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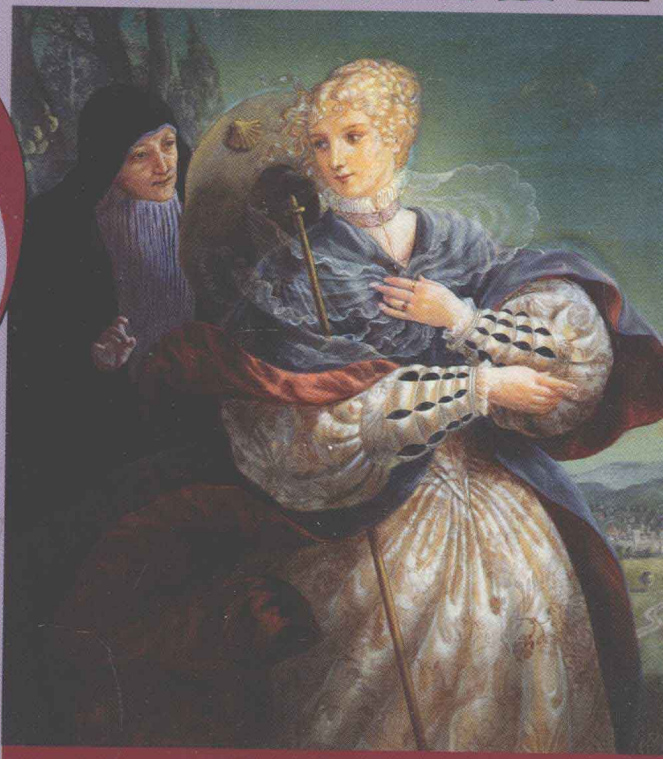

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

EDITED BY BARBARA A. MOWAT AND PAUL WERSTINE

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ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

WASHINGTON SQUARE PRESS
PUBLISHED BY POCKET BOOKS
New York London Toronto Sydney Singapore

A WASHINGTON SQUARE PRESS *Original* Publication

A Washington Square Press Publication of
POCKET BOOKS, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.
1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

ISBN: 0-671-72254-9

Washington Square Press New Folger Edition June 2001

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

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Cover art by Kinuko Y. Craft

Printed in the U.S.A.

THE NEW FOLGER LIBRARY SHAKESPEARE

Designed to make Shakespeare's great plays available to all readers, the New Folger Library edition of Shakespeare's plays provides accurate texts in modern spelling and punctuation, as well as scene-by-scene action summaries, full explanatory notes, many pictures clarifying Shakespeare's language, and notes recording all significant departures from the early printed versions. Each play is prefaced by a brief introduction, by a guide to reading Shakespeare's language, and by accounts of his life and theater. Each play is followed by an annotated list of further readings and by a "Modern Perspective" written by an expert on that particular play.

Barbara A. Mowat is Director of Academic Programs at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Senior Editor of *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Chair of the Folger Institute, and author of *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances* and of essays on Shakespeare's plays and on the editing of the plays.

Paul Werstine is Professor of English at King's College and the Graduate School of the University of Western Ontario, Canada. He is general editor of the New Variorum Shakespeare and author of many papers and articles on the printing and editing of Shakespeare's plays.

The Folger Shakespeare Library

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From the Director of the Library

For over four decades, the Folger Library General Reader's Shakespeare provided accurate and accessible texts of the plays and poems to students, teachers, and millions of other interested readers. Today, in an age often impatient with the past, the passion for Shakespeare continues to grow. No author speaks more powerfully to the human condition, in all its variety, than this actor/playwright from a minor sixteenth-century English village.

Over the years vast changes have occurred in the way Shakespeare's works are edited, performed, studied, and taught. The New Folger Library Shakespeare replaces the earlier versions, bringing to bear the best and most current thinking concerning both the texts and their interpretation. Here is an edition which makes the plays and poems fully understandable for modern readers using uncompromising scholarship. Professors Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine are uniquely qualified to produce this New Folger Shakespeare for a new generation of readers. The Library is grateful for the learning, clarity, and imagination they have brought to this ambitious project.

Werner Gundersheimer,
Director of The Folger Shakespeare
Library from 1984 to 2002

Editors' Preface

In recent years, ways of dealing with Shakespeare's texts and with the interpretation of his plays have been undergoing significant change. This edition, while retaining many of the features that have always made the Folger Shakespeare so attractive to the general reader, at the same time reflects these current ways of thinking about Shakespeare. For example, modern readers, actors, and teachers have become interested in the differences between, on the one hand, the early forms in which Shakespeare's plays were first published and, on the other hand, the forms in which editors through the centuries have presented them. In response to this interest, we have based our edition on what we consider the best early printed version of a particular play (explaining our rationale in a section called "An Introduction to This Text") and have marked our changes in the text—unobtrusively, we hope, but in such a way that the curious reader can be aware that a change has been made and can consult the "Textual Notes" to discover what appeared in the early printed version.

