

THE NEW SHAKESPEARE

As You Like It



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THE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE

**EDITED FOR THE SYNDICS OF THE
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BY

**SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH
AND JOHN DOVER WILSON**

AS YOU LIKE IT

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I

In *As You Like It*—the very title is auspicious—an Editor may take holiday and, after winning through Quarto thicket after thicket obedient to the Folio order, feel that he has earned a right to expatiate, enjoy his while in Arden and fleet the time carelessly. For no Quarto of the copy, entered provisionally by Master Roberts in the Stationers' Register and 'stayed,' whatever the reason of the staying, is extant if it ever existed. Our only text is that of the First Folio of 1623, to be considered with a few futile, mostly perfunctory, alterations in the later Folios, and more seriously with a few conjectured emendations by editors who in handling the text of this play have here and there been happy and once or twice convincing. But all this is dealt with in our *Note on the Copy* and lies apart from our present business.

II

Just as fortunately, from an Editor's point of view, we have no need to trouble our heads over 'sources.' *As You Like It* plainly derives almost all the plot it has from a novel by Thomas Lodge, *Euphues' Golden Legacie*, first published in 1590. Lodge derived a part of his story and of its *mise-en-scène* from *The Coke's Tale of Gamelyn*, left in MS by Chaucer, doubtless in MS accessible to Lodge and others, but not (so far as we know) actually printed until 1720 and included in some later editions of *The Canterbury Tales*. It was never fathered by Chaucer, never meant for a *Coke's Tale*, but was probably written out by Chaucer in the rough to be told by the Yeoman.

On this we cannot do better than quote Skeat:

Some have supposed, with great reason, that this tale occurs among the rest because it is one which Chaucer intended to recast, although, in fact, he did not live to rewrite a single line of it. This is the more likely because the tale is a capital one in itself, well worthy of being rewritten even by so great a poet; indeed, it is well known that the plot of the favourite play known to us all by the title of *As You Like It* was derived from it at second-hand. But I cannot but protest against the stupidity of the botcher whose hand wrote about it, 'The Coke's Tale of Gamelyn.' This was done because it happened to be found *next after* the 'Coke's Tale.'...The fitness of things ought to show at once that this 'Tale of Gamelyn,' a tale of the woods in true Robin Hood style, could only have been placed in the mouth of him 'who bare a mighty bow,' and who knew all the ways of wood-craft; in one word, of the Yeoman....And we get hence the additional hint, that the Yeoman's Tale was to have followed the Coke's Tale, a tale of fresh country life succeeding one of the close back-streets of the city. No better place could be found for it.

The Tale of Gamelyn (as the reader may remember) runs in this fashion:

Litheth and lesteneth || and herkeneth aright,
 And ye schulle heere a talking || of a doughty knight;
 Sire Johan of Boundys || was his righte name...

and he leaves three sons. The eldest, succeeding to the estate, misuses the youngest brother, who triumphs in a wrestling-bout and, escaping to the greenwood with an old retainer, Adam the Spencer, becomes an outlaw. The eldest brother, Johan, as sheriff, pursues him—just as the proud sheriff of Nottingham pursues Robin Hood. He is taken, and bailed; returns, in ballad-fashion (like the Heir of Linne, for example), just in time to save his bail, and the wicked Johan is sent to the gallows.

But Gamelyn most probably derives from a yet older ballad of Gandelyn, Robin Hood's fere in the greenwood and avenger of his death:

I herde a carpyng of a clerk,
Al at yone wodes ende,
Of gode Robyn and Gandleyn;
Was ther non other thyng—
Robynn lyth in grene wode bowndyn.

Upon this artless balladry Lodge stitched and embroidered, in his own manner and Lyly's, a story of court love. We are not concerned to seek whether he derived this from another story or simply invented it—and it is a pretty story anyhow. We concern ourselves only with the fact that Shakespeare took it to convert it to his own use, and note with an antiquarian interest certain names that persist—Rosalind, who becomes Ganymede as in the story, Aliena (Celia) who in the novel changes her name from Alinda, and the faithful old retainer Adam, whose name persists down from *The Tale of Gamelyn*—where he is Adam the Spencer—and is the name of the character which (tradition says) Shakespeare as an actor performed in his own play.

