

**THE TRAGEDY OF  
OTHELLO, THE  
MOOR OF VENICE**

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The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice by William Shakespeare & Roscoe Mongan

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**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & ROSCOE MONGAN**

**THE TRAGEDY OF  
OTHELLO, THE  
MOOR OF VENICE**



*with the.*

**OTHELLO.**

The Student's Shakespeare.

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THE TRAGEDY

OF

OTHELLO,

THE MOOR OF VENICE.

*By William Shakespeare.*

EDITED, WITH NOTES.

BY

ROSCOE MONGAN, B.A.,

(GOLD MEDALLIST.)

*Author of the "Treasury of Thought from Shakespeare," etc.*

o LONDON:

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1883.



## PREFACE.

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THE Tragedy of *Othello* having been appointed for the Military Examinations of 1883, and there being no *practical* English Edition—such as in the *Clarendon Press* or *Rugby* series—I have earnestly endeavoured to meet the requirements of Schools and Colleges.

The expurgation of the text has been managed as far as the sense and spirit of the original would allow. The greatest care has been taken, not only to explain verbal difficulties and difficult passages, but also to introduce, in appropriate places, the views and criticisms of the best English and German commentators. The quotations marked "Clarke" denote the eminent names of Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke, authors of the "Concordance."

Copious references have been made to Dr. Abbott's valuable

*Shakesperian Grammar*—an admirable work, indispensable to every student of Shakespeare.

LONDON, *Feb.*, 1883.







## INTRODUCTION.

**Date of this Play.** The best modern authorities consider that this play was composed and produced in, or near, the year 1604, and they base their opinions chiefly on internal evidence. The first edition of *Othello* was a quarto, published in 1622.

Stokes\* thus proves that this play was written before the year 1606. In i. i. 4 in the quarto of 1622 is found the expression, "Sblood," while this oath is omitted in the folio. This shows that the quarto was printed from a copy made before the Act of Parliament issued in 1606 against the abuse of the name of God in plays, etc.

The date (1604) is confirmed chiefly by such metrical tests as the comparative absence of rhyme and also by the comparative absence of classical allusions. Professor Dowden remarks that the general character and spirit of the play renders it "one of the group of tragedies of passion which

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\* See *Chronological Order of Shakespeare's Plays*. By the Rev. H. P. Stokes (London), 1878, p. 116.

includes *Macbeth* and *Lear*." . . . These dramas all end in confusion and sorrow, as those of a later period—*The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale*—close with reconciliation and peace.

At the period of the production of *Othello*, Shakespeare was in the full vigour of his splendid intellectual powers. *Hamlet* had already been produced; *Macbeth* and *Lear* were soon about to complete the group of these "four great tragedies."

Distinguished critics are almost unanimous in considering these "four great tragedies" as forming the grandest group in either ancient or modern literature. Of *Othello*, Macaulay says: "It is, perhaps, the greatest work in the world."

**Sources of the Plot.** The story on which the plot of *Othello* is founded seems to have been taken from the *Heccatomithi* of Giraldi Cinthio, an Italian novelist, first published at Monte Regale, in Sicily, in 1576. Verplanck\* thus describes the tale and the uses which Shakespeare has made of it.

"The following is the outline of the original story, sufficient to enable the reader to judge of the extent of the English dramatist's obligations to the Italian novelist, which are much less than is commonly supposed by those who take their ideas of the Italian story from some of the critics, and suppose it to be a novel, filled with dialogue and sentiment, instead of a meagre tale, not longer than one act of *Othello*.

"There lived at Venice a valiant Moor, held in great esteem for his military talent and services. Desdemona, a lady of marvellous beauty, attracted not by female fancy (*appetito donnesco*), but by his high virtues, became enamoured of the Moor, who returned her love; and, in spite of the opposition of her parents, married her. They lived in great happiness in

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\* *The Illustrated Shakespeare*, edited by G. C. Verplanck (New York), 1847.

Venice until the Moor (he has no other name in the story) was chosen to the military command of Cyprus, whither his wife insisted on accompanying him.

“He took with him a favourite ensign, a man of great personal beauty, but of the most depraved heart—a boaster and a coward. His wife is the friend of Desdemona. The ensign falls passionately in love with Desdemona, who, wrapped up in love of her husband, pays no regard to him. His love then turns to bitter hate, and he resolves to charge her with infidelity, and to fix the Moor’s suspicions upon a favourite captain of his. Soon after, that officer strikes and wounds a soldier on guard, for which the Moor cashiered him. Desdemona endeavours to obtain his pardon; and this gives the ensign an opportunity of insinuating accusations against her, and rousing the Moor’s jealousy. These suspicions he confirms by stealing from her a favourite worked handkerchief, and leaving it on the captain’s bed. Then the Moor and his ensign plot together to kill Desdemona and her supposed lover. The latter is waylaid and wounded in the dark by the ensign. Desdemona is beaten to death by him also ‘with a stocking filled with sand’; and then the Moor and he attempt to conceal their murder by pulling down the ceiling, and giving out that she was killed by the fall of a beam. The Moor becomes almost frantic with his loss—turns upon the ensign, whom he degrades and drives from him. The ensign revenges himself by disclosing the murder to the captain, upon whose accusation to the Senate the Moor is arrested, tried, tortured, and then banished, and afterwards killed by Desdemona’s relations.

“The tale has little beauty of style, power of narration, or vivid delineation of character. Indeed, none of the personages, except Desdemona, have any name, nor any distinctly and naturally drawn character; nor has the narrative any of that charm of expression and sentiment which has made others