Current ways of looking at the plays are reflected in our brief prefaces, in many of the commentary notes, in the annotated lists of "Further Reading," and especially in each play's "Modern Perspective," an essay written by an outstanding scholar who brings to the reader his or her fresh assessment of the play in the light of today's interests and concerns.

As in the Folger Library General Reader's Shakespeare, which this edition replaces, we include explanatory notes designed to help make Shakespeare's language clearer to a modern reader, and we place the notes on the page facing the text that they explain. We also follow the earlier edition in including illustra-

tions—of objects, of clothing, of mythological figures—from books and manuscripts in the Folger Library collection. We provide fresh accounts of the life of Shakespeare, of the publishing of his plays, and of the theaters in which his plays were performed, as well as an introduction to the text itself. We also include a section called "Reading Shakespeare's Language," in which we try to help readers learn to "break the code" of Elizabethan poetic language.

For each section of each volume, we are indebted to a host of generous experts and fellow scholars. The "Reading Shakespeare's Language" sections, for example, could not have been written had not Arthur King, of Brigham Young University, and Randall Robinson, author of *Unlocking Shakespeare's Language,* led the way in untangling Shakespearean language puzzles and shared their insights and methodologies generously with us. "Shakespeare's Life" profited by the careful reading given it by the late S. Schoenbaum; "Shakespeare's Theater" was read and strengthened by Andrew Gurr, John Astington, and William Ingram; and "The Publication of Shakespeare's Plays" is indebted to the comments of Peter W. M. Blayney. Among the texts we consulted, we found Susan Snyder's 1993 Oxford edition of the play especially helpful. We, as editors, take sole responsibility for any errors in our editions.

We are grateful to the authors of the "Modern Perspectives"; to Leeds Barroll and David Bevington for their generous encouragement; to the Huntington and Newberry Libraries for fellowship support; to King's College for the grants it has provided to Paul Werstine; to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, which provided him with a Research Time Stipend for 1990–91; to R. J. Shroyer of the University of Western Ontario for essential computer sup-

port; to the Folger Institute's Center for Shakespeare Studies for its fortuitous sponsorship of a workshop on "Shakespeare's Texts for Students and Teachers" (funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and led by Richard Knowles of the University of Wisconsin), a workshop from which we learned an enormous amount about what is wanted by college and high-school teachers of Shakespeare today; to Alice Falk for her expert copyediting; and especially to Steve Llano, our production editor at Pocket Books, whose expertise and attention to detail are essential to this project.

Our biggest debt is to the Folger Shakespeare Library—to Werner Gundersheimer, Director of the Library, who made possible our edition; to Deborah Curren-Aquino, who provides extensive editorial and production support; to Jean Miller, who combs the Library holdings for illustrations, and to Julie Ainsworth, Head of the Photography Department, who carefully photographs them; to Peggy O'Brien, former Director of Education at the Folger and now Director of Education Programs at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, who gave us expert advice about the needs being expressed by Shakespeare teachers and students (and to Martha Christian and other "master teachers" who used our texts in manuscript in their classrooms); to Allan Shnerson and Mary Bloodworth for expert computer support; to the staff of the Academic Programs Division, especially Rachel Kunkle (whose help is crucial), Mary Tonkinson, Kathleen Lynch, Carol Brobeck, Toni Krieger, Liz Pohland, Owen Williams, and Lisa Meyers; and, finally, to the generously supportive staff of the Library's Reading Room.

Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine

Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*

All's Well That Ends Well is, like so many of Shakespeare's comedies, about a young woman and a young man. Yet *All's Well* is in many ways Helen's story. Helen bears the name of the mythological, incredibly beautiful Helen of Troy, the object of all male desire, but the plot of *All's Well* turns on the fact that its heroine is not desired by Bertram, the man whose love she yearns for. In the face of his lack of interest and the wide gap in social standing that separates them, she sets out to win him as a husband. Having technically won him, she finds little happiness in the victory. Before they are married, he ignores her; after they are married, he shuns, deserts, and attempts to betray her. She is the one who takes all the initiative in furthering their union. Such a task is a hard one in a culture that, like Shakespeare's, consigned women to the passive role of yielding to male desire. Only by providing a spectacular, apparently miraculous, cure for the French king does she win the reward of choosing Bertram as a husband from among the young men whose fates are in the control of the King. Only through an arduous and lonely pilgrimage and a daring trick does she establish her marriage with Bertram.

