

**SHAKESPEARE'S
COMEDY OF ALL'S
WELL THAT ENDS WELL**

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Shakespeare's Comedy of All's Well that Ends Well by William Shakespeare & William J. Rolfe

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & WILLIAM J. ROLFE

**SHAKESPEARE'S
COMEDY OF ALL'S
WELL THAT ENDS WELL**



SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN AT NEW PLACE.

SHAKESPEARE'S
COMEDY OF
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

EDITED, WITH NOTES,
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WITH ENGRAVINGS



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All's Well that Ends Well.

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"Thus, Indian-like,
Religious in mine error, I adore
The sun, that looks upon his worshipper,
But knows of him no more."
(l. 3. 104-107.)



Boccaccio

INTRODUCTION
TO
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

I. THE HISTORY OF THE PLAY.

All's Well was first printed in the folio of 1623, where it occupies pages 230-254 in the division of *Comedies*. There can be little doubt, we think, that the play is a revision of the "Love Labours Wonne" included in Meres's often-quoted list (see our ed. of *M. N. D.* p. 9), as was first suggested by Farmer in his *Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare*. If so, it is probable that it was originally a companion play to *Love's Labour's Lost*, and written about the same time, or not far from 1592. Knight, Ulrici, and some other critics

put the date earlier than 1590. The marks of early work are seen in the frequent rhymed passages (some of them in alternate rhymes), the sonnet letter in iii. 4. 4-17, the lyrical, non-dramatic form of certain portions, and some peculiar grammatical constructions.*

The date of the revision of the play was probably not earlier than 1601, and may have been a year or two later. Furnivall makes it 1601-2; Dowden (who, however, is doubtful whether any part of the play is of early origin), "about 1602;" Fleay and Stokes, 1604; Gervinus and Collier, 1605 or 1606.

The text presents many difficulties, on account of the peculiarities of the style and the corruptions of the folio. Verplanck remarks: "The language approaches in many places to the style of *Measure for Measure*, as if much of it had been written in that season of gloom which imparted to the poet's style something of the darkness that hung over his soul. In addition to these inherent difficulties, there are several indications of an imperfect revision, as if words and lines intended to be rejected had been left in the manuscript,

* See Stokes, *Chronol. Order of Shakespeare's Plays*, p. 110, or Fleay, *Manual*, p. 224. Most of these earlier passages—"boulders from the old strata imbedded in the later deposits," as Fleay calls them—will be easily recognized by the reader.

It may be added that, though Fleay sees earlier and later work in the play, he says, in his *Introd. to Shaks. Study*, p. 25 (he was doubtful on the point when he published the earlier *Manual*): "It is not, however, as shown by Mr. Brae, a later version of *Love's Labour's Won*. The present title is alluded to in several places in the play itself, which are clearly part of the early work." Admitting this, we do not see that it settles the question. The play may have had a double title originally—*Love's Labour's Won*, or *All 's Well*, etc.—like *Twelfth Night*, and some other of the plays (cf. *Hen. VIII.* p. 10); or the present title may be a later one suggested by the occurrence of the proverb in the play.

Of the German critics, Gervinus and H. von Friesen are of opinion that the play is an early one recast. Tieck had long before noted evidences of two distinct styles of composition in it. On the other hand, Delius and Hertzberg deny that any such diversity of styles is to be recognized in any portion of it.