

**SHAKSPERE'S PLAYS: THE
SEPARATE EDITIONS OF,
WITH THE ALTERATIONS
DONE BY VARIOUS HAND**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649275090

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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INTRODUCTION.

THE immense popularity of the works of Shakspeare is most clearly shown by the great number of editions which have been produced, and also by the multitudinous editions of his Plays which have been separately published. The universality of knowledge contained therein—their thorough development of humanity—have won for them the highest appreciation and general acceptance. Yet but little is known relative to the manner in which the Shakspearean drama has served the purposes of other dramatists who have conceitedly thought that they could adorn and beautify the works of our many-sided master. Some of the alterations which have been made, are of the strangest character, especially those made by Davenant and Dryden. The circle for whom they sought to “gild refined gold and to paint the lily,” indulged in lewdness and profanity, and there cannot be any question that the Court of the latest Stuarts was marked by conduct of a libidinous nature. The alterations made by succeeding dramatists and actors have in no way added to the worth of Shakspeare, but, on the other hand, have demonstrated the inability of those who made the alterations to comprehend the greatness of Shakspeare, who seems to grow ever more in wisdom and truth, as we ourselves in wisdom grow. The wonderful vitality of the works of Shakspeare is evidenced

in the fact, that though so frequently weighted with the dross of others, they still keep the stage and are more than ever read. So great is the influence of his works, that in the past and in the present, he has been—

“the charmer of each age,
Whose thoughts so subtly with our growth have grown,
We are not conscious they are not our own.”

Each succeeding year adds to the number of students and readers of the works of the “sweet swan of Avon;” and this considerable increase in the number of readers of Shakspeare's works during the last hundred years has produced one great advantage: for it has caused most of the alterations of his text to fall into oblivion, and at the same time it has also enforced a greater necessity on the part of theatrical managers to adhere more closely to the original text when seeking to represent the poet's works. But three of the alterations may now be said to keep the stage: Richard III. by Colley Cibber, King Lear by Nahum Tate, and Katharine and Petruchio by David Garrick; and these three versions are in all probability about the worst that were ever made. The purport of the following pages, is to show the number and the nature of the alterations that have been effected, and also to give the number of editions of the separate Plays that have been printed and published.

COMEDIES.

THE TEMPEST, 40 Editions.—In 1667 this Play was altered by John Dryden and Sir W. Davenant, and of their alteration eleven editions were published, eight in 4to. and three in 12mo. In this version, the authors have introduced Hippolito, a man who has never seen a woman, and Sycorax, a sister-monster to Caliban ; they have also given Prospero another daughter, called Dorinda. Trinculo is converted into the boatswain and speaks a good deal of the language which belongs of right to Stephano ; and two fresh sailors, Ventoso and Mustacho are added to the dramatic personæ. In the 4th act Hippolito is wounded, and Ariel says of him—

“ His soul stood almost at life's door, all bare
And naked, shivering like boys upon a river's
Bank, and loth to tempt the cold air, but I took
Her, and stopp'd her in.”

Dorinda asks, “ What is the soul ? ”

Hippo. “ A small blue thing that runs about within us.
Dor. Then I have seen it in a frosty morning run
Smoaking from my mouth.”

This is the stuff thrust into Shakspeare's play, and was looked upon as an improvement. In 1673, it was altered by Shadwell and made into an opera. In 1674, The Mock Tempest, or the Enchanted Castle, a farce in five

acts, by Duffet was produced. There is not much in this piece, but the song of Ariel, "Where the bee suck, there suck I," is very happily imitated—

"Where good ale is, there suck I,
In a cobbler's stall I lie,
While the watch are passing by;
Then about the streets I fly,
After cullies merrily:
And I merrily, merrily take up my clo'se,
Under the watch and the constable's nose."

In 1756, David Garrick altered it to an opera; the music being by Mr. Smith. Prospero in this version is made to sing, and some of the other parts are borrowed from Dryden. There is a lot of arrant nonsense sung in the opera, and none more so than that sung by Ariel, from Dryden's *Tyrannic Love*:

"Merry, merry, merry, we sail from the east,
Half tippled at a rainbow feast."

In 1776 it was altered by R. B. Sheridan; the songs with music by T. Linley, jun. Two editions of this version appeared. In 1780 it was altered and produced as "The Shipwreck," at the Patagonian theatre. In 1789, J. P. Kemble altered it from the Dryden and Davenant version. Kemble restored a good deal of Shakspeare, though he retained most of Dryden's unnatural additions. Three editions of this alteration were published: one in 1789, 1806 and 1807. In 1815, Kemble made still further alterations in this comedy, by omitting more of Dryden and restoring more of Shakspeare. Neither of these alterations add to the credit of Kemble, either as an actor or Shakspearean scholar, for he must still be classed with those who have won disgrace for themselves by mutilating the text of Shakspeare. In 1821, this play was again converted into

an opera, and produced at Covent Garden Theatre on May 15th. This mutilation is one among the worst ever perpetrated by our English play-vampers, who, secure in their own puny powers, fail not to introduce a farrago of unmeaning nonsense into the works of the great poet. Mr. Macready was the Prospero of the opera; Miss Stephens, Dörinda; Miss Hallande, Miranda; Miss Foote, Ariel; Mr. Emery, Caliban; Mr. W. Farren, Stephano; Trinculo, Blanchard; Alonso, Egerton; Ferdinand, Abbott; and Hippolito, Duruset. The additional songs and dialogue were added by Reynolds. Two editions of the *Tempest* have been published in Phonetic spelling, one in 1849 and one in 1864.

