The Works of William Shakespeare [Cambridge Edition] [Vol. 8 of 9]

William Shakespeare

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THE WORKS

OF

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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PREFACE.

1. The earliest edition of HAMLET appeared in 1603, 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 Iohn Trundell. | 1603.

We refer to it as (Q_1).

A copy of this edition belonged to Sir Thomas Hanmer, though he does not appear to have mentioned it in his notes to Shakespeare or in his correspondence, and its existence was not known till his library came into the possession of Sir E. H. Bunbury in 1821. In a copy of the Reprint of 1825, now at Barton, Sir E. H. Bunbury wrote the following note:

'The only copy of this edition of Hamlet (1603) which is known to be in existence was found by me in the Library at Barton when it came into my possession in 1821. The Hamlet was bound up with ten others of the small 4to editions of Shakespeare's Plays (1598 to 1603) and with The Two Noble Kinsmen (1634). Most of these were complete. I sold the volume in Dec. 1824 for £180 to Messrs Payne and Foss, who resold it to the Duke of Devonshire for £230.'

This copy wanted the last leaf containing the 22 concluding lines. A second copy, wanting the title-page but otherwise perfect, was discovered in 1856 by Mr W. H. Rooney of Dublin. 'It was bought,' says Mr Timmins, 'by Mr Rooney from a student of Trinity College, Dublin, who had brought it from Nottinghamshire with his other books. After reprinting the last leaf, Mr Rooney sold the pamphlet to Mr Boone for £70, from whom Mr J. O. Halliwell bought it for £120,

and it is now in the British Museum.'

We have reprinted this edition, and recorded in foot-notes the few discrepancies which are found between the two copies.

An extremely accurate reprint was made from the Devonshire copy in 1825, and it was lithographed in facsimile, with the addition of the missing leaf, in 1858, under the direction of Mr Collier and at the expense of the Duke. In 1860 Mr J. Allen, Junr., reprinted this edition and the Quarto of 1604, placing the corresponding passages as nearly as possible on opposite pages, with a preface by Mr Samuel Timmins.

The edition of 1603 is obviously a very imperfect reproduction of the play, and there is every reason to believe that it was printed from a manuscript surreptitiously obtained. This manuscript may have been compiled in the first instance from short hand notes taken during the representation, but there are many errors in the printed text which seem like errors of a copyist rather than of a hearer. Compare for example lines 37, 38 of Scene III. of our Reprint, p. 205, with the corresponding lines of the more perfect drama as it was printed in the Quarto of 1604, Act I. Scene 3, lines 73, 74, p. 26.

In the Quarto of 1603 the passage runs thus:

And they of _France_ of the chiefe rancke and station Are of a most select and generall chiefe in that:

In that of 1604:

'And they in Fraunce of the best ranck and station, Or of a most select and generous, chiefe in that:'

It is clear that the corruption in both passages is due to an error in the

transcript from which both were copied. Probably the author had originally written:

'And they in France of the best rank and station Are most select and generous in that:'

and then given between the lines or in the margin, 'of,' 'chief', meaning these as alternative readings for 'in' and 'best' in the first line. The transcriber by mistake inserted them in the second line. A few lines above both Quartos give 'courage' for 'comrade,' a mistake due undoubtedly to the eye and not to the ear.

We believe then that the defects of the manuscript from which the Quarto of 1603 was printed had been in part at least supplemented by a reference to the authentic copy in the library of the theatre. Very probably the man employed for this purpose was some inferior actor or servant, who would necessarily work in haste and by stealth, and in any case would not be likely to work very conscientiously for the printer or bookseller who was paying him to deceive his masters.

The Quarto of 1604, which we call Q_2, has the following title-page:

THE | Tragicall Historie of | HAMLET, | _Prince of Denmarke_. | By William Shakespeare. | 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 vnder Saint Dunstons Church in | Fleetstreet. 1604.

The printer 'I. R.' was no doubt, as Mr Collier says, James Roberts, who had made an entry in the books of the Stationers' company as early as July 26, 1602, of 'A booke, The Revenge of Hamlett prince of Denmarke, as yt was latelie acted by the Lord Chamberleyn his

servantes.'

