

PREFACE

The twelve short plays in this book are intended to serve as a broad and enjoyable introduction to Shakespeare. The series of playlets represents abridgments from eleven of Shakespeare's principal plays. The texts have been simplified by the omission of difficult Elizabethan expressions and references which have been obscured by time. Occasional obsolete words have also been replaced by other words from the same contexts. Familiar lines, however, such as are memory gems, have not been touched.

The omissions have greatly shortened the dialog and quickened the action. The plays can be handled readily as units in a high school recitation or study period. Each can be read in dialog form, with good preparation, in thirty-five to forty minutes, and should be read for the first time by a good silent reader — that is, one whose eye skims the page for ideas and who does not pronounce the words either with his lips or mentally — in forty-five minutes. Dramatic readings take longer, as do elaborate presentations with incidental music and pauses between acts and scenes.

An appendix has been added summarizing the different styles of presentation for entertainment and furnishing helps for the dramatic presentation of the plays, as well as special notes for staging each of them.

Undoubtedly the most enjoyable handling of the playlets in class is that which allows for a free choice of rôles, and reading in dialog on different days with different casts. Each of the playlets represents the most interesting dramatically of the several plots which Shakespeare intertwined in the great play from which it was taken, and the principal characters include many of the brightest and greatest figures in Shakespeare. These characters, once impersonated and loved

in the playlets, should move certainly with greater interest and sympathy through the wider scenes of the complete plays. Their speeches and stories, like the early-learned *motifs* of an opera, should take on richer meanings when the great works themselves are studied.

As an aid to oral reading, the proper names have been pronounced. The marking of the names has been extremely difficult. From the time of Shakespeare himself, actors have pronounced foreign names with reckless inconsistency. Anglicized and foreign pronunciations mingle in the same play, and sometimes in the same word. In selecting but one pronunciation for such names it is necessary to be more or less arbitrary. Consistency is well-nigh impossible, due to the different sources of the names; for example, Greek, Latin, Italian, French,—some names in the original orthography and some Anglicized either in spelling or pronunciation or in both.

The illustrations in the book are principally those of amateur performances, showing what can be done by school children and non-professionals. Where it has been possible to secure a picture of a famous actor to illustrate a favorite rôle, the portrait has been used to show the height of artistry the presentation may reach.

Acknowledgment is made to the Salt Lake Costuming Company which kindly lent the costumes for the amateur pictures.

Acknowledgments of assistance on the text and other parts of the book are due the works on Shakespeare and the stage memoranda now generally accessible in libraries. I have received personal help from Professor B. Roland Lewis and his staff of the English Department of the University of Utah (who have reviewed the notes and verbal transpositions as well as all of the plays) and from other members of the faculty, who deserve most grateful thanks.

University of Utah, July, 1924 FRED G. BARKER.

THE MAN WHO WROTE THE PLAYS

The man who wrote the plays was William Shakespeare, who lived in the days of Queen Elizabeth and her successor, King James I of England.

Both Queen Elizabeth and King James took great delight in plays and often summoned the actor Shakespeare with his fellow actors to perform their plays at court.

The players acted also in a roughly built theatre called *The Globe*. James Burbage, the father of one of the actors, had built the first theatre in London. You may guess from this that the plays that Shakespeare wrote were among the earliest in the English language, and so indeed they were. Others had preceded them, of curious types, but we can trace in the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries the actual beginnings of writing for the theatre in English literature.

There had been rude farces, written for the strolling actors who played in the inn yards; there were a few comedies and tragedies written after the style of ancient Latin plays; and preceding these had come the sacred dramas played at first by the clergy but afterwards by the tradesmen's guilds. About the time that Shakespeare reached the theatre an epoch of playwriting began. Tragedies, histories, and comedies of a new type called *romantic* made their appearance.

The romantic drama reached its greatest height in Shake-speare's work. As the actor-playwright-poet experimented with each of the kinds of plays existing in his day, he wrote the greatest plays in each, and as his insight into the good, great, and beautiful was keen, he wrote for all time.

Seven years after Shakespeare's death, two of his fellow actors assembled his plays and published them in a great volume—the First Folio. That was in 1623, three hundred years ago.

INTRODUCTION

ANTECEDENTS

Shakespeare has been played almost constantly during the three hundred and odd years since the plays were written, and as nearly all of the plays are long and difficult, making heavy demands upon a large cast, many abridgments of one type or another have been made. The Forty-minute Plays have had their forbears dating back almost if not quite to the time of Shakespeare himself. The earliest playlets can only be conjectured, because the records are fragmentary and perhaps inaccurate in the naming of the plays. But playlets of the Restoration period, fifty years later, are extant.

