

SHAKESPEARE'S
COMEDY OF
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

EDITED, WITH NOTES,

BY

WILLIAM J. ROLFE, LITT.D.,

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WITH ENGRAVINGS.

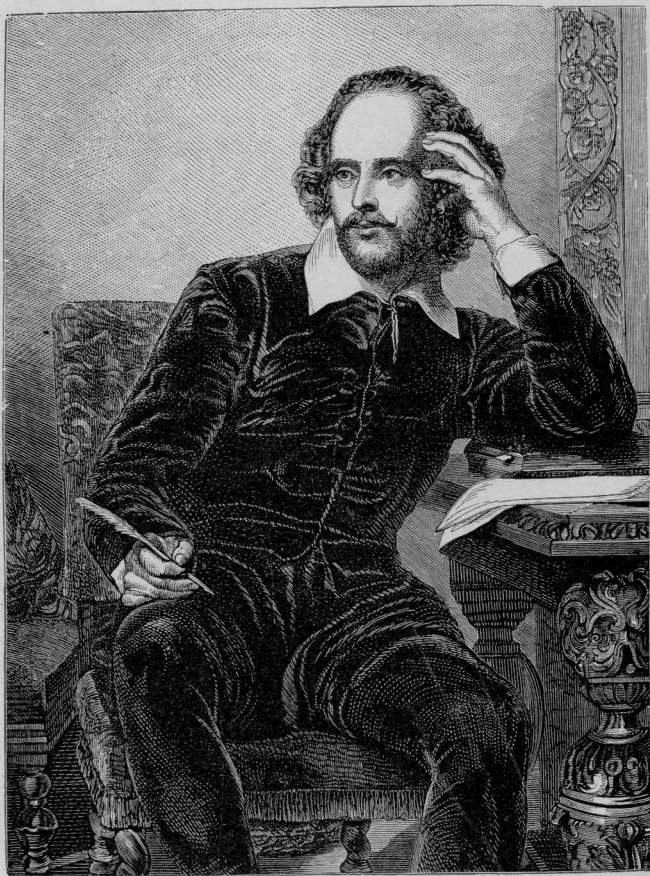


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SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDY
OF
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE





WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

ENGLISH CLASSICS.

EDITED BY WM. J. ROLFE, LITT.D.

Illustrated. 12mo, Cloth, 56 cents per volume.

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Merchant of Venice.

W. P. 18



MONUMENT AT STRATFORD.

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JOHN SHAKESPEARE'S HOUSE IN HENLEY STREET. View from an old Print.

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE was born at Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick, England, in April, 1564. The record of his baptism bears the date of April 26th, and as it was an old custom to christen children on the third day after birth, the tradition which makes his birthday the 23d has been commonly accepted. His father, John Shakespeare, seems to have belonged to the class of yeomen, and to have been a glover by trade. His mother, Mary Arderne, or Arden, came of a good old Warwickshire family, and brought her husband a considerable estate as dower. John Shakespeare was for many years an alderman, and twice filled the office of High Bailiff, or chief magistrate, but later in life he appears to have become quite poor.

Of a family of four sons and four daughters, William was the third child, but the eldest son. He was in all probability sent to the free-school of his native town, and after leaving school may have spent some time in an attorney's office: But in 1582, when he was only 18, he married Anne Hathaway, of the parish of Shottery, near Stratford, a woman some eight years older than himself. A daughter was soon born to him, and, two years later, twins—a boy and a girl.



ROOM IN THE HOUSE IN HENLEY STREET, WHERE SHAKESPEARE WAS BORN.

As nearly as can be made out, it was in the next year, 1586, that Shakespeare, then 22, went to London, where he became first an actor, then a writer for the stage. As an actor he seems to have made no special mark, but as a writer he very soon distinguished himself, and in a few years had won the foremost rank among the dramatists of his time. In 1598, Francis Meres, in his *Wit's Treasury*, speaks of him as "the

most excellent among the English for both kinds of tragedy and comedy." His works became not only widely popular, but they brought him special marks of favor and approval from Queen Elizabeth and her successor, James, and gained for him the patronage and friendship of some of the most accomplished men of rank of that day.



