The Works of William Shakespeare [Cambridge Edition] [Vol. 7 of 9]

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THE WORKS

OF

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

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THE WORKS

OF

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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PREFACE.

1. The first edition of ROMEO AND JULIET was published in 1597, with the following title:

AN | EXCELLENT | conceited Tragedie | _OF_ | Romeo and Iuliet, | As it hath been often (with great applause) | plaid publiquely, by the right Ho-|nourable the L. of _Hunsdon_ | his Seruants. | LONDON, | Printed by Iohn Danter. | 1597. |

After Sig. D, a smaller type is used for the rest of the play, and the running title is changed from 'The most excellent Tragedie, of Romeo and Iuliet' to 'The excellent Tragedie of Romeo and Iuliet.'

The text of this first Quarto differs so widely from that of later and more perfect editions, that it is impossible to record the results of a collation in footnotes: we have therefore reprinted it. When we refer to it in the notes, it is designated as (Q1), the marks of parenthesis being used as in similar cases previously.

An opinion has been entertained by some critics that in this earliest Quarto we have a fairly accurate version of the play as it was at first written; and that in the interval between the publication of the first and second Quartos, the play was revised and recast by its author into the form in which it appears in the edition of 1599. A careful examination of the earlier text will, we think, prove this notion to be untenable. Not to speak of minor errors, it is impossible that Shakespeare should ever have given to the world a composition containing so many instances of imperfect sense, halting metre, bad grammar, and abrupt dialogue. We believe that the play, as at first written, was substantially the same as that given in the later editions; and that the defects of the first impression are due, not to the author, but to the writer of the manuscript from which that first impression was printed. That manuscript was, in all probability, obtained from notes taken in short-hand during the representation: a practice which we know to have been common in those days. It is true that the text of (Q1) is more accurate on the whole than might have been expected from such an origin; but the short-hand writer may have been a man of unusual intelligence and skill, and may have been present at many representations in order to correct his work; or possibly some of the

players may have helped him either from memory, or by lending their parts in manuscript. But the examples of omission and conjectural insertion are too frequent and too palpable to allow of the supposition that the earliest text is derived from a bona fide transcript of the author's MS. The unusual precision of some stage directions in (Q1) tends to confirm our view of its origin; a view which is supported by the high authority of M. Tycho Mommsen. The portions of the play omitted in (Q1), though necessary to its artistic completeness and to its effect as a poem, are for the most part passages which might be spared without disturbing the consecutive and intelligible developement of the action. It is possible therefore that the play as seen by the short-hand writer was curtailed in the representation.

The second Quarto was in all likelihood an edition authorized by Shakespeare and his 'fellows,' and intended to supersede the surreptitious and imperfect edition of 1597. The play so published, we believe, as we have said, to be substantially identical with the play as at first composed; it seems however to have been revised by the author. Here and there a passage appears to have been rewritten. Compare, for example, (Q1) Sc. 10, lines 11-30 (p. 169 of the reprint) with the corresponding passages of the later editions, Act II. Sc. 6, lines 16-36. In this place assuredly the change must be attributed to the author; but we know of no other passage of equal length where the same can be affirmed with certainty. The words 'newly corrected, augmented, and amended,' found on the title-page of the second Quarto, may be accepted as the statement of a fact, when thus confirmed by internal evidence. Otherwise we know that the assertions in titlepages or prefaces of that time are not to be relied on, nor in this case would the words necessarily mean more than that this

second edition was more correct and more complete than the first. In fact, the added matter amounts nearly to a quarter of the whole.

The title-page of the second Quarto, Q2, is as follows:

THE | MOST EX-| cellent and lamentable | Tragedie, of Romeo | and _Iuliet_. | _Newly corrected, augmented, and | amended_: | As it hath bene sundry times publiquely acted, by the | right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine | his Seruants | LONDON. | Printed by Thomas Creede, for Cuthbert Burby, and are to | be sold at his shop neare the Exchange. | 1599. |

This is unquestionably our best authority; nevertheless in determining the text, (Q1) must in many places be taken into account. For it is certain that Q2 was not printed from the author's MS., but from a transcript, the writer of which was not only careless, but thought fit to take unwarrantable liberties with the text. In passing through his hands, many passages were thus transmuted from poetry to prose. Pope felt this strongly, too strongly indeed, for he adopted the text of the first Quarto in many places where Capell and all subsequent editors have judiciously recurred to the second. Nevertheless there is no editor who has not felt it necessary occasionally to call in the aid of the first. We think that M. Tycho Mommsen rates the authority of the second Quarto too highly. Any rare form of word or strange construction found in this edition alone, and corrected in all that follow, may more probably be assigned to the transcriber (or in some cases to the printer) than to Shakespeare, whose language is singularly free from archaisms and provincialisms.

