A SEQUEL TO THE BANKSIDE SHAKESPERE XXII: THE COMEDIE OF ERRORS (THE HEMINGES AND CONDELL TEXT WITH THE "GLOBE" MODERN TEXT)

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APPLETON MORGAN

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Trieste

THE COMEDIES, HISTORIES, AND TRAGEDIES OF MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

As presented at the Globe and Blackfriars Theatres, *circa* 1591–1623

Being the first revised folio text of 1623, *in parallel pages with the "Globe" text, with Critical Introductions*

A SEQUEL TO

The Bankside Shakespeare

EDITED BY APPLETON MORGAN

NEW YORK
THE SHAKESPEARE SOCIETY OF NEW YORK
1894

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XXII.

THE COMEDIE OF ERRORS

(*The Heminges and Condell text with the "Globe" modern text.*)

With an Introduction

BY

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1894

INTRODUCTION.

WITH the title-page date of 1623, Heminges and Condell brought out the first collected Edition of Shakespeare's Plays, under the patronage of the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, two new names in a Shakespearean connection, but at the charges of Jaggard, Blount, Smithweeke and Aspley, who had owned and printed some of the earlier Quartos.

In this collected edition were sixteen plays, of which no quarto editions have ever been discovered, and for the texts of which we have no other authority than that of these Folio editors. Probably these sixteen were plays which Shakespeare had been able to keep from the rapacity of the stationers, the piracy by stenographers and the larceny of disloyal actors, since many of them had been mentioned by Francis Meres as well known in 1598—some thirty years before.

They were now entered on the Stationers' Register, however, by the above-named Blount and Jaggard (who appear on the title page of the First Folio as its publishers), on the eighth day of November, 1623, as follows :

1623. 8° Nouembris. 1623. Rr. Jac. 21.° Mr. Blounte; Isaak Jaggard.—Entred for their copie vnder the hands of Mr Doctor Worrall and Mr Cole, warden, Mr William Shakspeers Comedyes, Histories and Tragedyes so manie of the said copies as are not formerly entred to other men, vizt. *Comedyes*. The Tempest. The two gentlemen of Verona. Measure for Measure. The Comedy of Errors. As you like it. Alls well that ends well. Twelfe night. The winter's tale.—

Histories. The thirde parte of Henry the sixt.* Henry the eight. Tragedies. Coriolanus. Timon of Athens. Julius Cæsar. Mackbeth. Anthonie and Cleopatra. Cymbeline.

—An entry which, if it preceded the publication of the folio, would, according to the present custom of publishers at least, have thrown the actual appearance of that volume into the year 1624. It would seem, also, that some legal difficulties had surrounded the undertaking from its start. At least I draw this much from the fact that the entry above cited was made, not by the proprietors themselves, as was usual, but by their counsel and solicitor.

But, however that may have been, there is no difficulty in selecting from among them THE COMEDY OF ERRORS as the earliest in point of composition. We are indeed able to locate it much earlier than even Meres's mention of it in 1598—probably to identify its performance at the Rose playhouse in 1592, and to its having been acted at some playhouse not earlier than, but probably at about, the month of August, 1589. This evidence is, to mention the best evidence first, the long localism† introduced in Act third, scene second, where two of the actors refer to such affairs in England, Scotland, France, Spain, the Netherlands, and even in far-off America, as for some reason happened to be of special public interest at the date of its insertion. The matter is lugged in, as Dromio the clown is lugged into the Pilgrimage to Parnassus (1597), "by a rope," the rope being, in this case, a very thin one indeed, consisting merely of a remark by one of the

* This may be a scrivener's error for the *First* Part of King Henry VI. For, as we have seen, that play—known as *The Contention*—was issued in quarto in 1594 by Creed and Millington (Millington had copyrighted it as *The First Part of the Contention*, March 12th, 1593–4), whereas there is no Quarto anywhere corresponding to the First Part of King Henry the Sixth, which appears first in this First Folio.

† See, as to Localisms, Introduction to Volume I.

twin Dromios that he is claimed by a woman who "haunts him and will have him." The particular matter which gives us the date is as follows: (F. 907.)

"*Antipholus of S.* In what part of her body stands * * * * Scotland?

"*Dromio of S.* I found it by the barrenness; hard in the palm of the hand.

"*Antipholus of S.* Where France?

"*Dromio of S.* In her forehead; armed and reverted, making war against her heir."