INNER COURT OF THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, STRATFORD.

But while thus prosperous and honored in London, Shakespeare continued to look upon Stratford as his home. There he had left his wife and children, and thither, after he had secured a competency, he returned to spend the evening of

his days in quiet. It was probably about the year 1612 that he settled down in Stratford, on an estate purchased some years previous. His wife was still living, and also his two



CHANCEL OF STRATFORD CHURCH.

daughters, of whom the elder, Susanna, was married to Dr. John Hall, in 1607; the younger, Judith, to Mr. Thos. Quiney, in 1616. His son, Hamnet, had died in his twelfth year, in 1596.

Shakespeare died at Stratford, as already mentioned, on the 23d of April, 1616; and he lies buried in the parish church there.

The first work of Shakespeare's which was printed with his name was the poem of *Venus and Adonis*, which appeared in 1593. In the Dedication to the Earl of Southampton the author styles it "the first heir of his invention." In 1594, *The Rape of Lucrece* was published. Both these poems were reprinted several times in the poet's lifetime. His only other works, besides the Plays, are *The Passionate Pilgrim*, a small collection of poems, first printed in 1599, and his *Sonnets* (154 in number), with a poem entitled *A Lover's Complaint*, which appeared together in 1609.

The first edition of his collected Dramatic Works contained all the Plays generally included in modern editions, with the exception of *Pericles*, and was published in a folio volume, in 1623, or not till seven years after his death. It was put forth by two of his friends and fellow actors, *John Heminge* and *Henrie Condell*, and the title-page declares it to be printed "according to the true original copies." The preface also condemns all preceding editions of separate plays* as "stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors," while it claims that the publishers of this volume had the use of the author's manuscripts. They probably had the use of such of his papers as were in the possession of the Blackfriars Theatre, to

* Eighteen of the Plays are known to have been separately printed, some of them more than once, in Shakespeare's lifetime. *Othello* was also printed separately in 1622. All these editions are in quarto form, and are commonly known as the old or early *quartos*.

which they, like himself, belonged. The volume, however, appears to have had no proper editing, and every page is disfigured by the grossest typographical errors. While it is the earliest and the only authentic edition of the Plays, it cannot be accepted as anything like an infallible authority in all cases for what Shakespeare actually wrote.



STRATFORD CHURCH, WEST END

The volume just described is commonly known as the "first folio." A second folio edition, including the same plays, appeared in 1632. It contains some new readings, which are

probably nothing more than the conjectural emendations of the unknown editor.

A third folio edition was issued in 1664. This contains the thirty-six Plays of the preceding folios, with *Pericles* and six dramas* not included in the modern editions. A fourth and last folio reprint followed in 1685.

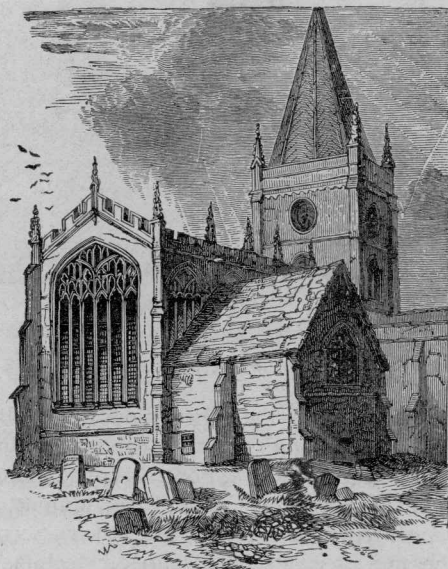


HOUSE IN HENLEY STREET, ABOUT 1820.

