

**SHAKESPEARE'S
TRAGEDY
OF HAMLET**

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Shakespeare's Tragedy of Hamlet by William Shakespeare & Israel Gollancz

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & ISRAEL GOLLANCZ

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WITH PREFACE
GLOSSARY & BY
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*"The time is out of joint; O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!"*

In these words, I imagine, is the key to Hamlet's whole procedure, and to me it is clear that Shakespeare sought to depict a great deed laid upon a soul unequal to the performance of it. In this view I find the piece composed throughout. Here is an oak-tree planted in a costly vase, which should have received into its bosom only lovely flowers; the roots spread out, the vase is shivered to pieces.

A beautiful, pure, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which makes the hero, sinks beneath a burden which it can neither bear nor throw off; every duty is holy to him,—this too hard. The impossible is required of him,—not the impossible in itself, but the impossible to him. How he winds, turns, agonizes, advances, and recoils, ever reminded, ever reminding himself, and at last almost loses his purpose from his thoughts, without ever again recovering his peace of mind. . . .

It pleases, it flatters us greatly, to see a hero who acts of himself, who loves and hates us as his heart prompts, undertaking and executing, thrusting aside all hindrances, and accomplishing a great purpose. Historians and poets would fain persuade us that so proud a lot may fall to man. In *Hamlet* we are taught otherwise; the hero has no plan, but the piece is full of plan. . . .

Hamlet is endowed more properly with sentiment than with a character; it is events alone that push him on; and accordingly the piece has somewhat the amplification of a novel. But as it is Fate that draws the plan, as the piece proceeds from a deed of terror, and the hero is steadily driven on to a deed of terror, the work is tragic in its highest sense, and admits of no other than a tragic end.

GOETHE: *Wilhelm Meister*.



Preface.

The Early Editions. The authorised text of *Hamlet* is based on (i.) a Quarto edition published in the year 1604, and (ii.) the First Folio version of 1623, where the play follows *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth*, preceding *King Lear*. The Quarto of 1604 has the following title-page:—

"THE | Tragicall Historie of | HAMLET, | *Prince of Denmarke.* |
By William Shakespeare. | Newly imprinted and enlarged to
almost as much | againe as it was, according to the true and
perfect | Coppie. | AT LONDON, | Printed by I. R. for N. I., and
are to be sold at his | shoppe vnder Saint Dunston's Church in |
Fleetstreet. 1604" (v. No. 2 of Shakespeare Quarto Facsimiles,
issued by W. Griggs, under the superintendence of Dr Furnival).

A comparison of the two texts shows that they are derived from independent sources; neither is a true copy of the author's manuscript; the Quarto edition, though very carelessly printed, is longer than the Folio version, and is essentially more valuable; on the other hand, the Folio version contains a few passages which are not found in the Quarto, and contrasts favourably with it in the less important matter of typographical accuracy (*vide* Notes, *passim*).

The two editions represent, in all probability, two distinct acting versions of Shakespeare's perfect text.

Quarto editions appeared in 1605, 1611, *circa* 1611-1637, 1637;

each is derived from the edition immediately preceding it, the Quarto of 1605 differing from that of 1604 only in the slightest degree.

The First Quarto. The 1604 edition is generally known as the Second Quarto, to distinguish it from a remarkable production which appeared in the previous year:—

"The | Tragicall Historie of | HAMLET | *Prince of Denmark*
| By William Shake-speare. | As it hath bene diuerse times acted
by his Highnesse ser- | uants in the Cittie of London: as also in
the two V- | niversities of Cambridge and Oxford, and else-where
| At London printed for N: L. and John Trundell. | 1603."

No copy of this Quarto was known until 1823, when Sir Henry Bunbury discovered the treasure in 'a small Quarto, barbarously cropped, and very ill-bound,' containing some dozen Shakespearian plays. It ultimately became the property of the Duke of Devonshire for the sum of £230. Unfortunately, the last page of the play was missing.

In 1856 another copy was bought from a student of Trinity College, Dublin, by a Dublin book-dealer, for one shilling, and sold by him for £70; it is now in the British Museum. In this copy the title-page is lacking, but it supplies the missing last page of the Devonshire Quarto.*

* In 1858 a lithographed facsimile was issued by the Duke, in a very limited impression. The first serviceable edition, and still perhaps the best, appeared in 1860, together with the Quarto of 1604, "*being exact Reprints of the First and Second Editions of Shakespear's great Drama, from the very rare Originals in the possession of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire; with the two texts printed on opposite pages, and so arranged that the parallel passages face each other. And a Bibliographical Preface by Samuel Timmins. . . . Locke here vpon this Picture, and on this.*"

In connection with the publication of the 1603 Quarto, reference must be made to the following entry in the *Stationers' Registers* :—

"[1602] xxvjth Julij.

