

Shakespeare

Complete Works



SHAKESPEARE

COMPLETE WORKS

EDITED
WITH A GLOSSARY BY
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PREFACE

THERE is no proof that Shakespeare personally superintended the printing of any of his plays. Although sixteen came separately from the press in small quarto volumes during his lifetime, many, if not all, of these were published without the consent or supervision of the author from copies often surreptitiously obtained from the playhouse. At the time of Shakespeare's death in 1616, no less than twenty-one plays remained in manuscript. Six years later, in 1622, one of these, 'Othello', was issued to the public in quarto. It was not until 1623 that Shakespeare's actor friends, John Heming and Henry Condell, brought together the previously printed and unprinted dramas of which they knew him to be the author, and published them in a folio volume in order 'to keep' (as they wrote) 'the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive'. Thirty-six plays were thus claimed for Shakespeare. The thirty-seventh, 'Pericles', had been first printed separately in quarto in 1609, but was not added to the collection until the third folio appeared in 1664.

The text alike of the first folio and the quartos was doubtless supplied by playhouse copies which often embodied the ill-conditioned interpolations and alterations of actors and theatrical managers. As a rule the editors of 1623 followed where they could the text of the quartos, but in a few cases they unwisely had recourse to less correct copies. Moreover, the printers of both Elizabeth's and James I's reigns were very liable to typographical error, and they introduced much that is unintelligible into the original editions of Shakespeare's works. But in the absence of Shakespeare's manuscripts, the seventeen early quartos and the folio of 1623 jointly present, despite defect of copyist and printer, the sole authorized version of the Shakespearian text. From that version I have only ventured to deviate where it seemed to me that the carelessness of either copyist or printer deprived a word or sentence wholly of meaning. Editors of Shakespeare have sometimes denounced as corrupt and have partially altered passages which owe their difficulty of interpretation to the presence of some word or phrase rare in Shakespeare's day and long since obsolete. It has been my endeavour to avoid this danger. I have only adopted a change after convincing myself that the characteristics of Shakespeare's vocabulary or literary style failed to justify the original reading.

For the uncertain orthography of the old editions I have substituted the recognized orthography of the present day. But metrical considerations occasionally render the retention of the older spelling necessary, and I have deemed it desirable to adhere to the older forms of a few words

which modern orthography has practically shaped anew. The punctuation has been thoroughly revised, and, to increase facilities of reference, I have numbered the lines at shorter intervals than have been adopted hitherto.

In seeking to emend corrupt passages I have carefully considered the suggestions of my many predecessors, and from few of those who have already laboured in the field of textual criticism have I failed to derive some enlightenment. Of the older editors, Theobald, whose edition of Shakespeare appeared in 1733, and Capell, whose edition appeared in 1768, have proved most helpful. Among more modern editions I am chiefly indebted to the work of Delius, Dyce, and the Cambridge editors. A very few of the emendations which I have adopted are now introduced into the text for the first time. My thanks are due to my friend Mr. P. A. Daniel for many useful suggestions.

I have appended a short glossary, which I trust will adequately explain the meaning of the obsolete words which Shakespeare employed.

W. J. CRAIG.

1894.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	v
THE TEMPEST	1
THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA	23
THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR	45
MEASURE FOR MEASURE	72
THE COMEDY OF ERRORS	101
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING	119
LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST	144
A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM	171
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE	192
AS YOU LIKE IT	217
THE TAMING OF THE SHREW	243
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL	270
TWELFTH-NIGHT; OR, WHAT YOU WILL	299
THE WINTER'S TALE	324
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF KING JOHN	355
THE TRAGEDY OF KING RICHARD II	381
THE FIRST PART OF KING HENRY IV	409
THE SECOND PART OF KING HENRY IV	438
THE LIFE OF KING HENRY V	470
THE FIRST PART OF KING HENRY VI	502
THE SECOND PART OF KING HENRY VI	531
THE THIRD PART OF KING HENRY VI	564
THE TRAGEDY OF KING RICHARD III	596
THE FAMOUS HISTORY OF THE LIFE OF KING HENRY VIII	635
TROILUS AND CRESSIDA	667
CORIOLANUS	701
TITUS ANDRONICUS	738
ROMEO AND JULIET	764
TIMON OF ATHENS	795
JULIUS CÆSAR	820
MACBETH	846
HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK	870
KING LEAR	908

OTHELLO, THE MOOR OF VENICE	943
ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA	977
CYMBELINE	1012
PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE	1048

POEMS

VENUS AND ADONIS	1074
THE RAPE OF LUCRECE	1087
SONNETS	1106
A LOVER'S COMPLAINT	1127
THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM	1131
SONNETS TO SUNDRY NOTES OF MUSIC	1133
THE PHENIX AND THE TURTLE	1135
INDEX OF CHARACTERS	1136
INDEX OF FIRST LINES OF SONGS, ETC.	1141
GLOSSARY	1142
SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS IN THEIR HISTORICAL ORDER by F. MADAN	1165
NOTES ON THE SEQUENCE OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS by PERCY SIMPSON	1166