

SHAKESPEARE'S  
TRAGEDY OF  
ROMEO AND JULIET.

EDITED, WITH NOTES,

BY

WILLIAM J. ROLFE, LITT. D.,

FORMERLY HEAD MASTER OF THE HIGH SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

*WITH ENGRAVINGS.*



NEW YORK ··· CINCINNATI ··· CHICAGO  
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Romeo and Juliet.

W. P. 16

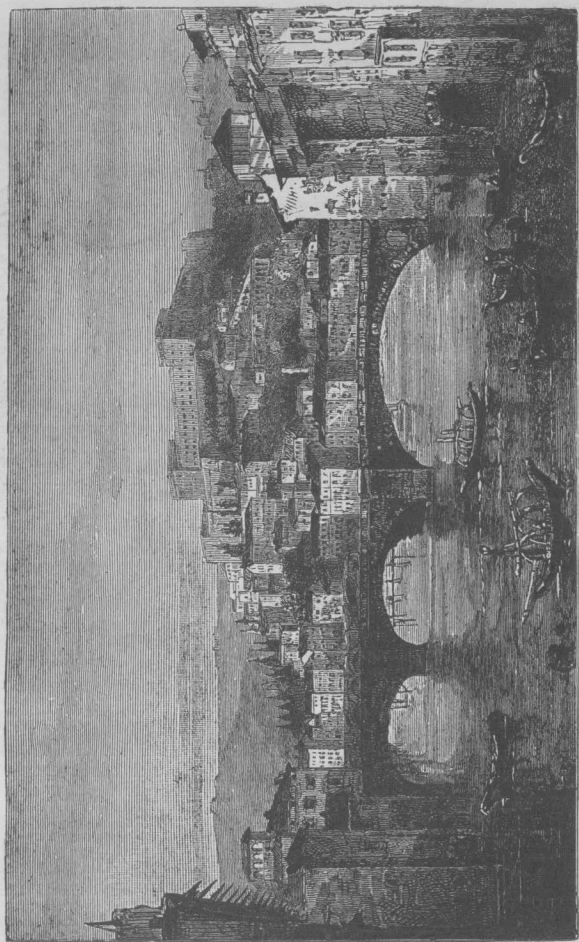


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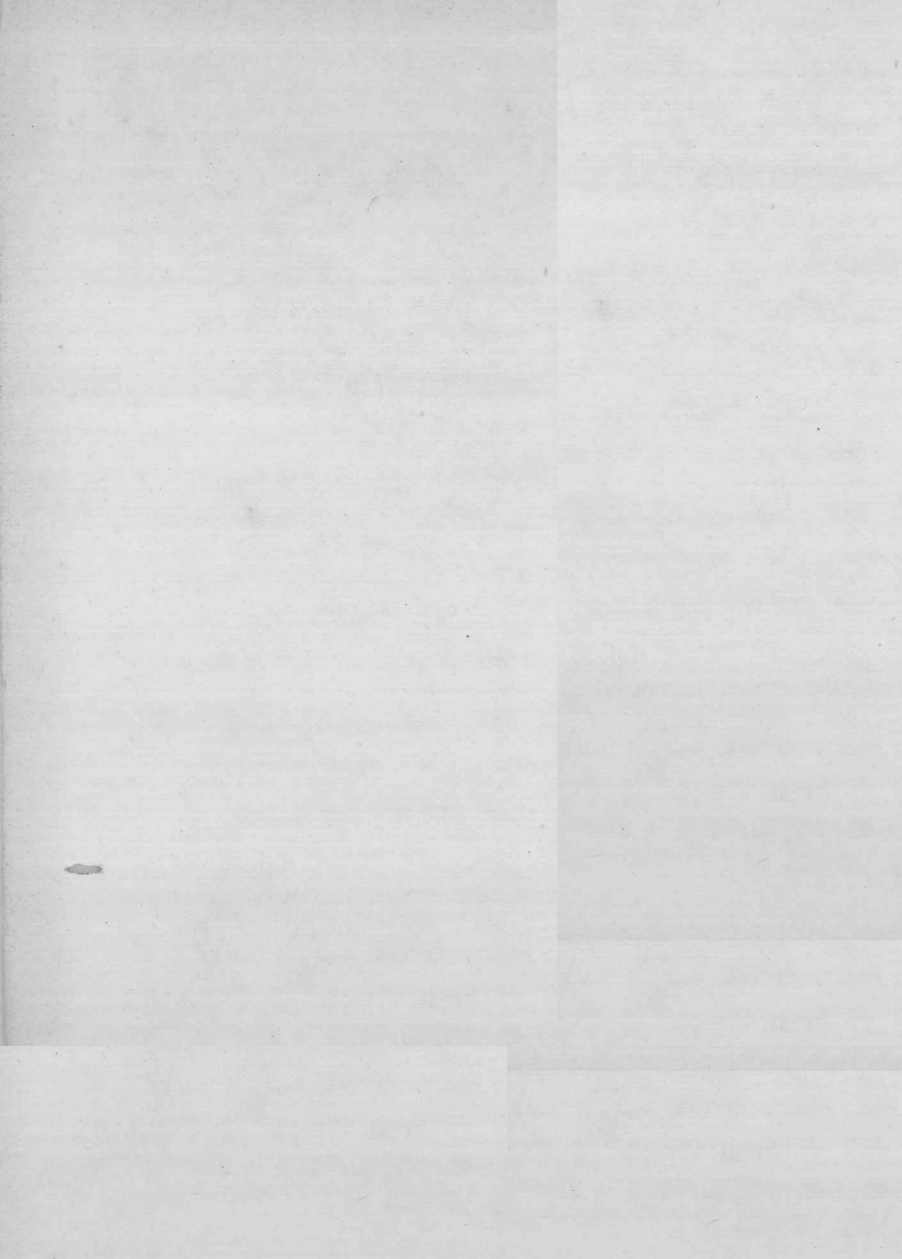
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VIEW FROM PONTE NUOVO, VERONA.