The name of the young champion and Rosalind's lover in the novel is Rosader. Shakespeare perhaps invented 'Orlando' as opponent to his bad brother 'Oliver'—'a Roland for his Oliver.' We observe that he wears the Christian name of his father Sir Rowland de Boys with a difference, as becomes a younger son.

Let us here remark that all the fugitives reach this Forest of Arden leg-weary and almost dead-beat. Sighs Rosalind, 'O Jupiter! how weary are my spirits!' invoking Jupiter as a Ganymede should. Touchstone retorts, 'I care not for my spirits, if my legs were not weary'; and Celia entreats, 'I pray you, bear with me, I cannot go no further': as, later on, old Adam echoes, 'Dear master, I can go no further'; and again, we remember, Oliver arrives footsore, in rags, and stretches himself to sleep, so dog-tired that even a snake, coiling about his throat, fails to awaken him. It is only the young athlete Orlando who bears the journey well.

III

But a word or two must be said on the change which overtakes all the travellers as soon as they cross the frontier of this forest into Arden, so entirely different from Lodge's forest of Ardennes.

To begin with, we can never understand the happiest in Shakespeare, without a sense of his native wood-magic. It may be too fanciful to say that he had something of the Faun in him: but certain it is that in play after play he gets his people into a woodland, or a wooded isle, where all are ringed around with enchantment, and escape the better for it. It is so in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, in *A Winter's Tale*, in *The Tempest*. Men and women are lost to the world for a time, to indulge their own happy proclivities and go back somehow regenerated. We are not surprised by anything that happens within this magic fence. Within Arden we have snakes and lionesses, as within the impossible sea-coast of Bohemia, we find the stage-direction, *Exit pursued by a bear*. Titania fondles a clown and kisses the ass's head with which Puck has decorated him. Strange hounds pursue Stephano and Trinculo. Caliban is as credible as Audrey. Above all presides the tolerant magician who, in this play, assembles Dukes and courtiers—calling fools into a circle—providing them with healthy criticism of their folly. But this is not all, or by any means all. This Arden, on the south bank of Avon, endeared to him by its very name (name of his mother), had been the haunt where he caught his first 'native wood-notes wild,' as the path by the stream had been his, known to this day as the Lovers' Walk.

Time has softened down Stoneleigh-in-Arden to a stately park, with Avon streaming through; but the deer are there yet, and the ford that 'Makes sweet music with the enamelled stones' over which the deer

splash—bucks leading in single file, does following in a small cohort; and there are the gnarled oaks with antique roots twisting through the bank, mirrored in pools to which the water slides over sandstone slabs and through runnels. On the left hand, under the spread of more oaks, chestnuts, wych-elms, with vistas of woodland film and of fern over which rise antlers of the herd, and over which, with no stretch of imagination, we can still see the crooks of Phebe and Silvius moving, beribboned, decorated to a model old as Sicily. Just as easily can we see Audrey, William and Sir Oliver Martext blundering into the landscape.

To put it shortly, he who knows Arden has looked into the heart of England and heard the birds sing in the green midmost of a moated island. Herein possibly lies the reason why, of all Shakespeare's plays, *As You Like It* has never crossed the Channel, to be understood by Continent sanctioners, readers, critics. An American visitor to Europe is reported as having said that, while many sights were wonderful, two struck him dumb, so many miles were they beyond promise or expectancy. The first the array of Velasquez canvases at Madrid; the second, the exuberant, almost violent rush of leaf, song, green beauty in our May-time. To men of Shakespeare's generation, after winter's necessary hardship, the transformation, the miracle, must have been yet more surprising. But we at any rate have known it, and our point is here that continental critics who have not seen the phenomenon or heard the birds singing through it, cannot understand this particular play. They have their own spring-tide, and following seasons: but not just *this*. The Germans especially are like the Wise Men of Gotham, 'all at sea in a bowl.' They are sailing, in a bowl, on perilous seas of which they possess no chart. Fortunately for the mirth of Shakespeare's countrymen they now and again cancel each other out. Let us set the solemn Ulrici and the solemn Gervinus side by side.