In a comedy like *All's Well*, which centers on courtship and marriage, Bertram's part is largely an unsympathetic one, for, in fleeing Helen, he impedes the advancement of the plot. However, the play provides points of view from which Bertram may be perceived with some sympathy. As the play opens,

Bertram's father, like Helen's, has just died. Yet Bertram does not, as we might expect in a comedy, come into his inheritance and assume the rights and responsibilities of an autonomous male. Instead, he becomes a ward to the French king, who severely restricts Bertram's opportunities to find his own way in the world. When his young friends go off to war to seek fame, Bertram is obliged to maintain his attendance at the King's court. When Helen cures the King, the King makes Bertram available to her quite against Bertram's will. When Helen selects him, he is powerless to resist openly. To exert any control over the course of his life, he must flee the King and his native land and go to war in Italy, thereby incurring the displeasure not only of the King but also of his mother the Countess and the rest of the older generation, all of whom disapprove of his treatment of Helen and his flagrant disobedience of the King.

While Bertram finds fulfillment in his transgression, winning glory in battle and also finding sexual satisfaction, and while the play gives us reasons to understand his behavior, he continues to strike us more as an obstacle for Helen to overcome than as a sympathetic hero. The play tells Helen's fairy-tale story of incredible challenges met and overcome—though few today see a fairy-tale ending at the conclusion of her journey.

After you have read the play, we invite you to turn to the essay printed at the back of this book, *"All's Well That Ends Well*: A Modern Perspective," by Professor David McCandless of Carleton College.

Reading Shakespeare's Language: *All's Well That Ends Well*

For many people today, reading Shakespeare's language can be a problem—but it is a problem that can be solved. Those who have studied Latin (or even French or German or Spanish), and those who are used to reading poetry, will have little difficulty understanding the language of Shakespeare's poetic drama. Others, though, need to develop the skills of untangling unusual sentence structures and of recognizing and understanding poetic compressions, omissions, and wordplay. And even those skilled in reading unusual sentence structures may have occasional trouble with Shakespeare's words. Four hundred years of "static" intervene between his speaking and our hearing. Most of his immense vocabulary is still in use, but a few of his words are not, and, worse, some of his words now have meanings quite different from those they had in the sixteenth century. In the theater, most of these difficulties are solved for us by actors who study the language and articulate it for us so that the essential meaning is heard—or, when combined with stage action, is at least *felt*. When reading on one's own, one must do what each actor does: go over the lines (often with a dictionary close at hand) until the puzzles are solved and the lines yield up their poetry and the characters speak in words and phrases that are, suddenly, rewarding and wonderfully memorable.

Shakespeare's Words

As you begin to read the opening scenes of a play by Shakespeare, you may notice occasional unfamiliar words. Some are unfamiliar simply because we no longer use them. In the opening scenes of *All's Well That Ends Well*, for example, you will find the words *prejudicates* (i.e., condemns in advance), *discipled* (i.e., trained), *approof* (i.e., proof), and *sithence* (i.e., since). Words of this kind are explained in notes to the text and will become familiar the more of Shakespeare's plays you read.

In *All's Well That Ends Well*, as in all of Shakespeare's writing, more problematic are the words that we still use but that we use with a different meaning. In the opening scenes of *All's Well That Ends Well*, for example, the word *want* has the meaning of "lack," *simpleness* is used where we would say "innocence," *livelihood* is used where we would say "liveliness," and *taxed* where we would say "reproved" or "reprimanded." Such words will be explained in the notes to the text, but they, too, will become familiar as you continue to read Shakespeare's language.

Some words are strange not because of the "static" introduced by changes in language over the past centuries but because these are words that Shakespeare is using to build dramatic worlds that have their own space, time, and history. In the first two acts of *All's Well That Ends Well*, for example, Shakespeare conjures up a number of different worlds—those of the court, the military, and the medical profession. The first and principal setting is that of the court, both the provincial court of Rossillion and the royal court of the King of France. Power relations within these courts are determined by the accidents of birth (i.e.,

lineage or "blood") and death. Because of his father's death, Bertram, an "unseasoned courtier," is "in ward, evermore in subjection" to the King of France. Yet to Helen, by birth "a gentlewoman" to an "honorable mistress" and therefore below Bertram in social hierarchy, he is "a bright particular star." Helen laments the "difference betwixt their two estates"—between her "humble" and his "honored name"—and wishes that their "qualities were level." For Bertram, the adventure of a foreign war offers the promise of deliverance from subjection. "The Florentines and Senoys are by th' ears," and Bertram and other young courtiers who are "sick for breathing and exploit" and who desire to "wear themselves in the cap of the time" will compete to be the "bravest questant" and to survive as "well-entered soldiers." In "the Tuscan service," they will risk being forever disfigured by a "cicatrice" but will also be thrilled by "the bound and high curvet / Of Mars's fiery steed." Helen will attempt to change the fate of her birth and find "the luckiest star in heaven" through her practice of medicine or "physic," using the "applications," "prescriptions," "receipts," "appliance," and "empirics" that she has inherited from her father against the "malignant cause" from which the French king suffers. In so doing she will best the "schools" or "congregated college" of the "artists . . . both of Galen and Paracelsus," "learned and authentic fellows."

