

TIMON, A PLAY

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Timon, A Play by Alexander Dyce

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ALEXANDER DYCE

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NOW FIRST PRINTED.

EDITED BY

THE REV. ALEXANDER DYCE.



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P R E F A C E.

The following notices of the present drama occur in the Preliminary Remarks on *Timon of Athens*,—*Shakespeare*, vol. xiii., 244-5, ed. 1821.

“ Mr. Strutt the engraver, to whom our antiquaries are under no inconsiderable obligations, has in his possession a MS. play on this subject. It appears to have been written, or transcribed, about the year 1600. There is a scene in it resembling Shakespeare’s banquet given by Timon to his flatterers. Instead of *warm water*, he sets before them *stones painted like artichokes*, and afterwards beats them out of the room. He then retires to the woods, attended by his faithful steward, who (like Kent, in *King Lear*,) has disguised himself to continue his services to his master. Timon, in the last act, is followed by his fickle mistress, &c., after he was reported to have discovered a hidden treasure by dig-

ging. The piece itself (though it appears to be the work of an academick) is a wretched one."—*Steevens*.

"To the manuscript play mentioned by Mr. Steevens, our author, I have no doubt, was also indebted for some other circumstances. Here he found the faithful steward, the banquet-scene, and the story of Timon's being possessed of great sums of gold which he had dug up in the woods; a circumstance which he could not have had from Lucian, there being then no translation of the dialogue that relates to this subject."—*Malone*.

From the possession of Strutt, the MS. of *Timon* passed (perhaps not immediately) into that of Mr. Heber, at the sale of whose library it was purchased by Mr. Rodd the bookseller, and afterwards became mine. It is an apograph by two transcribers, the portions copied out by the one differing greatly in the character of the handwriting from those executed by the other.

This play was evidently intended for the amusement of an academic audience. That it was really acted, a strong presumptive proof is afforded by the stage-direction at page 79, which originally stood, "*Enter Timon and Laches with either a spade in their hands,*" but which has been carefully altered to "*Enter Timon and Laches with 3 spades in their hands,*"—because a third spade was required for the use of Gelasimus in a later part of the scene.

I leave to others a minute discussion of the question, whether or not Shakespeare was indebted to the present piece. I shall merely observe, that I entertain considerable doubts of his having been acquainted with a drama, which was certainly never performed in the metropolis, and which was likely to have been read only by a few of the author's particular friends, to whom transcripts of it had been presented.

A. DYCE.