CAPULET'S GARDEN.

# INTRODUCTION TO ROMEO AND JULIET.

## I. THE HISTORY OF THE PLAY.

THE earliest edition of *Romeo and Juliet* was a quarto published in 1597 with the following title-page :

AN | EXCELLENT | conceited Tragedie | OF | Romeo and  
Juliet. | 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.

This was followed in 1599 by a second quarto edition, the title-page of which is as follows :

THE | MOST EX- | cellent and lamentable | Tragedie, of  
Romeo | and *Iuliet*. | *Newly corrected, augmented, and | amend-  
ed*: | As it hath bene sundry times publicquely 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.

A third quarto appeared in 1609 with the following title-page:

THE | MOST EX- | CELLENT AND | Lamentable Tragedie,  
of | *Romeo and Iuliet*. | As it hath beene sundrie times  
publicquely 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.

A fourth quarto has no date, and there is some doubt whether it was a reprint of the one of 1609, or that a reprint of this. The Camb. editors consider that "internal evidence conclusively proves" the former; Halliwell thinks "it is very difficult to say which is the earlier," but inclines to the opinion that the undated copy was published in 1608. The text is more correct than that of the quarto of 1609. The earlier of the two, whichever it may have been, was undoubtedly a reprint of the second quarto with some corrections, and the later was a reprint of the earlier.

The undated quarto is the first that bears the name of the author. On the title-page, which in other respects is

\* Here follows a vignette, wit<sup>h</sup> the motto *AVT NVNC AVT NVN-  
QUAM*.

This quarto is reprinted in full in Furness's "New Variorum" ed. of the play, and also in the Camb. ed.

substantially identical with that of the third quarto, "Written by W. *Shake-speare*" is inserted as a separate line after the word "Globe." According to Halliwell, this line is found only in early copies of the edition, having been suppressed before the rest were printed.\*

The above are the only editions known to have been issued before the folio of 1623, in which the play occupies pages 53-79 in the division of "Tragedies." The text of the folio seems to have been taken from the third quarto.

A fifth quarto, evidently reprinted from the fourth, and with substantially the same title-page, except that it is said to be printed "by *R. Young* for *John Smethwicke*," was published in 1637.

The first quarto is much shorter than the second, the former having only 2232 lines, including the prologue, while the latter has 3007 lines (Daniel). Some editors (among whom are Knight and Verplanck) believe that the first quarto gives the author's first draught of the play, and the second the form it assumed after he had revised and enlarged it; but the majority of the best critics (including Collier, White, the Cambridge editors, Mommsen, Furness, Daniel, Dowden, and Stokes) agree substantially in the opinion that the first quarto was a pirated edition, and represents in an abbreviated and imperfect form the play subsequently printed in full in the second. The former was "made up partly from copies of portions of the original play, partly from recollection and from notes taken during the performance;" the latter was from an authentic copy, and a careful comparison of the text with the earlier one shows that in the meantime the play "underwent revision, received some slight augmentation, and in some few places must have been entirely rewritten."†

\* The copy in the British Museum is without the author's name (Daniel).

