 1607; but nowhere have we "*his* Highness' servants." The Quarto of Love's Labour's Lost has "As it was presented before *her* Highness this last Christmas."

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Now, it is worth remarking that we learn from Henslowe's Diary that on May 9th, 1603, "my Lord of Worsters men" played by the king's license, which must have been conceded to them by James I. before he granted one to his own company, formerly the Lord Chamberlain's and subsequently known as "his Majesty's servants," the patent of which to L. Fletcher, Shakespeare, Burbage, and others bears date May 17th, 1603. I would venture, therefore, to suggest that the Quarto of 1603 was printed from a copy of the play which had *never been played by Shakespeare's own company*, but by another one; perhaps by "my Lord of Worsters men," or by some members of that company who had been travelling during the last five or six years preceding 1603.

As to the chief source whence the plot of this play was taken, it has undoubtedly perished with the old play; for we cannot consider that Shakespeare owed anything directly to the original history of Hamlet in Saxo Grammaticus, or to Belleforest's version of it from Banello, published in 1559; much less to the English translation of Belleforest, which was published by Pavier in 1608. The title given by Belleforest to the story was: "*Avec quelle ruse Amleth, qui depuis fut Roy de Dannemarch, vengea la mort de son pere Horruendile, occis par Fengon son jrerre, autre occurrence de son histoire.*" Pavier calls his translation—which Collier described as "bald, literal, and in many places uncouth"—simply the *Hystorie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke* (Hazlitt's Shak. Lib. Pt. 1, vol. ii. p. 215, 216). This English translation was, I firmly believe, only published in consequence of the success of the play. The incidents common to Shakespeare's play and to the English *Hystorie of Hamlet* are very few; and as to any hints for the characterization of the *Dramatis Personæ* the prose narrative is a perfect blank. No two persons can be more different than the coarse, brutal, ruffianly Hamlet and the hero of Shakespeare's tragedy. Of course the author of the old play may have followed more closely the story as given in Belleforest than Shakespeare has; but the only incidents, common to the *Hystorie* and to the play, are the fact of the King

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having murdered his brother, and afterwards contracted an incestuous marriage with his sister-in-law; the assumption of madness by Hamlet; and his killing one of the King's friends who had concealed himself during the interview between himself and his mother. The idea of using Ophelia as a means to detect whether Hamlet's madness was real or not was, no doubt, suggested by the very coarse incident in Saxo Grammaticus, which is considerably modified in Belleforest and in the English translation. The fact that one of the courtiers, who had been brought up with Amlethus, helps him to avoid the trap laid for him by means of the woman, in Saxo Grammaticus, may have suggested the character of Horatio; but it is at the best a very faint suggestion. The Danish prince is certainly sent to England, and procures, by means of counterfeit letters, that the fate, intended for him by Fengon at the hands of the King of England, should overtake the two courtiers sent with him, much in the same way as Hamlet procures the banishment of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; but we may presume that these incidents were found in the old play, and were not taken by Shakespeare direct from the Hystorie.

As to the question whether Pavier's Hystorie of Hamblet was really published earlier than 1608—as Collier confidently asserted without an atom of proof—and before the production of the play, I think that it is completely answered by Elze, an abstract of whose cogent argument will be found in vol. ii. p. 89 of Dr. Howard Furness's New Variorum Edition of Hamlet. There are two passages in the History which have been often quoted as showing that Shakespeare had, at any rate, studied this prose story. They both occur in the scene, which corresponds to the scene in the Queen's closet in the play, in which Polonius is killed, and they will be found on page 236 of Vol. II. Part I. of Hazlitt's edition of the Shakespeare Library. In the first the narrator states that "the counsellor entred secretly into the Queenes chamber, and there hid himselfe behind the arras." The next is that which describes Hamlet entering "like a cocke beating with his armes, (in such manner

as cockes vse to strike with their wings), vpon the hangings of the chamber, whereby feeling something stirring vnder them, he cried a rat a rat, and presently drawing his sworde thrust it into the hangings" (Hazlitt's Shak. Lib. vol. ii. Pt. I. p. 236). It is very remarkable that neither in Saxo Grammaticus nor in Belleforest is there any mention of arras or hangings. In Saxo Grammaticus the word used is *stramentum*, the whole passage being: "obstreptentis galli more occentum edidit, brachiiisque pro alarum plausu concussis, con(s)censo stramento¹ corpus crebris saltibus librare cepit, siquid illic clausum delitesceret, expecturus. At ubi subiectam pedibus molem persensit, ferro locum rimatū, suppositum confodit, egestumque latebra trucidauit" (Holder's ed. p. 91). The corresponding word, in Belleforest, to *stramentum* is *loudier* or *lodier*, and he says that "le Conseiller entra secrettement en la chambre de la Reine, se cacha sous quelque *loudier*" (Belleforest, Histoires Tragiques, vol. v. p. 42). As to the expression, *A rat, a rat!* there is not the slightest parallel to this either in Saxo Grammaticus or in Belleforest. It is highly improbable, to say the least, that these alterations should have been made by the translator, unless they had been suggested to him by the play. If we could discover any early copy of the translation which was published by Pavier, it would help us to determine whether these expressions were taken from the old play, or whether they were, as I think is more probable, inserted after Shakespeare's Hamlet had been represented on the stage.

