

**SHAKESPEARE'S THE  
COMEDY OF ERRORS.  
EDITED, WITH NOTES**

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Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors. Edited, with Notes by William Shakespeare & William J. Rolfe

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**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & WILLIAM J. ROLFE**

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EDITED, WITH NOTES**





SHAKESPEARE'S  
THE COMEDY OF ERRORS.

EDITED, WITH NOTES,

BY

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*WITH ENGRAVINGS.*



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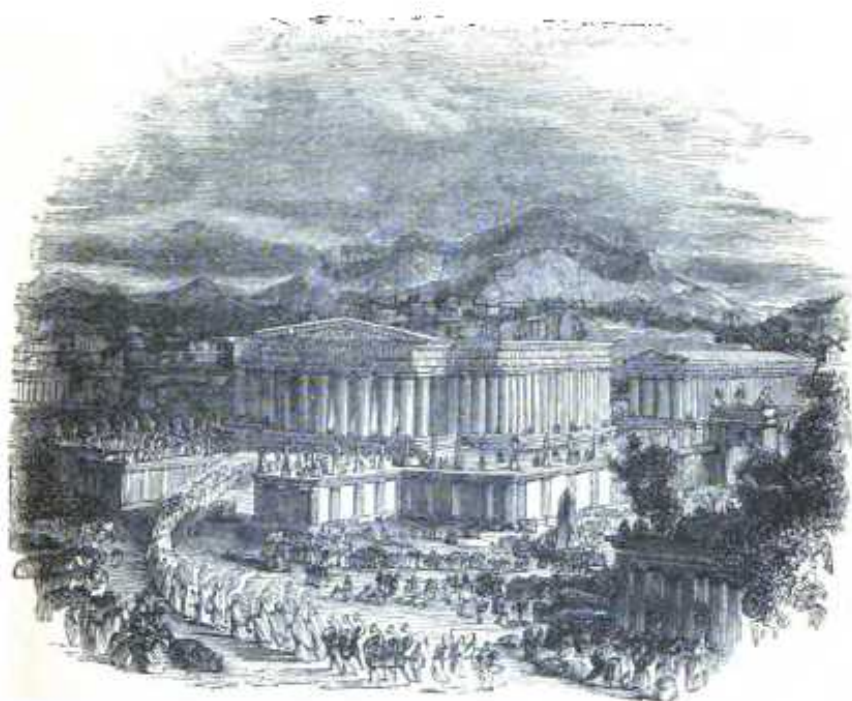
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RPHASUS.



TEMPLE OF DIANA AT EPHESUS.

INTRODUCTION  
TO  
THE COMEDY OF ERRORS.

I. THE HISTORY OF THE PLAY.

ALL the critics agree that the *Comedy of Errors*, though first printed in the folio of 1623, is one of the earliest of the plays. It is mentioned by Meres (see *M. N. D.* p. 9), and



is probably the "*Comedy of Errors*, like to Plautus his *Menæchmus*," which, according to the *Gesta Grayorum*, was "played by the players" at Gray's Inn, one night in December, 1594. The pun in iii. 2. 121 on France "making war against her heir" would seem to show that the play was written between August, 1589, when the civil war about the succession of Henry IV. began, and July, 1593, when it ended.\* Furnivall makes the date 1589, Collier "before 1590," Chalmers, Drake, Delius, and Stokes 1591, Malone 1592, Fleay (*Chronicle Life of Shakespeare*, 1886) 1594, the play having been revised, as he thinks, from the original version of 1590, which may have been partly from another hand.

The *Comedy of Errors* is the shortest of the plays, having only 1778 lines ("Globe" ed.), while *Hamlet*, the longest, has 3930, *Richard III.* 3620, *Troilus and Cressida* 3496, 2 *Henry IV.* 3446, etc. The next shortest is the *Tempest* with 2065, the next *Macbeth* with 2108, and the next the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* with 2180.

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

"The general idea of this play," as Singer remarks, "is taken from the *Menæchmi* of Plautus, but the plot is entirely recast, and rendered much more diverting by the variety and quick succession of the incidents. To the twin brothers of Plautus are added twin servants, and though this increases the improbability, yet, as Schlegel observes, 'when once we have lent ourselves to the first, which certainly borders on the incredible, we should not probably be disposed to cavil about the second; and if the spectator is to be en-

\* A writer in the *North British Review*, April, 1870, attempts to show that events in French history of earlier date are alluded to. Henry of Navarre, he says, became heir to the throne on the death of the Duke of Anjou in 1584, and remained so until he became king on the murder of Henry III., Aug. 2, 1589.