

**SHAKESPEARE'S: AS YOU LIKE IT;
WITH INTRODUCTION, AND
NOTES EXPLANATORY AND
CRITICAL. FOR USE IN SCHOOLS
AND FAMILIES**

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & HENRY N. HUDSON

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FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES.

BY THE

REV. HENRY N. HUDSON, LL.D.



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INTRODUCTION.

Date of the Composition.

AS YOU LIKE IT was registered at the Stationers', in London, on the 4th of August, 1600. Two other of Shakespeare's plays, and one of Ben Jonson's were entered at the same time; all of them under an injunction, "to be stayed." In regard to the other two of Shakespeare's plays, the stay appears to have been soon removed, as both of them were entered again in the course of the same month, and published before the end of that year. In the case of *As You Like It*, the stay seems to have been kept up; perhaps because its continued success on the stage made the theatrical company unwilling to part with their interest in it.

This is the only contemporary notice of the play that has been discovered. As it was not mentioned in the list given by Francis Meres in 1598, we are probably warranted in presuming it had not been heard of at that time. The play has a line, "Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?" apparently quoted from Marlowe's version of *Hero and Leander*, which was published in 1598. So that we may safely conclude the play to have been written some time between that date and the date of the forecited entry at the Stationers'; that is, when the Poet was in his thirty-sixth or thirty-seventh year. The play was never printed, that we know of, till in the folio of 1623.

Before passing from this branch of the subject, perhaps I ought to cite a curious piece of tradition, clearly pointing to the play in hand. Gilbert Shakespeare, a brother of William, lived till after the Restoration, which occurred in 1660; and Oldys tells us of "the faint, general, and almost lost ideas" which the old man had, of having once seen the Poet act a part in one of his own comedies; "wherein, being to personate a decrepit old man, he wore a long beard, and appeared so weak and drooping, that he was forced to be carried by another person to a table, at which he was seated among some company who were eating, and one of them sung a song." This could have been none other than the "goold old man" Adam, in and about whom we have so much noble thought; and we thus learn that his character, beautiful in itself, yet more so for this circumstance, was sustained by the Poet himself.

Sources of the Plot.

In regard to the originals of this play, two sources have been pointed out, — *The Cook's Tale of Gamelyn*, sometime attributed to Chaucer, but upon better advice excluded from his works; and a novel by Thomas Lodge entitled *Rosalynd; Euphues' Golden Legacy*. As the *Tale of Gamelyn* was not printed till more than a century later, it has been questioned whether Shakespeare ever saw it. Nor indeed can much be alleged as indicating that he ever did: one point there is, however, that may have some weight that way. An old knight, Sir John of Boundis, being about to die, calls in his wise friends to advise him touching the distribution of his property among his three sons. They advise him to settle all his lands on the eldest, and leave the youngest without any thing. Gamelyn, the youngest, being his favourite son, he rejects

their advice, and bestows the largest portion upon him. The Poet goes much more according to their advice; Orlando, who answers to Gamelyn, having no share in the bulk of his father's estate. A few other resemblances, also, may be traced, wherein the play differs from Lodge's novel; though none of them are so strong as to force the inference that Shakespeare must have consulted the *Tale*. Nor, in truth, is the matter of much consequence, save as bearing upon the question whether the Poet was of a mind to be unsatisfied with such printed books as lay in his way. I would not exactly affirm him to have been "a hunter of manuscripts"; but indications are not wanting, that he sometimes had access to them: nor is it at all unlikely that one so greedy of intellectual food, so eager and so apt to make the most of all the means within his reach, should have gone beyond the printed resources of his time. Besides, there can be no question that Lodge was very familiar with the *Tale of Gamelyn*: he follows it so closely in a large part of his novel as to leave scarce any doubt that he wrote with the manuscript before him; and if he, who was also sometime a player, availed himself of such sources, why may not Shakespeare have done the same?

The practical use of such inquiries is, that they exhibit the Poet in the character where I like especially to view him, namely, as an earnest and diligent seeker after knowledge, and as building himself up in intelligence and power by much the same means as are found to serve in the case of other men. He himself tells us that "ignorance is the curse of God, knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to Heaven." Assuredly he was a great student as well as a great genius; as full of aptness to learn as of force to create. If he had great faculties to work with, he was also a great worker in

the use of them. Nor is it best for us to think of him as being raised by natural gifts above the common methods and processes of high intellectual achievement.

Lodge's *Rosalind* was first printed in 1590; and its popularity appears in that it was reprinted in 1592, and again in 1598. Steevens pronounced it a "worthless original"; but this sweeping sentence is so unjust as to breed some doubt whether he had read it. Compared with the general run of popular literature then in vogue, the novel has no little merit; and is very well entitled to the honour of having contributed to one of the most delightful poems ever written. A rather ambitious attempt indeed at fine writing; pedantic in style, not a little blemished with the elaborate euphemism of the time, and occasionally running into absurdity and indecorum; nevertheless, upon the whole, it is a varied and pleasing narrative, with passages of great force and beauty, and many touches of noble sentiment, and sometimes informed with a pastoral sweetness and simplicity quite charming.

To make a full sketch of the novel, in so far as the Poet borrowed from it, would occupy too much space. Still it seems desirable to indicate, somewhat, the extent of the Poet's obligations in this case; which can be best done, I apprehend, by stating, as compactly as may be, a portion of the story.

Sir John of Bordeaux, being at the point of death, called in his three sons, Saladyne, Fernandine, and Rosader, and divided his wealth among them, giving nearly a third to Rosader the youngest. After a short period of hypocritical mourning for his father, Saladyne went to studying how he might defraud his brothers, and ravish their legacies. He put Fernandine to school at Paris, and kept Rosader as his foot-boy. Rosader bore this patiently for three years, and

then his spirit rose against it. While he was deep in meditation on the point, Saladyne came along and began to jerk him with rough speeches. After some interchange of angry and insulting words, Rosader "seized a great rake, and let drive at him," and soon brought him to terms. Saladyne, feigning sorrow for what he had done, then drew the youth, who was of a free and generous nature, into a reconciliation, till he might devise how to finish him out of the way.

Now, Gerismond, the rightful King of France, had been driven into exile, and his crown usurped, by Torismond, his younger brother. To amuse the people, and keep them from thinking of the banished King, the usurper appointed a day of wrestling and tournament; when a Norman, of great strength and stature, who had wrestled down as many as undertook with him, was to stand against all comers. Saladyne went to the Norman secretly, and engaged him with rich rewards to dispatch Rosader, in case Rosader should come within his grasp. He then pricked his brother on to the wrestling, telling him how much honour it would bring him, and that he was the only one to uphold the renown of the family. The youth, full of heroic thoughts, was glad of such an opportunity. When the time came, Torismond went to preside over the games, taking with him the Twelve Peers of France, his daughter Alinda, his niece Rosalynd, and all the most famous beauties of the Court. Rosalynd, "upon whose cheeks there seemed a battle between the graces," was the centre of attraction, "and made the cavaliers crack their lances with more courage." The tournament being over, the Norman offered himself as general challenger at wrestling. While he is in the full career of success, Rosader alights from his horse, and presents him-