ULRICH.

The general comic view of life is reflected throughout the whole play, and forms the foundation and platform upon which the action moves. . . . The motives which set the whole in motion are merely chance, the unintentional encounter of persons and incidents, and the freaks, caprices and humours, the sentiments, feelings and emotions, to which the various personages recklessly give way in what they do and leave undone. Nowhere does the representation treat of conscious plans, definite resolves, decided aims and objects; nowhere do we find preconsidered or, in fact, deeper, motives proceeding from the inmost nature of the characters. The characters themselves, even though clearly and correctly delineated, are generally drawn in light, hurried outlines, but are full of life, gay and bold in action, and quick in decision; they appear, as already said, either inconstant, variable, going from one extreme to the other, or possess such a vast amount of imagination, sensitiveness, and love for what is romantic and adventurous that their conduct, to a prosaic mind, can only appear thoughtless, capricious and arbitrary; and such a mind would be inclined to call them all fools, oddities, and fantastic creatures.

GERVINUS.

The sweetest salve in misery, so runs 'the golden legacy' of the Novel, is patience, and the only medicine for want is contentment. Misfortune is to be defied with equanimity, and our lot be met with resignation. Hence, both the women and Orlando mock at Fortune, and disregard her power. All the three principal figures (or, including Oliver, four) have this fate in common, that to all their external misfortunes, to banishment and to poverty, there is added a new evil (for so it is regarded) love. Even this they strive to encounter with the same weapons, with control and with moderation, not yielding too much, not seeking too much, with more regard to virtue and nature than to wealth and position, just as Rosalind chooses the inferior (*nachgeborene*) Orlando, and just as Oliver chooses the shepherdess Celia. It is in reference to this that the pair of pastoral lovers are brought into contrast; Silvius loves too ardently, while Phebe loves too prudishly. If this moral reflection be expressed in a word, it is Self-control, Equanimity, Serenity in outward sorrow and inward suffering, whereof we here may learn the price. That this thought lies at the core of Shakespeare's comedy is scarcely at the first glance conceivable, so wholly is every reflection eliminated, so completely is there, in the lightest and freest play of the action and the dialogue, merely a picture sketched out before us.

On this we simply remark that absurdly as these two critics contradict one another, neither is right and each is equally wrong, because neither one nor the other has a notion what he is talking about.

Gervinus' and Ulrici's nescience of English woodland may be forgiven. But their dealing thus with Arden *in impari materia* strikes us as less excusable when we reflect that Shakespeare—who exiles a French Duke and courtiers upon the banks of Avon just as nonchalantly as in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* he peopled an Athenian wood with Warwickshire fairies—has been at pains to provide us with a couple of his own moralists and philosophisers upon the passing show. Are we, on the face of it, likely to do as well with Gervinus and Ulrici as with Jaques and Touchstone?

IV

Let us consider Shakespeare's own pair of critics briefly and in their quiddity. Jaques has followed the exiled Duke to the forest and for what reason no one knows: in loyalty, likely enough: but if in loyalty (as many a sardonic man will go any distance for it, yet conceal devotion as a proud personal secret) he will carry no hint of this on his sleeve. He is the professed cynical moralist and something of an egoist too, with a conscious pose. He discerns the exiled Duke's talk and Amiens' song about the salutary effect of the winter wind (which by the way does not blow at all in the story) to be humbug, and in his fashion with his *Ducdame*, goes some way to expose it. But he consents with the folly in its practice. He is courtier as well as moraliser and has been (we gather) an easy liver in his time and has come through it, like many another easy liver (say Solomon himself), with a certain addiction of proverbs to the tongue—polite ones, to be sure; but, partly it may be, because they hold this reserve of politeness, concealing

himself beneath apparent outspokenness and railing, he misses as a critic to be quite effective. The polite French hardly realise this: they incline to consider him the central figure of the stage—and George Sand married him, in her version, to Celia! One can better imagine Shakespeare marrying him to an arrant shrew, or even giving him a belated capture of the wench Audrey from *Touchstone* who yields her on some ridiculous, extravagant point of punctilio.