The third Quarto, Q3, was published in 1609, with the following title-page:

THE | MOST EX-CELLENT AND | Lamentable Tragedie, of | _Romeo_ _and Juliet_. | As it hath beene sundrie times publiquely Acted, | by the KINGS Maiesties Seruants | at the Globe. | Newly corrected, augmented, and | amended: | LONDON | Printed for IOHN SMETHVVICK, and are to be sold | at his Shop in Saint _Dunstanes_ Church-yard, | in Fleetestreete vnder the Dyall | 1609 |.

It was printed from Q2, from which it differs by a few corrections, and more frequently by additional errors.

The next Quarto has no date.

Its title-page bears for the first time the name of the author. After the word 'GLOBE' and in a separate line we find the words: 'Written by W. _Shake-speare_.' Otherwise, except in some slight variations of type and spelling, the title-page of the undated Quarto does not differ from that of Q3. It was also printed '_for Iohn Smethwicke_,' without the mention of the printer's name.

Though this edition has no date, internal evidence conclusively proves that it was printed from Q3 and that the Quarto of 1637 was printed from it. We therefore call it Q4.

It contains some very important corrections of the text, none however that an intelligent reader might not make conjecturally and without reference to any other authority. Indeed had the corrector been able to refer to any such authority, he would not have left so many obviously corrupt passages untouched.

The title-page of the fifth Quarto, our Q5, is substantially identical with that of Q4, except that it is said to be printed 'by _R. Young_ for _John Smethwicke_,' and dated, 1637.

It is printed, as we have said, from Q4. The punctuation has been carefully regulated throughout, and the spelling in many cases made uniform.

The symbol Qq signifies the agreement of Q2, Q3, Q4, and Q5.

The text of the first Folio is taken from that of the third Quarto. As usual there are a number of changes, some accidental, some deliberate, but all generally for the worse, excepting the changes in punctuation and in the stage-directions. The punctuation, as a rule, is more correct, and the stage-directions are more complete, in the Folio.

The text of the second Folio is printed of course from the first. In this play there are found in it a considerable number of conjectural emendations, not generally happy, and perhaps more than the usual number of errors.

A careful study of the text of _Romeo and Juliet_ will show how little we can rely upon having the true text, as Shakespeare wrote it, in those plays for which the Folio is our earliest authority.

M. Tycho Mommsen published in 1859 a reprint of the first and second Quartos on opposite pages, and in the footnotes a collation of the remaining Quartos (not quite complete in the case of the fourth and fifth), the four Folios, Rowe's first edition, and the new readings of Mr Collier's MS. corrector. The volume is preceded by learned and valuable 'Prolegomena,' and the collation, which we have tested, is done with great care and accuracy. If our collation, so far as it occupies the same ground, may claim to be not less accurate, it must be remembered, first, that we have not endeavoured to record every minute variation of typography, but only such as were in our

judgement significant or otherwise noteworthy; secondly, that we have had in all cases the original editions to refer to; and thirdly, that we have had the advantage of comparing our collation with his, and, wherever we found a discrepancy, verifying by a reference to the old copies.

Of the many alterations of _Romeo and Juliet_ we have only had occasion to quote Otway's _Caius Marius_.

* * * * *

2. TIMON OF ATHENS was printed for the first time in the Folio of 1623. It is called _The Life of Tymon of Athens_; in the running titles, _Timon of Athens_; and occupies twenty-one pages, from 80 to 98 inclusive, 81 and 82 being numbered twice over. After 98 the next page is filled with _The Actors Names_, and the following page is blank. The next page, the first of _Julius Cæsar_, is numbered 109, and instead of beginning as it should signature _ii_, the signature is _kk_. From this it may be inferred that for some reason the printing of _Julius Cæsar_ was commenced before that of _Timon_ was finished. It may be that the manuscript of _Timon_ was imperfect, and that the printing was stayed till it could be completed by some playwright engaged for the purpose. This would account for the manifest imperfections at the close of the play. But it is difficult to conceive how the printer came to miscalculate so widely the space required to be left.

The well-known carelessness of the printers of the Folio in respect of metre will not suffice to account for the deficiencies of _Timon_. The original play, on which Shakespeare worked, must have been written, for the most part, either in prose or in very irregular verse.

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