

**SHAKESPEARE'S
COMEDY OF THE
TAMING OF THE SHREW**

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Shakespeare's Comedy of the Taming of the Shrew by William Shakespeare & William J. Rolfe

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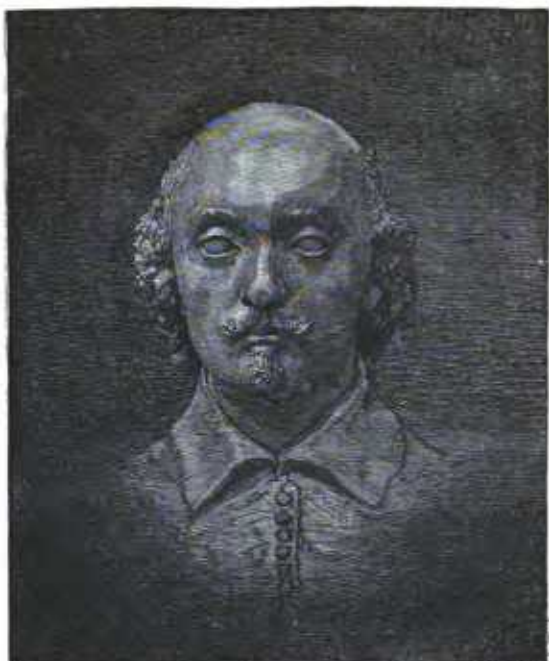
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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & WILLIAM J. ROLFE

**SHAKESPEARE'S
COMEDY OF THE
TAMING OF THE SHREW**



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SHAKESPEARE'S
COMEDY OF
THE TAMING OF THE SHREW.

EDITED, WITH NOTES,
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WITH ENGRAVINGS.



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PREFACE.

The Taming of the Shrew is one of the most interesting of the plays, from the fact that it is not wholly Shakespeare's, and that we have the earlier play from which he took the main incidents of his plot, as well as some minor details of the action and occasionally the very phraseology. In the *Notes* I have quoted more of this old play than any other editor has given (except Halliwell, who reprints the whole of it in his great folio edition), in order that the reader may see just how Shakespeare has made use of it. The comic parts of it have considerable merit, but the serious or sentimental portions are generally poor, sometimes very poor. Shakespeare helped himself freely to the former where they suited his purpose, but the latter he used scarcely at all. For instance, in iv. 3 and iv. 5 he followed the old play quite closely, as the extracts on pages 159, 161, and 166 will show; and so, too, in the final scene until we come to Kate's long speech (136-179), where he gives us something all his own and in keeping with the character, instead of the pedantic homily (see page 171) on the creation of the world and of man, with which the earlier Kate is absurdly made to address her sisters. This is but one illustration out of many that might be cited to show how Shakespeare has bettered the characterization of the old play, not only by making the personages consistent with themselves, but also by lifting them to a higher plane of humanity. Kate, "curst" though she be, is not the vulgar vixen the earlier playwright made her; and Petruchio, if "not a gentleman," judged by the standard of our day (see p. 27 below), is much nearer being one than his prototype Ferando. The two Kates are tamed by the very same methods, but in the case of the first we miss all the subtle touches that show the result to be a genuine "moral reform" (compare the quotation from Clarke, p. 161 below), and make us feel

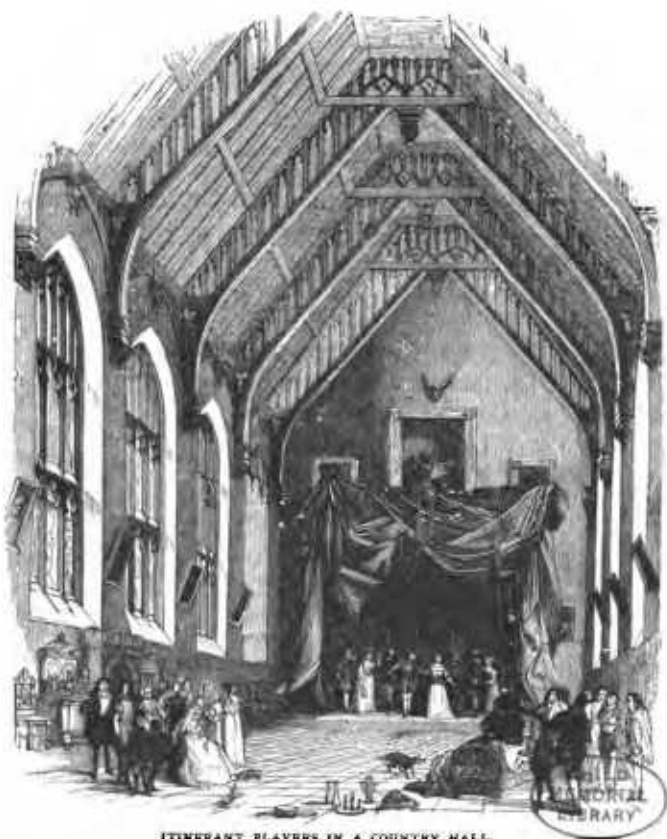
that the Shrew has learned to love her conqueror as well as to respect him—"taming her wild *heart* to his *loving* hand," as Beatrice expresses it.

The extracts from *The Taming of a Shrew* are copied verbatim from the reprint published by the Shakespeare Society in 1844. I have preferred not to modernize the spelling and pointing, as most of the editors have done, because the original is an interesting specimen of the printing of the time. The proof-reader, like Quince in his prologue, does not "stand upon points," and consequently the text is often "like a tangled chain, nothing impaired, but all disordered." The reader will no doubt find some amusement in disentangling it.

The illustrations on pages 8, 9, 41, 56, 71, 72, 84, 107, and 108 are from Knight's "Pictorial Shaksperc." The views of the town-house and the church of St. Giustina (completed in 1549, and still standing) at Padua are copied by Knight from the "Storia Dimostrazione della Città di Padova," 1767. That of Pisa is from a print by Franciscus of Milan, 1705, but the famous *quattro fabbriche* look just as they do to-day. The Prato della Valle (now known as the Piazza di Vittorio Emanuele) is from Piranesi, 1786; and the Gymnasium from an old print in the King's Library, British Museum.

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