But on quite another score, this figure of Jaques, the melancholy, the contemplative—never getting to action beyond declamation and moralising—must give food for thought to any student of Shakespeare. He upon a fanciful comedy intrudes a figure, brooding on the ways of humankind, draped (we all visualise Jaques to be so draped) in a careful cloak of black. As yet he forwards no action, stands outside, plays no part save that of observer, amused critic: and in this comedy of ours he becomes a 'convertite' and hangs up his subtle cloak in a cell, we having no further dramatic use for him. But this contemplative man in his 'inky cloak' persists in Shakespeare's mind to be oppressed by dreadful responsibility, to be forced into action by most tragic pressure of fate. It happens so: it persists to most tragic violence: but allowing for this circumstantial pressure, let us compare Jaques with Hamlet and his—

What a piece of work is a man, etc.

V

Touchstone is, of course, a deliberately opposed commentator; but still a commentator, and a deal nearer to earth and her genuine well-springs than our philosophic Jaques. Those who see the characters in this Arden in terms of colour beneath the green boughs, will not miss to contrast *Touchstone's* motley with Jaques' dark

habit: to see him, for instance, turning himself on the stage against Arden's background as he answers Corin's question, 'And how like you this shepherd's life, Master Touchstone?'

Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a good life [*Here turning so that one side of him itself presents green upon green*]; but in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught [*Here opposing the scarlet side, and so on throughout the speech*].

The virtues we must stress are Touchstone's loyalty and complete honesty. For the loyalty, he follows to the forest with just so much unquestioning unsolicited loyalty as the Fool in *King Lear* shows to his lord and master. It seems to us, examined, almost as beautiful, and it gets almost as little thanks. But it has, with one as with the other, performed its service. And in *As You Like It* as in *Lear* this part of the Fool is to help insanity or sentimentality back to sense: to be the 'touch-stone,' the test of normal, all the more effective for being presented in jest, under motley. 'Lord! what fools these mortals be!' Our Touchstone, transformed from a 'roynish clown' into a mundane philosopher from the moment he reaches the forest, knows what he knows and why he must mate with Audrey. He gives us his reasons none too delicately: but we have proved his character, his tenacity in faith, and his grossest reasons (they are not so gross, after all) help marvellously to un-sentimentalise a play which might easily have lost itself in sentiment, to recall its waywardness, to give it to us for the thing it is, so bewitching and yet so forth-right, so honest, so salutary.

VI

In the faithful love of Celia for Rosalind (we think) it has not been noted, or not sufficiently noted, that Shakespeare had, for his age, a curiously deep understanding of sisterly love and loyalty to truth. Truth

between two men-friends was accepted as a convention, almost: for his friend a man would sacrifice wife, mistress and children: and maybe in our Introduction to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* we did not allow enough for this in our comments upon Valentine's amazing offer to Proteus:

All that was mine in Silvia I give thee.

That, however, reaches to the limit of the medieval male convention. One finds little trace before Shakespeare of that *sisterly* devotion into which he has already given us sweet insight in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* (not to dwell on Beatrice's valiancy for injured Hero and her risk of a man's love on the challenge 'Kill Claudio'). Let us listen to Helena reproaching Hermia:

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key;
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted;
But yet an union in partition. . .

But love for man parts this double 'cherry,' as it so often does. In *As You Like It* Celia, the provident, throughout follows Rosalind, giving up father, state and fortune in steady fidelity.

Rosalind is after her lover; and plays the action through with prettiest trickery and witchery. But is Orlando really tricked to the end? He may pin foolish ballads on trees where (as in *Love's Labour's Lost*) nobody concerned is likely to read 'em. But can anyone read the later scenes of this play and believe that he had not at any rate a shrewd suspicion that this Ganymede was his Rosalind: or even that the exiled Duke himself had not some inkling?

I do remember in this shepherd-boy
Some lively touches of my daughter's favour.