THE EARLIEST PLAYLETS

The earliest printed reference to what may have been a Shakespearean playlet is in a book published in 1624,¹ eight years after Shakespeare's death, in which there is a passage complaining of the high price of certain other entertainments and continuing, "As for flashes of light, we might see very cheape in the Comedie of Piramus, where one comes in with a Lanthorne and Acts Moonshine." This may be identified with the interlude from A Midsummer Night's Dream. Charles I wrote "Piramus and Thisby" on the title page of A Midsummer Night's Dream in his copy of the Second Folio of 1632, preserved at Windsor Castle.

At any rate Bottom and his fellows, the actors in the interlude of Piramus and Thisbe, were well known and much beloved before the Puritans closed the theatres in 1642. In 1631 the Bishop of Lincoln was accused by his Puritan ¹Gee's New Shreds of the Old Snare.

enemies of having had performed at his house on a Sunday evening a play in which a Mr. Wilson acted the part of Bottom,—this actor afterwards for punishment having to sit "with his feete in the stocks, and attyred with his asse heade, and a bottle of hay sette before him, and this subscription on his breast,—

Good people I nave played the beast, And brought ill things to passe: I was a man, but thus have made Myselfe a silly asse."

The name of the play presented at the Bishop's house is unknown, the name, A Midsummer Night's Dream, being, we are informed, "a forgery in a later hand" than that of the manuscript from which we learn of the performance. In view of the private nature of the entertainment and its having to be given secretly, an abbreviated version of the play must have been used, but evidently one that contained somewhat more of the story of Bottom than merely the interlude.

Afterward, during the period of Puritan domination, says Francis Kirkman, "when the publique theatres were shut up and the actors forbidden to present us with any of their tragedies, because we had enough of that in ernest; and comedies, because the vices of the age were too lively and smartly represented; then all that we could divert ourselves with were these humours and pieces of plays, passing under the name of a merry conceited fellow called Bottom the Weaver . . . or some such title . . . and that by stealth too, and under the pretence of rope dancing and the like."

Immediately after the restoration of Charles II there was published, The Merry Conceited Humours of Bottom the Weaver, as it hath been often publikely acted by some of his Majesties Comedians, and lately privately presented by several apprentices for their harmless recreation, with great applause.

OTHER VERY EARLY SHORT PLAYS

It is not unlikely that the example of playing such excerpts was set by Shakespeare's own company. An excerpt of the episode of Benedick and Beatrice from Much Ado about Nothing seems to have been played as early as 1613, which would have been during Shakespeare's lifetime. In a warrant made out in the Lord Treasurer's accounts for Much Ado about Nothing as one of seven Shakespearean plays performed at the festivities of the Princess Elizabeth's wedding, the second paragraph calls for "one other" play "called Benedicte and Betteris," acted before the king. The episode of Benedick and Beatrice seems to have been a favorite with the royal family; the king's son, Charles I, added the name Benedick and Beatrice to the title of Much Ado about Nothing in his copy of the Second Folio.

If "Benedick and Beatrice" may have become a playlet at this early date, the discrepancy of a number of other titles of plays listed for that time¹ may possibly be reconciled as indicating cuttings rather than merely mistakes in the titles of complete plays. The following titles are odd if they refer to the complete plays rather than to episodes: "The Hotspur" (Henry IV, Part I?), "Robin Goodfellow" (A Midsummer Night's Dream?), "Tom Bedlam, the Tinker" (King Lear?) and "Malvolio" (Twelfth Night?). The calling of a play for a lesser rôle than the one which most appealed to the public in the great play is not improbable but is strange enough to provoke some question of the fact.

LATER CUTTINGS THAT ARE DEFINITELY KNOWN

In 1662 Francis Kirkman published in The Wits, or Sport upon Sport a Falstaff playlet called The Bouncing Knight

¹ titles of plays listed for that time. See Fleay, A Chronicle History of the London Stage 1559–1642.

(based on the scenes in Henry IV, Part I, in which Falstaff figured) and also a "droll" of The Grave-Makers, from Hamlet, both of which had been acted by stealth during the period of Puritan ascendancy. Another Falstaff playlet, curiously named, The Boaster; or Bully-Huff catch'd in a trap, was printed in 1698.

In 1738 "George Lillo presented a successful adaptation of the last two acts of *Pericles* at Covent Garden." This playlet began with the same scene as Charles Elliott's cutting of *Pericles* (1922), and the two playlets would probably be found much alike, if Lillo's were preserved, since the playwriting dictum of Lillo's time required compression of the action with a view to securing dramatic unity of time and place, and the exigencies of the now popular one-act play impel Mr. Elliott to follow the same course.

In 1754 Morgan acted and printed a cutting of A Winter's Tale, Florizel and Perdita, or the Sheep Shearing. David Garrick, the celebrated actor at Drury Lane, followed with a Dramatic Pastoral, Florizel and Perdita, in 1756, in which the text was not only cut, but considerably altered.

