

**THE COMEDY OF  
MUCH ADO ABOUT  
NOTHING.**

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The comedy of much ado about nothing, by Ebenezer Charlton Black

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THE NEW HUDSON  
SHAKESPEARE

WS

THE COMEDY OF  
MUCH ADO  
ABOUT  
NOTHING

INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY  
HENRY NORMAN  
HUDSON, LL.D.



EDITED AND REVISED BY  
EBENEZER CHARLTON  
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## PREFACE

The text of this edition of *Much Ado About Nothing* is based upon a collation of the Quarto of 1600, the seventeenth century Folios, the Globe edition, and the Cambridge (W. Aldis Wright) edition of 1891. As compared with the text of the earlier editions of the Hudson Shakespeare, it is conservative. Exclusive of changes in spelling, punctuation, and stage directions, very few emendations by eighteenth century and nineteenth century editors have been adopted; and these, with variations from the First Folio, are indicated in the textual notes. These notes are printed immediately below the text, so that a reader or student may see at a glance the evidence in the case of a disputed reading, and have some definite understanding of the reasons for those differences in the text of Shakespeare which frequently surprise and very often annoy. Such an arrangement should be of special help in the case of a play universally read and often acted, since no two actors or interpreters agree in adhering to one text. A consideration of the more poetical, or the more dramatically effective, of two variant readings will often lead to rich results in awakening a spirit of discriminating interpretation and in developing creative criticism. In no sense is this a textual variorum edition. The variants given are only those of importance and of high authority.

The spelling of the text is modern except in the case of verb terminations in *-ed*, which, when the *e* is silent, are

printed with the apostrophe in its place. This is the general usage in the First Folio. The important contractions in the First Folio which may indicate Elizabethan pronunciation ('i' th' for 'in the,' 'rememb'red' for 'remember'd,' 'pamp'red' for 'pamper'd,' for example) are also followed. Modern spelling has to a certain extent been adopted in the text variants, but the original spelling has been retained wherever its peculiarities have been the basis for important textual criticism and emendation. The punctuation follows to a great extent that of the Folios in the use of the colon and the more important parentheses. In this way the spirit of the original printing, which is often a guide to the original interpretation, is preserved, as it is in the King James version of the Bible.