† See the introduction to Mr. P. A. Daniel's *Romeo and Juliet: Par-*

The date of the play is placed by all the critics some years earlier than the publication of the first quarto. They generally agree that it was probably begun as early as 1591, though it may not have assumed its final form until 1596 or 1597. Romeo is alluded to as a popular character of Shakespeare's by Weever in an epigram, written probably before 1595. The title-page of the first quarto tells us in 1597 that the play had been "often plaid publicquely;" and from the additional statement that "Lord Hunsdon's servants" were the performers, Malone shows that it must have been acted between July, 1596, and April, 1597. The Lord Chamberlain, Henry Lord Hunsdon, died July 22, 1596; his son, George Lord Hunsdon, was appointed Chamberlain in April, 1597. It was only in the interval between these dates that the company would have been called "Lord Hunsdon's servants" instead of the more honourable designation of "the Lord Chamberlain's servants." This, however, does not prove that the play was then *first* brought out; and Weever's epigram proves that it had been put on the stage at least a year earlier.

The Nurse's allusion in i. 3. 23 ("T is since the earthquake now eleven years") has been quoted in support of the assumed date of 1591, a memorable earthquake having been felt in London in 1580; and the repetition of the "eleven years" (in i. 3. 35), as Stokes remarks, favours this view, in spite of the fact that the Nurse is somewhat confused in her reckoning as to Juliet's age.\*

*allel Texts of the First Two Quartos*, published for the New Shaksper Society in 1874; also White's introduction to the play in his ed. of Shakespeare, vol. x. p. 10 fol. On this subject and on the question of the date of the play, cf. the summary of the views of the leading editors in F. p. 408 fol.

\* Other historical allusions have been suspected to exist. For instance, the reference in v. 2. 8 fol. to the sealing-up of plague-stricken houses has been thought to be connected with the pestilence of 1593;

The internal evidence confirms this opinion that the tragedy was an early work of the poet, and that it was subsequently "corrected, augmented, and amended." There is a good deal of rhyme, and much of it in the form of alternate rhyme. The alliteration, the frequent playing upon words, and the lyrical character of many passages also lead to the same conclusion.\*

## II. THE SOURCES OF THE PLOT.

Girolamo della Corte, in his *Storia di Verona*, 1594, relates the story of the play as a true event occurring in 1303; but he is very untrustworthy as a historian, and the earlier annalists of the city are silent on the subject. A tale in and ii. 2. 82 fol. may have been suggested by the voyages of Drake and Hawkins in 1594-5 or of Raleigh in 1595, etc.

\* White sees traces of another hand than Shakespeare's in the earlier version of the play—"not many," but "quite unmistakable;" and he believes that the difference between the two versions "is owing partly to the rejection by him of the work of a collaborer, partly to the surreptitious and inadequate means by which the copy for the earlier edition was obtained, and partly, perhaps, but in a much less degree, to Shakespeare's elaboration of what he himself had written." The date of the first form of the play W. is inclined to put as early as 1591. He says: "that in 1591 Shakespeare and one or more other 'practitioners for the stage' composed a *Romeo and Juliet* in partnership, and that in 1596 Shakespeare 'corrected, augmented, and amended' it, making it to all intents and purposes entirely his own, and that it then met with such great success that an unscrupulous publisher obtained as much as he could of it, by hook or by crook, and had the deficiencies supplied, as well as could be, by bits from the play of 1591, and, when that failed, by poets as unscrupulous as himself, is entirely accordant with the practices of that day, and reconciles all the facts in this particular case; even the two that the play contains a reference which indicates 1591 as the year when it was written, and that in 1596 it was published in haste to take advantage of a great and sudden popularity." Fleay (*Shakespeare Manual*, p. 32) expresses the opinion "that G. Peele wrote the early play about 1593; that Shakespeare in 1596 corrected this up to the point where there is a change of type in the 1st quarto (end of ii. 3), and in 1597 completed his corrections as in the 2d quarto."