For some unknown reason the projected edition was delayed, and in the mean time the popularity of the play encouraged N. L., i.e. Nicholas Ling, and the other publisher, Trundell, to undertake a surreptitious edition.

In the interval between the two editions Shakespeare seems to have changed the names of some of his Dramatis Personæ, substituting 'Polonius' for 'Corambis' and 'Reynaldo' for 'Montano.' He may also have changed the order of one or two scenes, and here and there erased or inserted a few lines, but we think that no substantial change was made, and that the chief differences between (Q_1) and Q_2 are only such as might be expected between a bona fide, and a mala fide, transcription.

The Quarto of 1605, which we call Q_3, is not, properly speaking, a new edition, being printed from the same forms as Q_2, and differing from it no more than one copy of the same edition may differ from another. The title-page differs only in the date, where 1605 is substituted for 1604.

Another Quarto, our Q_4, printed in 1611, bears a title-page which does not substantially differ from that of Q_3, except that it is said to be:

'Printed for _Iohn Smethwicke_, and are to be sold at his shoppe | in Saint Dunstons Church-yeard in Fleetstreet. | Under the Diall. 1611. |'

Another Quarto, without date, is said on the title-page to be 'Newly imprinted and inlarged, according to the true | and perfect Copy lastly Printed,' and to be 'Printed by W. S. for _Iohn Smethwicke_.'

Otherwise the title-page is identical with that of Q_4. Mr Collier supposes this undated Quarto to have been printed in 1607, because there is an entry in the Stationers' books of that year and no edition with that date is known to exist. We are convinced however that the undated Quarto was printed from that of 1611, and we have therefore called it Q_5.

Another Quarto, printed 'by _R. Young_ for _John Smethwicke_,' was published in 1637. This we call Q_6. It is printed from Q_5, though the spelling is considerably modernized and the punctuation amended.

The symbol Qq signifies the agreement of Q_2, Q_3, Q_4, Q_5 and Q_6.

Besides these, several editions, usually known as Players' Quartos, were printed at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the following century. Of these we have had before us during our collation, editions of 1676, 1685, 1695 and 1703. These we call respectively Q(1676), Q(1685), Q(1695) and Q(1703). We have given all readings which seemed in any way remarkable, though we need scarcely say that the changes made in these editions have no authority whatever. It is however worthy of notice that many emendations usually attributed to Rowe and Pope are really derived from one or other of these Players' Quartos. When we give a reading as belonging to one of these Quartos, it is to be understood that it occurs there for the first time and that all the subsequent Quartos adopt it.

The text of Hamlet given in the Folio of 1623 is not derived from any of the previously existing Quartos, but from an independent manuscript. Many passages are found in the Folio which do not appear in any of the Quartos. On the other hand many passages found

in the Quartos are not found in the Folio. It is to be remarked that several of those which appear in the Folio and not in the Quarto of 1604 or its successors, are found in an imperfect form in the Quarto of 1603, and therefore are not subsequent additions. Both the Quarto text of 1604 and the Folio text of 1623 seem to have been derived from manuscripts of the play curtailed, and curtailed differently, for purposes of representation. Therefore in giving in our text all the passages from both Folio and Quarto we are reproducing, as near as may be, the work as it was originally written by Shakespeare, or rather as finally retouched by him after the spurious edition of 1603.

We have been unable to procure a copy of the Quarto edition of this play, edited in 1703 by 'the accurate Mr John Hughs' (Theobald's _Shakespeare Restored_, p. 26), and have therefore quoted the readings of it on Theobald's authority. It is different from the Players' Quarto of 1703, and is not mentioned in Bohn's edition of Lowndes's _Bibliographer's Manual_. No copy of it exists in the British Museum, the Bodleian, the library of the Duke of Devonshire, the Capell collection, or any other to which we have had access.

We have to thank Dr C. M. Ingleby for the loan of several editions of _Hamlet_ which we should otherwise have had difficulty in procuring.

2. KING LEAR first appeared in 1608. In this year there were two editions in Quarto. One bears the following title:

M. William Shakespeare, | _HIS_ | True Chronicle History of the life | and death of King _Lear_, and his | _three Daughters_. | _With the unfortunate life of_ EDGAR, | sonne and heire to the Earle of _Glocester_, and | _his sullen and assumed humour of_ TOM | of

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