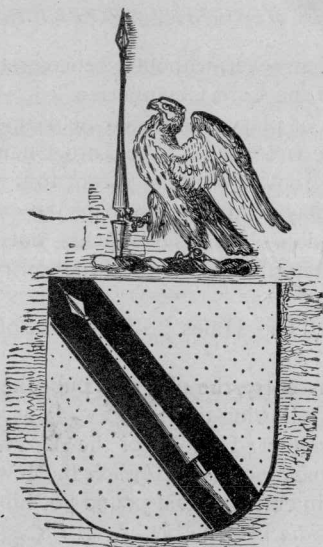
These four folios were the only editions of the Plays brought out in the 17th century. The 18th century produced a long succession of editors—Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Hanmer, Warburton, Johnson, Steevens, Capell, Reed, Malone, and Rann. In 1803 appeared what is known as “Reed’s Second Edition of Johnson and Steevens,” in twenty-one volumes, in which were incorporated all the notes of the preceding editions.

* These are *The London Prodigal*, *Thomas Lord Cromwell*, *Sir John Oldcastle*, *The Puritan Widow*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, and *Lochrine*. It is almost certain that Shakespeare wrote none of them.

This was followed in 1821 by what is now the standard "*Variorum* edition," also in twenty-one volumes, mostly prepared by Malone, but completed and carried through the press by his friend Boswell. The most important English editions of more recent date are those of Knight, Collier, Singer, Staunton, Dyce, Clark and Wright, and Halliwell. The only American editions of any critical value are Verplanck's (1847), Hudson's (1855 and 1881), White's (1857-1865 and 1883), and Furness's ("New Variorum" ed. begun in 1871).



STRATFORD CHURCH, EAST END, WITH CHARNEL-HOUSE.



ARMS OF JOHN SHAKESPEARE

INTRODUCTION TO THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

I. THE HISTORY OF THE PLAY.

The Merchant of Venice is the last on a list of Shakespeare's plays given by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia*, which appeared in 1598. In the same year it was entered as follows on the Register of the Stationers' Company:—

“22 July, 1598, James Robertes.] A booke of the Marchaunt of Venyce, or otherwise called the Jewe of Venyse. Provided that yt bee not prynted by the said James Robertes.

or anye other whatsoever, without lycence first had from the right honourable the Lord Chamberlen."

The company of players to which Shakespeare belonged, and for which he wrote, were "the Lord Chamberlain's Servants;" and the above order was meant to prohibit the publication of the play until the patron of the company should give his permission. This he appears not to have done until two years later, when the following entry was made in the Register:

"28 Oct., 1600, Tho. Haies.] The booke of the Merchant of Venyce."

Soon after this entry, the play was published by Heyes, in quarto, with the following title:

The most excellent | Historie of the *Merchant* | of *Venice*. |
With the extreame crueltie of *Shylocke* the Iewe | towards the
sayd Merchant, in cutting a iust pound | of his flesh: and the
obtainyng of *Portia* | by the choyse of three | chests. *As it*
hath beene diuers times acted by the Lord | Chamberlaine his Ser-
uants. | Written by William Shakespeare. | AT LONDON, |
Printed by I. R., for Thomas Heyes, | and are to be sold in
Paules Church-yard, at the | signe of the Greene Dragon. |
1600.

Another edition, also in quarto, was issued the same year, by Roberts, with the following title:

THE | EXCELLENT | History of the Mer- | chant of *Ven-*
ice. | With the extreme cruelty of *Shylocke* | the Iew towards
the saide Merchant, in cut- | ting a iust pound of his flesh.
And the obtaining | of *Portia*, by the choyse of three Caskets. |
Written by W. SHAKESPEARE. | Printed by J. Roberts, 1600.

The play was not reprinted until it appeared in the folio of 1623, where the text varies but little from the quartos.

Henslowe's *Diary*, under the date "25 of aguste, 1594," records the performance of "the Venesyon comodey," which is marked as a new play. Some critics take this to be *The Merchant of Venice*, since the company of players to which