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA, 11 *Editions*. In 1763, this Comedy, with alterations and additions by Benjamin Victor, was produced at Drury Lane. The alterations consisted in the transposition of scenes and in the omitting of speeches, which, instead of improving the acting of the comedy only served to produce much absurdity. The additions consisted of two scenes added to the 5th act for the purpose of introducing Speed and Lance, and they are entirely unmeaning and unnecessary. In 1790 this comedy was revived at Covent Garden Theatre, with the addition of songs, duetts, glees and choruses selected from the entire works of Shakspeare. In 1808, it was altered by J. P. Kemble, whose alterations are chiefly based upon Victor's version. The additions made by Kemble are in the worst taste, and from the weakness of the language when compared with the original play, proves that Kemble was not familiar with the play of Shakspeare's, but more so with the mangled abortion of Victor's. In 1821, Reynolds degraded this comedy into an opera, which was produced

at Covent Garden Theatre. What Dryden said of D'Urfey is equally applicable to Reynolds,—“let him alone, he will do something worse presently.”

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR, 33 *Editions*. In 1702, John Dennis tried his cunning hand in seeking to destroy the great master's work, by adapting this comedy and making it his own. His piece was called “The Comical Gallant, or the Amours of Sir John Falstaff.” In this alteration Dennis has retained about one-half of Shakspeare's play, and he has also changed the language of the scenes which he has retained. This manipulation of the words of the poet by Dennis, proves his incapacity as a Shakspearean critic, and shows how valueless must be any opinion which he has put forth on the merits of Shakspeare. The whole conduct of the comedy is changed and Dennis has added one new character,—the host of the Bull, a brother of Mrs. Ford; Mrs. Dorothy Tearsheet is substituted for Mrs. Quickly, and Fenton and Anne Page are much enlarged. The following syllabus of Dennis's comedy will show the changes:—

Act 1st begins with Fenton and the Host of the Garter—then comes a scene between Fenton and Anne Page—Shallow, Slender and Sir Hugh enter—Falstaff discharges Pistol and Nym—Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford compare the letters—the act concludes with a poor scene between Page and Ford.

Act 2. Mrs. Dorothy comes to Falstaff with a message from Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page—Ford visits Falstaff as Broom—this scene is materially altered—Dr. Caius and Sir Hugh quarrel, and are reconciled.

Act 3. The scene lies at the Bull Inn—Falstaff and Mrs. Ford meet by appointment—Mrs. Page enters, disguised as Captain Dingboy—she pretends to have an

intrigue with Mrs. Ford and frightens Falstaff by discharging a pistol at him—on the approach of Ford, Falstaff is carried off in a buck basket—Mrs. Page beats Ford—her peruke falls off and she is discovered.

Act 4. Falstaff and Ford, as Broom, have a second meeting—the Host of the Bull tells Ford that Falstaff and Mrs. Ford are to meet at Herne's Oak—Anne Page has a scene with Fenton and another with Slender—the latter is chiefly from Shakspeare's first act.

Act 5. Mrs. Ford says her husband is gone to London—Falstaff enters to Mrs. Ford, and Mrs. Page, as Herne the Hunter—a terrible symphony is heard—Falstaff secretes himself in a tuft of trees—the pretended fairies bring in Ford, dressed as Falstaff—they sing a song and beat Ford to stockfish—Falstaff escapes unhurt—Ford is cured of his jealousy—Slender and Dr. Caius enter, both of them in women's clothes and masked—Fenton and Anne Page enter, unmasked—Slender and Dr. Caius fight, for the Host of the Garter, disguised as a parson, has married Dr. Caius to Slender.

In 1797, J. P. Kemble altered this comedy, and a second edition of his alteration was published in 1804. In 1824, this comedy was converted into an opera, by Reynolds, and produced at Drury Lane Theatre, on June 1st.

TWELFTH NIGHT, 19 Editions. In 1663, this Comedy was altered and produced at the Theatre, Lincoln's Inn Fields, the character of Viola being omitted in the representation. This comedy was altered by C. Burnaby, and published under the title of "Love Betrayed, or the Agreeable Disappointment," in 1703. This is a very poor alteration of Shakspeare's comedy, the plot and main incidents are preserved, the names of the characters