

**SHAKESPEARE'S  
COMEDY OF AS  
YOU LIKE IT**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649703173

Shakespeare's Comedy of as You Like It by William Shakespeare & William J. Rolfe

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**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & WILLIAM J. ROLFE**

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SHAKESPEARE'S  
COMEDY OF  
AS YOU LIKE IT.

EDITED, WITH NOTES,

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*NEW YORK:*  
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,  
FRANKLIN SQUARE  
1896.

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THE FOREST OF ARDEM.

INTRODUCTION  
TO  
AS YOU LIKE IT.

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I. THE HISTORY OF THE PLAY.

*As You Like It* was first printed, so far as we know, in the folio of 1623, where it occupies pages 185-207 in the division of "Comedies." The earliest notice of it by name is found in the Registers of the Stationers' Company, on a leaf which does not belong to the regular records, but contains miscel-

laneous entries, notes, etc. Between two of these, the one dated in May, 1600, and the other in June, 1603, occurs the following memorandum :\*

4 Augusti	
As you like yt / a booke	} to be staied.
Henry the ffift / a booke	
Every man in his humour / a booke	
The commedie of muche A doo about nothing a booke /	

All these "books" are stated to be "my lord chamberlens menns plaies," which confirms Malone's opinion that the entry refers to the year 1600. *Henry V.* and *Much Ado About Nothing* were duly licensed (the former on the 14th and the latter on the 23d of August) and published that year; and it is not likely that the plays would have been "staied" after the publication of two of them. The prohibition was probably removed soon after it was recorded; and, as Halliwell suggests, the clerk may not have considered it worth the formality of a note in the body of the register.

On the other hand, *As You Like It* is not mentioned by Meres in his enumeration of Shakespeare's plays† in *Paladis Tamia*, which was published in September, 1598; and it contains a quotation (see iii. 5. 80) from Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, the earliest known edition of which appeared in the same year. It may therefore be reasonably concluded,

\* We print this as Wright gives it. In Halliwell's folio ed. it appears thus :

4 Augusti.	
As you like yt, a booke. Henry the ffift, a booke. Every man in his humor, a booke. The Commedie of Much Adoo about nothinge.	} To be staied.
a booke.	

Collier gives it twice (in the introductions to *Much Ado* and *A. Y. L.*), but the versions do not agree with each other or with either of the above. The matter is of little importance, and we refer to it only as illustrating one of the minor trials of an editor who cannot refer to original documents, but has to depend on copies made by others.

† See the passage in our ed. of *M. N. D.* p. 9.

as nearly all the commentators agree, that *As You Like It* was written between September, 1598, and August, 1600; probably in the year 1599.

#### II. THE SOURCES OF THE PLOT.

Shakespeare was chiefly indebted for the story of the play to a novel by Thomas Lodge, published in 1590 under the title of "Rosalynde, Euphues Golden Legacie, found after his death in his Cell at Silixedra, bequeathed to Philautus sonnes nursed up with their father in England, Fetcht from the Canaries by T. L., gent., Imprinted by T. Orwin for T. G. and John Busbie, 1590."\* This book was reprinted in 1592, and eight editions are known to have appeared before 1643. How closely the poet followed the novel may be seen by the extracts from the latter printed in our *Notes* below.

We may add here that Lodge took some of the main incidents of his novel from *The Cokes Tale of Gamelyn*, which is found in a few of the later manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer, but which the best editors of that poet believe to be the production of another writer.

#### III. CRITICAL COMMENTS ON THE PLAY.

[From Hazlitt's "Characters of Shakespear's Plays."†]

Shakespear has here converted the forest of Arden into another Arcadia, where they "fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world." It is the most ideal of any of this author's plays. It is a pastoral drama, in which the interest arises more out of the sentiments and characters than out of the actions or situations. It is not what is done, but what is said, that claims our attention. Nursed in solitude, "under the shade of melancholy boughs," the imagination grows soft and delicate, and the wit runs riot in idleness,

\* Possibly the poet used a lost play based upon the novel.

† *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, by William Hazlitt (London, 1817), p. 305 fol.