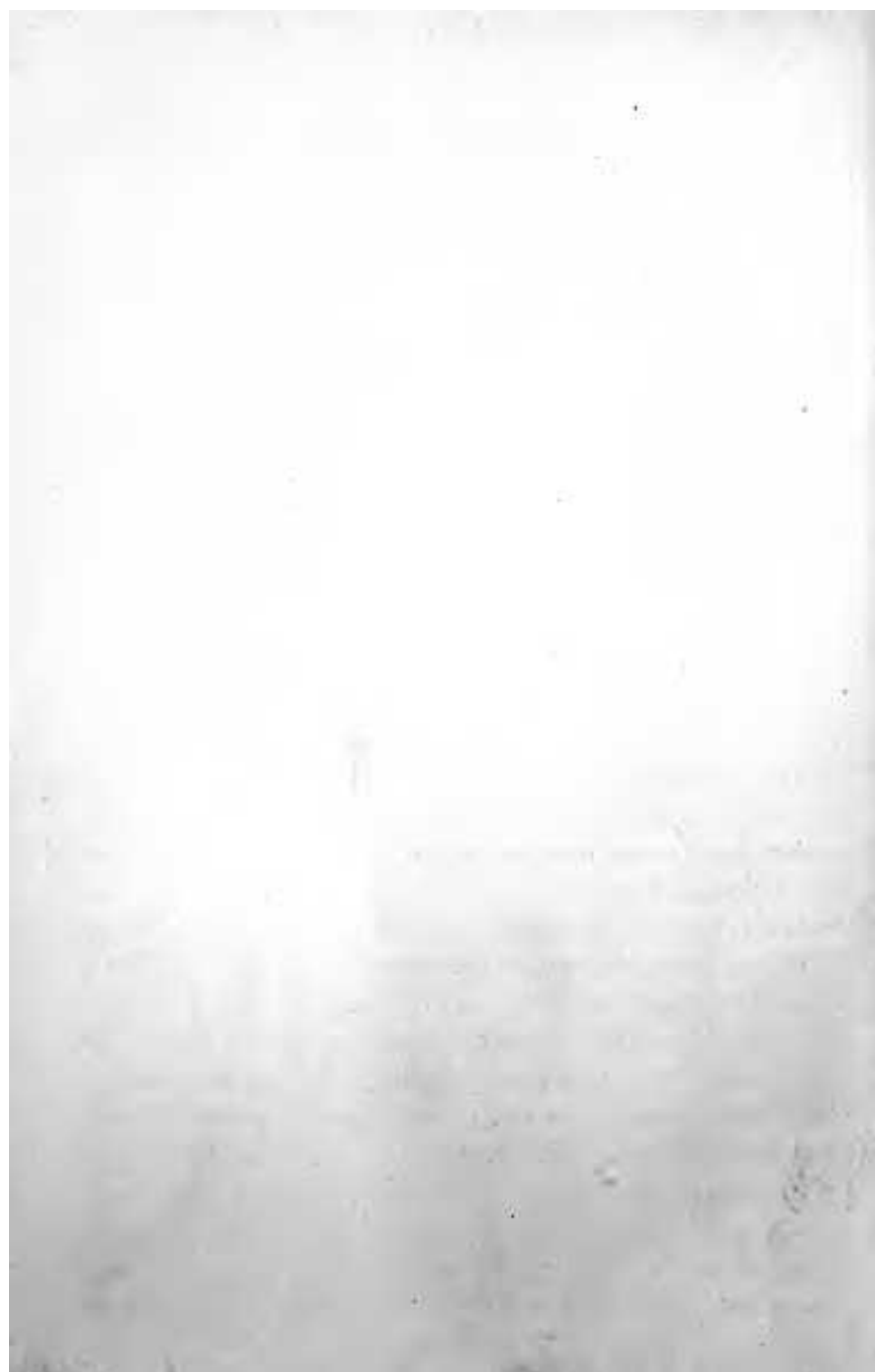
With the exception of the position of the textual variants, the plan of this edition is similar to that of the earlier editions of the Hudson Shakespeare. It is impossible to specify the various instances of revision and rearrangement in the matter of the Introduction and the interpretative notes, but the endeavor has been to retain all that gave the Hudson Shakespeare its unique place and to add the results of what seems vital and permanent in later inquiry and research. In this edition, as in the volumes of the series already published, the chapters entitled Sources, Date of Composition, Early Editions, Diction and Versification, Title of the Play, Duration of Action, Dramatic Construction and Development, with Analysis by Act and Scene, and Stage History are wholly new. In this edition, too, is introduced a chronological chart covering the important events of Shakespeare's life as man and as author and indicating in parallel columns his relation to contemporary writers and events. As a guide



to reading clubs and literary societies, there has been appended to the Introduction a table of the distribution of characters in the play, giving the acts and scenes in which each character appears and the number of lines spoken by each. The index of words and phrases has been so arranged as to serve both as a glossary and as a guide to the more important grammatical differences between Elizabethan and modern English.

While it is important that the principle of *sum cuique* be attended to so far as is possible in matters of research and scholarship, it is becoming more and more difficult to give every man his own in Shakespearian annotation, but the list of authorities given on page lv will indicate the chief source of much that has gone to enrich the value of this edition. Especial acknowledgment is here made of the obligations to Dr. William Aldis Wright and Dr. Horace Howard Furness, whose work in the collation of Quartos, Folios, and the more important English and American editions of Shakespeare has been of so great value to all subsequent editors and investigators.

With regard to the general plan of this edition, Professor William Peterfield Trent, of Columbia University, has offered valuable suggestions and given important advice. In the case of *Much Ado About Nothing* particular acknowledgment is due to Dr. Francis Kingsley Ball. To his critical acumen and literary sagacity are due the explanations connected with the return to the original text in I, i, 138-140; IV, i, 197; and V, i, 16.



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