Garrick's version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Katharine and Petruchio*, was printed in the same year, and though it contains several queer distortions of the original, it was "highly praised, and held the stage till the end of the century." Indeed, it held the stage to the virtual exclusion of the complete play, until nearly the end of the next century, when John Drew appeared in the restored original in 1887.

In 1762 The Comedy of Errors was altered by Hull, and in 1783 another cutting of the same play, by William Woods, appeared under the title The Twins. The latter cutting was made with such care and respect as would almost satisfy a modern critic.

In 1764 A Midsummer Night's Dream was "cut down to two acts" by Colman and played as an "after piece" at

Drury Lane. Revived in this form fourteen years later, it held the stage for the next half century. The complete play, as Shakespeare wrote it, was not presented again in England until 1856.

There have been "selections from Shakespeare" since, and shortened plays, but the abridgment is usually that of the stage manager in limiting his performance to the two or two and a half hours of an evening's entertainment.

THE PRESENT PLAYLETS

The Forty-minute Plays were projected in the winter of 1913–14, when eight of them were outlined under the inspiration of witnessing performances of Reinhardt's admirable company. The first of them to be played, however, Shylock, was not presented until 1917. Since then revision, experimentation, and trial have consumed much time. An earnest attempt has been made to keep the playlets more faithful to the original than their predecessors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Several excellent cuttings of about the same length have appeared during the present century: Miss Frances E. Clark's Oberon and Titania (1915), a Katharine and Petruchio staged by Professor Maud May Babcock of the University of Utah (1915), and Charles Elliott's cutting of Pericles (1922).

In 1921 appeared outlines by Roy Mitchell for twenty-five acting episodes, irregular in length and somewhat more fragmentary in character than the playlets included here. Mr. Mitchell did not print the texts, but his book, Shakespeare

¹ shortened plays. Among them were: Shakespeare's Much Ado about Nothing, arranged in two acts for amateur presentation, by Leslie Warren (Walter H. Baker and Company, 1894); Bell's Reader's Shakespeare, a complete series of abridgments for dramatic reading, in three volumes (Funk and Wagnalis Company, 1895); the Ben Greet Shakespeare, five of the plays in separate volumes, arranged by the English Shakespearean actor, Ben Greet (Doubleday Page). These versions were rather long and not altogether adapted to children's purposes.

for Community Players (Dutton), is a boon to the producer of any Shakespearean play. Mr. Mitchell has been technical director of the Greenwich Village Theatre, New York, and filled his book with illustrations and suggestions for the staging of Shakespearean plays.

Some of the cuttings whose history has been traced are subjected to the bitter criticism, and justly so, that has been directed at the work of Dryden, Davenant, Cibber, and others who attempted to rewrite Shakespeare, "improving" his plots and changing his characters to make the plays come out more satisfactorily to themselves; but in the main the abridgments of Shakespeare have been legitimate attempts to present parts of the complete plays when circumstances have made cuttings appropriate. For the short plays in this volume, all intention is disclaimed of attempting to do more than select and simplify portions of the plays that fall naturally into units. The Supplementary Readings will give a further taste of the complete plays, and it is hoped that the reader will later study them in their entirety.

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FORTY-MINUT	E PLAYS	FROM	SHAKESPEARI	E
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Rosalind. [Reads.] From the east to western Ind, No jewel is like Rosalind.

AS YOU LIKE IT

(Condensed)

THE PERSONS IN THE PLAY

DUKE, living in exile.

DUKE FREDERICK (fred'er-1k), his usurping brother.

AMIENS* ($\check{a}'m\check{i}-\check{e}nz$), JAQUES ($\check{j}\check{a}'kw\bar{e}z$),

LE BEAU (le-bō'), a courtier attending on Duke Frederick.

CHARLES (chärlz), Duke Frederick's wrestler.

First Lord,*

First Lord,*
Second Lord,*
Second Lord,*

OLIVER (ŏl'ĭ-vēr),
JAQUES DE BOYS (jā'kwēz dēboiz),
ORLANDO (ôr-lăn'dō),

Sons of Sir Roland (rō'lănd)
de Boys.

Adam (ăd'ăm), servants to Oliver.

Rosalind (rŏz'à-lǐnd), daughter of the exiled Duke.

Celia (sēl'yā), daughter of Duke Frederick.

15 reading parts*

SYNOPSIS

Act I. Scene 1. Oliver's orchard. The persons represented are Adam and Orlando, Oliver, Charles.

Scene 2. A lawn before the Duke's palace. Duke Frederick, Celia and Rosalind, Le Beau.

* The 15 reading rôles may be assumed, if necessary, by 11 people— Jaques de Boys "doubling" for Amiens, Charles for the First Lord, and Le Beau for both the Second Lord and Dennis.