No: we are in Arden, where all is deception, but there is no deception save self-deception, and even that very pretty, and pardonable. At any time, in any clearing, two page-boys may wander in and sing a carol of a lover and his lass. As another carol of the time has it:

Hey, nonny no!
 Men are fools who wish to die!
 Is't not fine to dance and sing
 When the bells of death do ring?
 Is't not fine to swim in wine,
 And turn upon the toe,
 And sing hey, nonny no!
 When the winds blow
 And the seas flow?
 Hey, nonny no!

It is all charming make-believe in this play, with Jaques and Touchstone as correctives or sedatives. To philosophise it is as absurd as to sit down and count out its impossibilities of time, 'duration of action,' geography, fauna. But the heart of it is as sound as the heart of an Idyll of Theocritus or an Eclogue of Virgil. You may call it artificial: you may prove, for instance, that the chiming quartet, 'And so am I for Phebe,' 'And I for Ganymede,' 'And I for Rosalind,' 'And I for no woman,' etc. is artificial. But its pastoral guise is the guise of a feeling that goes deeper into mortal concern than criticism can easily penetrate.

VII

What shall we say of the ending and its hymeneals? The ending is huddled up, of course: any Elizabethan playwright took that way, and the plays of Shakespeare, labelled Comedy, History, or Tragedy, take it again and again. Yet even after a lion and a snake, these classical nuptials seem wildly incongruous with the English Arden Shakespeare has evolved for us out of his

young memories. It may very well be that, as our texts reach us, they were adapted out of Christian to Pagan ceremonial in obedience to royal wish or statute. But it matters nothing, surely. The gods change, but literature persists: and if the *deus Terminus* of our woodland be the altar of Hymen, who shall gainsay? Surely no one who has known Catullus.

It is all just as believable as that Oliver has changed heart by converse with a friar casually met, or Jaques hung up his cloak in a house of convertites. Arden, having room for all fancy beneath its oaks, has room for all reconciliations on its fringe, and Hymen, surely, makes a better sealer of vows than, say, Martext, discoverable in that land. For after all, every passenger goes through it under enchantment, and as in *The Tempest* Ferdinand and Miranda prepare their wedlock through sweet Pagan rites—as in *The Tempest* all are held under spell—so all step clear of the forest, as of the Isle, to common life, restored to it through nuptial mirth not of the Church—of the Golden Age, rather. We are recalled to normal life because Shakespeare is, at the end, of all men the most commonsensical. We win out of Arden, or a rainbowed island, to end our days as a burgess, proprietor of respectable New Place. But in youth—and it is observable how almost all great authors draw throughout life upon their youth, bringing forth treasures both new and old—in our author's house are many mansions, and we have loitered through Arden, courted under the boughs, laughed, loved, housed in the wilderness, listened to Avon and heard the song.

TO THE READER

The following is a brief description of the punctuation and other typographical devices employed in the text, which have been more fully explained in the *Note on Punctuation* and the *Textual Introduction* to be found in *The Tempest* volume:

An obelisk (†) implies corruption or emendation, and suggests a reference to the Notes.

A single bracket at the beginning of a speech signifies an 'aside.'

Four dots represent a *full-stop* in the original, except when it occurs at the end of a speech, and they mark a long pause. Original *colons* or *semicolons*, which denote a somewhat shorter pause, are retained, or represented as three dots when they appear to possess special dramatic significance. Similarly, significant *commas* have been given as dashes.

Round brackets are taken from the original, and mark a significant change of voice; when the original brackets seem to imply little more than the drop in tone accompanying parenthesis, they are conveyed by commas or dashes.

In plays for which both Folio and Quarto texts exist, passages taken from the text not selected as the basis for the present edition will be enclosed within square brackets. Lines which Shakespeare apparently intended to cancel, have been marked off by frame-brackets.

Single inverted commas (") are editorial; double ones ("") derive from the original, where they are used to draw attention to maxims, quotations, etc.

The reference number for the first line is given at the head of each page. Numerals in square brackets are placed at the beginning of the traditional acts and scenes.