James Robertes. Entered for his Copie vnder the handes of master *Payfield* and master *Watersons* Warden A booke called '*the Revenge of HAMLETT Prince [of] Denmarke*' as yt was lastli Acted by the Lord Chamberlayne his ser-vantes vjd."

James Robertes, the printer of the 1604 edition, may also have been the printer of the Quarto of 1603, and this entry may have had reference to its projected publication; it is noteworthy that in 1603 "the Lord Chamberlain's Servants" became "The King's Players," and the Quarto states that the play had been acted "by His Highness' Servants." On the other hand, the entry may have been made by Robertes to secure the play to himself, and some "inferior and nameless printer" may have anticipated him by the publication of an imperfect, surreptitious, and garbled version, impudently offering as Shakespeare's such wretched stuff as this :—

*"To be, or not to be, I there's the point,
To Die, to sleepe, is that all: I all!
No, to sleepe, to dreame, I mary there it goes,
For in that dreame of death, when wee awake,
And borne before an everlasting Judge;
From whence no passenger ever return'd,
The undiscover'd country, at whose sight
The happy smile, and the accursed damn'd."*

The dullest poetaster could not have been guilty of this non-

Lithographic reprints were also issued by E. W. Ashbee and W. Griggs; the text is reprinted in the *Cambridge Shakespeare, etc.*

sense: a second-rate playwright might have put these last words in Hamlet's mouth:—

*" Mine eyes have lost their sight, my tongue his use :
Farewell Horatio, heaven receive my soul :"*

"*The rest is silence*"—Shakespeare's supreme touch is here.

A rapid examination of the first Quarto reveals the following among its chief divergences:—(i.) the difference in length; 2143 lines as against 3719 in the later Quarto; (ii.) the mutilation, or omission, of many passages "distinguished by that blending of psychological insight with imagination and fancy, which is the highest manifestation of Shakespeare's genius;" (iii.) absurd misplacement and maiming of lines; distortion of words and phrases; (iv.) confusion in the order of the scenes; (v.) difference in characterisation; e.g. the Queen's avowed innocence ("But as I have a soul, I swear by heaven, I never knew of this most horrid murder"), and her active adhesion to the plots against her guilty husband; (vi.) this latter aspect is brought out in a special scene between Horatio and the Queen, omitted in the later version; (vii.) the names of some of the characters are not the same as in the subsequent editions; *Corambis* and *Montano*, for *Polonius* and *Reynaldo*. What, then, is the history of this Quarto? In the first place it is certain that it must have been printed without authority; in all probability shorthand notes taken by an incompetent stenographer during the performance of the play formed the basis of the printer's "copy." Thomas Heywood alludes to this method of obtaining plays in the prologue to his *If you know not me, you know no bodie*:—

*" (This) did through the Seats, the Boxes, and the Stage
So much, that some by Stenography drew
The plot: put it in print: (scarce one word true)."*

The main question at issue is the relation of this piratical version

to Shakespeare's work. The various views may be divided as follows:—(i.) there are those who maintain that it is an imperfect production of an old *Hamlet* written by Shakespeare in his youth, and revised by him in his maturer years; (ii.) others contend that both the First and Second Quartos represent the same version, the difference between the two editions being due to carelessness and incompetence; (iii.) a third class holds, very strongly, that the First Quarto is a garbled version of an old-fashioned play of *Hamlet*, written by some other dramatist, and revised to a certain extent by Shakespeare about the year 1602; so that the original of Quarto 1 represented Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in an intermediate stage; in Quarto 2 we have for the first time the complete metamorphosis. All the evidence seems to point to this third view as a plausible settlement of the problem; there is little to be said in favour of the first and second theories.

The Lost Hamlet. There is no doubt that a play on the subject of *Hamlet* existed as early as 1589, in which year there appeared Greene's *Menaphan*, with a prefatory epistle by Thomas Nash, containing a summary review of contemporary literature. The following passage occurs in his 'talk' with 'a few of our triviale translators':—

"It is a common practice now a daies amongst a sort of shifting companions, that runne through every arte and thrive by none to leave the trade of *Novicius* (i.e. attorney) whereto they were borne, and busie themselves with the enlevours of art, that could scarcelie latinize their neck verse if they should have needs; yet English Seneca read by candle-light yeeldes manie good sentences, as *Bloud is a beggar*, and so forth: and if you intreate him faire in a frostie morning,