some respects similar is found in the *Ephesiaca* of Xenophon of Ephesus, a Greek romance-writer of the Middle Ages; and one essentially the same, the scene of which is laid in Siena, appears in a collection of novels by Masuccio di Salerno, printed at Naples in 1476. Luigi da Porto, in his *La Giuletta*, published about 1530, is, however, the first to call the lovers Romeo and Juliet, and to make them children of the rival Veronese houses. The story was retold in French by Adrian Sevin, about 1542; and a poetical version of it was published at Venice in 1553. It is also found in Bandello's *Novelle*, 1554; and five years later Pierre Boisteau translated it, with some variations, into French in his *Histoire de Deux Amans*. The earliest English version of the romance appeared in 1562 in a poem by Arthur Brooke founded upon Boisteau's novel, and entitled *Romeus and Juliet*. A prose translation of Boisteau's novel was given in Paynter's *Palace of Pleasure*, in 1567. It was undoubtedly from these English sources, and chiefly from the poem by Brooke, that Shakespeare drew his material. It is to be noted, however, that Brooke speaks of having seen "the same argument lately set forth on stage;" and it is possible that this lost play\* may also have been known to Shakespeare, though we have no reason to suppose that he made any use of it. That he followed Brooke's poem rather than Paynter's prose version is evident from a careful comparison of the two with the play. Malone sums up the results of such a comparison as follows:

\* It is not unlikely that there was more than one English play on the subject before Shakespeare's. Coll. says: "We can scarcely suppose that no other drama would be founded upon the same interesting incidents between 1562 and the date when Shakespeare wrote his tragedy, a period of probably more than thirty years; but no hint of the kind is given in any record, and certainly no such work, either manuscript or printed, has come down to us."

Some critics believe that the "stage" to which Brooke refers was a foreign one, but this is improbable.

"1. In the poem the prince of Verona is called *Escalus*; so also in the play. In Painter's translation from Boisteau he is named *Signor Escala*, and sometimes *Lord Bartholomew of Escala*. 2. In Painter's novel the family of Romeo are called the *Monteschés*; in the poem and in the play, the *Montagues*. 3. The messenger employed by friar Lawrence to carry a letter to Romeo is in Painter's translation called *Anselme*; in the poem and in the play, friar *John* is employed in this business. 4. The circumstance of Capulet's writing down the names of the guests whom he invites to supper is found in the poem and in the play, but is not mentioned by Painter, nor is it found in the original Italian novel. 5. The residence of the Capulets, in the original and in Painter, is called *Villa Franca*; in the poem and in the play, *Freetown*. 6. Several passages of *Romeo and Juliet* appear to have been formed on hints furnished by the poem, of which no traces are found either in Painter's novel, or in Boisteau, or the original; and several expressions are borrowed from thence."\*

White remarks on the same subject: "The tragedy follows the poem with a faithfulness which might be called slavish, were it not that any variation from the course of the old story was entirely unnecessary for the sake of dramatic interest, and were there not shown in the progress of the action, in the modification of one character, and in the disposal of another, all peculiar to the play, self-reliant dramatic intuition of the highest order. For the rest, there is not a personage or a situation, hardly a speech, essential to Brooke's poem, which has not its counterpart—its exalted and glorified counterpart—in the tragedy. . . . In brief,

\* On the other hand, as Fleay notes, the statement of the exact duration of Juliet's sleep (iv. 1. 105: "two and forty hours") is given in the novel ("forty houres at the least"), but not in the poem; which shows that Shakespeare, while generally following the latter, occasionally made use of the former.



*Romeo and Juliet* owes to Shakespeare only its dramatic form and its poetic decoration. But what an exception is the latter! It is to say that the earth owes to the sun only its verdure and its flowers, the air only its perfume and its balm, the heavens only their azure and their glow. Yet this must not lead us to forget that the original tale is one of the most truthful and touching among the few that have entranced the ear and stirred the heart of the world for ages, or that in Shakespeare's transfiguration of it his fancy and his youthful fire had a much larger share than his philosophy or his imagination.

"The only variations from the story in the play are the three which have just been alluded to: the compression of the action, which in the story occupies four or five months, to within as many days, thus adding impetuosity to a passion which had only depth, and enhancing dramatic effect by quickening truth to vividness; the conversion of Mercutio from a mere courtier, 'bolde emong the bashfull maydes,' 'courteous of his speech and pleasant of devise,' into that splendid union of the knight and the fine gentleman, in portraying which Shakespeare, with prophetic eye piercing a century, shows us the fire of faded chivalry expiring in a flash of wit; and the bringing-in of Paris (forgotten in the story after his bridal disappointment) to die at Juliet's bier by the hand of Romeo, thus gathering together all the threads of this love entanglement to be cut at once by Fate."

### III. CRITICAL COMMENTS ON THE PLAY.

[From Schlegel's "*Dramatic Literature*."\*]

*Romeo and Juliet* is a picture of love and its pitiable fate, in a world whose atmosphere is too rough for this tenderest blossom of human life. Two beings created for each other feel mutual love at first glance; every consideration dis-

\* *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, by A. W. Schlegel; as quoted by Verplanck, p. 63.