It would be impossible to give here the many passages to be found in authors of the seventeenth century before the Restoration, in which portions of this play are either bodily "conveyed," or most obviously imitated. To take an early and a late one, one may fairly say that Marston's Malcontent (1604) would never have been written—though Giovanni Altfronto, otherwise Malevole, is

¹ I should have thought that *stramentum*, in this passage, meant the rushes or straw that are strewed on the floor; but Belleforest certainly seems to have taken it to mean "a counterpane," though the former meaning coincides better with the context of the passage in Saxo.

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Excerpt

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HAMLET.

but a Brummagem imitation of Hamlet after all—if Shakespeare's play had not appeared. As a specimen of one of the later imitations of Hamlet, we may mention that little-known tragedy *The Fatal Contract*, by William Hemings, Master of Arts at Oxford, printed in 1661, but acted before that. In that play we have an *Aphelia* and a *Ghost in armour*; and, though the story of the play is totally different, many passages from Hamlet are either adapted or closely imitated.

The Cambridge editors say that the text of Hamlet in the Folio of 1623 is derived from an independent MS., one which had evidently been curtailed for the purpose of representation. Some passages are however found in the Folio which are not found in Q. 2, or in its successors, but some of which “are found in an imperfect form in the Quarto of 1603, and therefore are not subsequent additions” (vol. viii. p. xi.). The text is, in this edition, like that of most editors, founded upon a combination of those of Q. 2 and F. 1.

STAGE HISTORY.

From the time of its first production to the present day the tragedy of Hamlet seems to have kept a firmer and more uninterrupted hold upon the stage than any other play of Shakespeare's. Except during that brief and gloomy period, when Puritanism was in the ascendant, and no rational or wholesome amusements were allowed to the English people, one may venture to say that not a single year passed without it being represented several times, not only in London, but in the provinces. It is a common saying, amongst people connected with the stage, that no actor has ever yet positively failed in Hamlet; and managers, in town and country, will tell you that you have only to put Hamlet up, even with a bad cast, and you may rely on a fairly good house. Be the reason what it may, it is certain that, for the general public, who are not afflicted with that elegant complaint known as *ennui* or boredom—generally the result of too close an intimacy with and complete subserviency to one's own self,—for ordinary people who have not emasculated their minds and passions, Hamlet, even imperfectly represented, has

always had a strong interest: while, whenever an actor of talent, to say nothing of genius, attempts the chief part, he is sure to attract a numerous and attentive audience. One need not go far back in the annals of the English stage to learn that on those few occasions when an actor of real genius has arisen to throw a new light upon the complex character of Hamlet, the theatre-going public have always evinced their sympathy and interest by flocking night after night to see such a performance. This extraordinary popularity of Hamlet as an acting play is full of instruction to two classes of persons; first, to those who are never tired of declaring that the taste of the present day necessitates a total separation between literature and the drama; secondly, to those who are always sneering feebly and dyspeptically at the actor's art—persons ravenously jealous of the applause which the actor receives, but which the public ungenerously withholds from them in any of their multifarious capacities. These latter may lay to heart the undoubted fact that Hamlet, the most poetic in some respects of any of Shakespeare's plays, could not have been written by anyone but a practised actor familiar with the stage and all its ways; also this fact, scarcely less disputable, that all the reams of criticism, which have been written on the character of Hamlet, have not been able to bring home to the minds of men the real meaning of the character so clearly as a single performance of some great actor.

I have already alluded, in the *Literary History* of this play, to the peculiarity of the title-page of the first Quarto (1603). It is the only one of all the Shakespearian Quartos that contains any specific reference to performances out of London. If we are to believe that title-page, then, we know that Hamlet in its unrevised form was acted at both universities, and elsewhere in the provinces by some company, probably not Shakespeare's own. These performances may have been simultaneous with those of the revised play in London by the Lord-Chamberlain's company to which Shakespeare belonged; or they may have taken place before Shakespeare produced his revised version. At any-