Shakespeare's Sentences

In an English sentence, meaning is quite dependent on the place given each word. "The dog bit the boy" and "The boy bit the dog" mean very different things, even though the individual words are the same. Because

English places such importance on the positions of words in sentences, on the way words are arranged, unusual arrangements can puzzle a reader. Shakespeare frequently shifts his sentences away from "normal" English arrangements—often to create the rhythm he seeks, sometimes to use a line's poetic rhythm to emphasize a particular word, sometimes to give a character his or her own speech patterns or to allow the character to speak in a special way. When we attend a good performance of the play, the actors will have worked out the sentence structures and will articulate the sentences so that the meaning is clear. In reading for ourselves, we can do as the actor does. That is, when we become puzzled by a character's speech, we can check to see if words are being presented in an unusual sequence.

Shakespeare often, for example, rearranges subjects and verbs (i.e., instead of "He goes" we find "Goes he"). In *All's Well That Ends Well*, when Bertram says of his dead father "So in approof lives not his epitaph" (1.2.57), he is using such a construction. So is Parolles when he says simply "say I" (2.3.15). The "normal" order would be "His epitaph lives not so in approof" and "I say." Shakespeare also frequently places the object before the subject and verb (i.e., instead of "I hit him," we might find "Him I hit"). The Countess's statement "Her dispositions she inherits" (1.1.41–42) is an example of such an inversion, as is the French king's "his plausive words / He scattered not in ears" (1.2.60–61). The "normal" order would be "She inherits her dispositions" and "He scattered not his plausive words in ears."

Inversions are not the only unusual sentence structures in Shakespeare's language. Often in his sentences words that would normally appear together are sepa-

rated from each other. Again, this is often done to create a particular rhythm or to stress a particular word. Take, for example, "Then I confess / Here on my knee before high heaven and you / That before you and next unto high heaven / I love your son" (1.3.201–4). In these lines, the adverb "Here" and the phrase "on my knee before high heaven and you" separate the verb of the main clause ("confess") from its object (the clause "That . . . I love your son"). (Within the clause that forms the object of the main clause, the phrases "before you" and "next unto high heaven" delay the appearance of the clause's subject and verb ["I love"]. For more on delaying the appearance of the principal sentence elements, see below.) Or take the King's lines to Bertram quoting the young man's father:

> "Let me not live"—
> This his good melancholy oft began
> On the catastrophe and heel of pastime,
> When it was out—"Let me not live," quoth he,
> "After my flame lacks oil. . . ."
>
> (1.2.62–66)

Here after one sentence begins with the first quotation of Bertram's father's words, the sentence is interrupted, as marked in our text by the first dash, so that another entire sentence can be inserted ("This his good melancholy . . . was out") before the original sentence begins again. Thus Shakespeare is able to create the flavor of spontaneous conversation in the medium of blank verse.

Sometimes, although not often in *All's Well That Ends Well*, rather than separating basic sentence elements, Shakespeare simply holds them back, delaying them until other material to which he wants to give

greater emphasis has been presented. Shakespeare puts this kind of construction in the mouth of the King when he again addresses Bertram, this time about Helen:

> If she be
> All that is virtuous, save what thou dislik'st—
> "A poor physician's daughter"—thou dislik'st
> Of virtue for the name.
>
> (2.3.132–35)

Holding back the essential sentence elements, the subject, the verb, and the completion of the predicate ("thou dislik'st / Of virtue for the name"), the King first establishes the terms according to which Helen is to be presented. For him, she is a paragon of virtue, "All that is virtuous"; he dismisses the issue of her inadequate lineage by reducing it to his quotation of the phrase that Bertram has earlier used to characterize her, " 'A poor physician's daughter.' " The King turns Bertram's evaluation into just so many words.

Finally, in many of Shakespeare's plays, sentences are sometimes complicated not because of unusual structures or interruptions but because Shakespeare omits words and parts of words that English sentences normally require. (In conversation, we, too, often omit words. We say, "Heard from him yet?" and our hearer supplies the missing "Have you.") Frequent reading of Shakespeare—and of other poets—trains us to supply such missing words. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, a number of speakers implicitly claim to voice wisdom by speaking in a carefully balanced elliptical way. For example, when Lafew tells the Countess and Bertram that they have nothing to fear from the French king, he states his opinion in a sentence so formulated that the