SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDY OF THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

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Shakespeare's Comedy of the Merry Wives of Windsor by William Shakespeare & Israel Gollancz

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & ISRAEL GOLLANCZ

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THE

TEMPLE SHAKESPEARE



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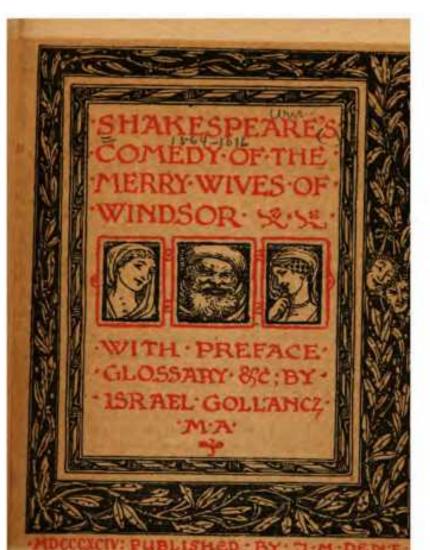
The Chandos Portrait, from the Engraving by J. Bochson.

He was not of an age, but for all time!

And all the Musks still were in their prime,
When like APOLLO he came forth to warme
Our eares, or like a MERCURY to charme!
Nature her selfe was proud of his designes,
And joy'd to weare the droseing of his lines!
Which were so richly spun, and woven to fit,
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit.
The merry GHREK, tart ARISTOPHANES,
Neat TERENCE, witty PLAUTUS, now not please;
But antiquated, and deserted lye
As they were not of Natures family.

BRN. JONSON.

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· AND · CO : ALDINE · HOUSE · LONDON · E · C ·

"But Shakespear's play in fourteen days was writ,

And in that space to make all just and fit,

Was an attempt surpassing human wit.

Yet our great Shakespear's matchless muse was such

None over in so small time perform'd so much."

"THE COMICAL GALLANT,"

JOHN DENNIS, 1701.

Preface.

The Editions. The earliest known edition of The Merry Wive of Window is a Quarto printed in 1602, with the following

title-page:-

"A most pleasaunt and excellent conceited Comedie, of Sir Iohn Falitaffe and the merrie Wives of Window. Entermixed with sundrie variable and pleasing humors of Sir Hugh the Welch Knight, lustice Shallow, and his wise Cousin M. Slender. With the swaggering value of Auncient Pistall, and Corporall Nym. By William Shakespeare. As it hath bene divers times Acted by the right Honorable my Lord Chamberlaines Servants. Both before her Maiestle, and elsewhere. London Printed by T. C. for Arthur Iohnson, and are to be sold at his shop in Powles Churchyard, at the signe of the Flower de Leuse and the Crowne" (reprinted in the Cambridge Shakespeare and in Hazlitt's Shakespeare Quartos, Quaritch). A second Quarto, a mere reprint of the first, appeared in 1619.

In the first Folio the play occupies pp. 39-60; its length there is more than double that of the Quartos, from which it differs to such an extent as to give the impression of being a revised and

expanded version of a mere garbled and pirated sketch.

Date of Composition. The first Quarto was entered in the Stationers' Registers under date 18th Jan. 1602; the play was probably written after Henry V., i.e. after the middle of the