The gibe at Scotland would have been relished in days when Elizabeth was troubled with the nightmare of a Scotch claimant for her throne. And the pun on *hair* and *heir* was an allusion to the civil war in France over the successorship of Henry the Fourth—which allusion would have been palpably stale and senseless had not the news been comparatively recent to a London audience. This war actually began with the murder of Henry the Third, August 2d, 1589. But it may be argued that a state of war was really inaugurated between the contending parties at the date of the death of the Duke of Anjou in 1584. Or the pun would have been again appropriate when Essex was sent by the English Court to the assistance of Henry of Navarre. So the pun helps us at least to the date 1591, which is the earliest date at which we can conjecture the appearance of a true Shakespearean play. Were further proof that this passage was interpolation needed, it would be found in the discrepancy between Dromio's statement in line F. 1095 that his involuntary sweetheart is named Dowsabel, whereas he here (F. 897) says her name is Nell; clearly that he may work in the pun—Nell—an ell—in describing her dimensions; the identical carelessness with a purpose that is so frequent in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.* (Unless, indeed, some one shall arise to dis-

* See Introduction to Volume I.

cover that "Nell" was short for "Dowsabel," which would be quite in accord with the expected in Shakesperean hermeneutics !)

And such being the testimony, it is amply confirmed by the context. Indeed, of internal evidence that *The Comedy of Errors* was Shakespeare's very early work, the play has an abundance. It is written in rhyme, a form which Shakespeare discarded as experience showed him how much more effectively his actors could deliver blank verse or prose. It makes no attempt to distinguish character; the Antipholi might be Dromios, or the Dromios Antipholi, or either anybody else in the play, so far as the speeches put into their mouths characterize them or do more than fit them for the "business" assigned to each. Again, the anachronisms would be harrowing were they not boyish, as in the *Titus Andronicus*, and fitted with much amateur allusion to the classics. Here in Ephesus are, for example, a striking clock, ducats, guilders, marks, angels, sixpences and pounds sterling. Here are aqua vitæ, a mace, "suits of durance," a "hoy" (a sloop-rigged coaster of Elizabeth's time); women named Maud, Bridget, Marian, Jenny, Cicely, Nell, Dowsabel and Gilian; Turkish tapestry, "Tartar limbo," wenches who swear "God damn," rapiers, "Lapland sorcerers," etc. To be finical, if the play related to a date subsequently to St. Paul's visit, A. D. 56, we might strain a point to place in Ephesus a Priory and a Prioress, allusions to Christians, to Adam, Noah, Satan, the Prodigal Son, to "Saints in Heaven" and to Pentecost. But even St. Paul did not bring to the Ephesians the institutions of beads for prayers, the right of sanctuary in religious houses, any more than he did the English legalisms of "fine and recovery" and "actions on the case." And I think that the misdemeanor of Ægeon in entering the port of Ephesus may be an anachronistic allusion to the

Statute 1 Eliz. ch. 13, which inaugurated the policy of barring certain ports to foreigners. For it is in evidence that the policy was not intended to be Ephesian when the Merchant, at line F. 162, advises Antipholus of Syracuse to give it out that he is from Epidamnum, in order to avoid the penalty provided by the special or temporary decree of non-intercourse with the port of Syracuse.

Possibly, too, the pun on the Warwickshire pronunciation of "ship" as "sheep," and the use of the Warwickshire "soon" in the sense of "promptly" or "exactly"—in the keeping of an appointment at a certain hour—and of "coil" for "trouble," may be called anachronisms." They are certainly evidence that the author of them had lived in Warwickshire. As to the "Schoolmaster named Pinch," that seems to me an indication of Shakespeare's authorship. The whilom bad boy of Stratford-on-Avon, chased by Sir Thomas Lucy's bailiffs, cuffed by the beadle and flogged by Thomas Hunt, seems to have expressly disliked schoolmasters. What was wanted, at this point in the play, was a leech. But, just as he made clever old Parson Evans, in *The Merry Wives*, go out of his way to be ridiculous as a pedagogue, so he makes this schoolmaster do duty as a medical attendant, in order to get a fling at schoolmasters in general. (I may add, however, that, as usual, we find on examination that Shakespeare is justified in anything he may assume. We have Ben Jonson's authority for it that schoolmasters were given to other sorts of cunning:

"I would have ne'er a cunning schoolmaster in England—I mean a cunning man as a schoolmaster—that is, a conjurer."

Another and final proof of very early production would be the stage directions, which are quite as rudimentary as any of the amusing examples heretofore given,* which included not only the name of the

* See Introduction to Volume VII. *ante*.