

**SHAKESPEARE'S THE TEMPEST.
WITH INTRODUCTION, AND
NOTES EXPLANATORY AND
CRITICAL. FOR USE IN SCHOOLS
AND CLASSES**

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Shakespeare's the Tempest. With Introduction, and Notes Explanatory and Critical. For Use in Schools and Classes by Rev. Henry N. Hudson

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REV. HENRY N. HUDSON

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THE TEMPEST.

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INTRODUCTION, AND NOTES EXPLANATORY AND CRITICAL,

FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND CLASSES.

BY THE

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INTRODUCTION.

State of the Text.

THE TEMPEST is one of the plays that were never printed till in the folio of 1623; where, for reasons unknown to us, it stands the first in the division of Comedies, and the first in the volume, though it was undoubtedly among the latest of the Poet's works.

The play is badly printed, considerably worse than most of the plays first printed in that volume; though not so badly as *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Coriolanus*. Besides many slighter errors, not very difficult of correction, it has a number of passages that are troublesome in the highest degree, and some that have hitherto baffled the most persevering and painstaking efforts to bring them into a satisfactory state; insomuch that they should, perhaps, be left untouched, as hopelessly incurable. Still I suppose it would hardly do to give up the cause on the plea that the resources of corrective art have here been exhausted: so I have, though without any great confidence of success, ventured to try my hand on several of them, and, after many years of careful study, have done the best I could with them. The details of the matter are, I believe, fully presented in the Critical Notes, and therefore need not be further enlarged upon here. It will be seen that I have adopted several new

readings recently proposed by eminent contemporary Shakespearians; and in these, as I can hardly have any self-partiality to warp my judgment, so I feel more confident as to the result.

Date of the Writing.

It has been ascertained beyond question that *The Tempest* was written at some time between the years 1603 and 1613. On the one hand, the leading features of Gonzalo's Commonwealth, as described in Act ii., Scene 1, were evidently taken from John Florio's translation of Montaigne, which was published in 1603. As the passage is curious in itself, and as it aptly illustrates the Poet's method of appropriating from others, I subjoin it together with the original: —

Had I plantation of this isle, my lord,
 And were the King on't, what would I do?
 I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
 Execute all things: for no kind of traffic
 Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
 Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
 And use of service, none; contract, succession,
 Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
 No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
 No occupation; all men idle, all,
 And women too, but innocent and pure;
 No sovereignty:
 All things in common Nature should produce
 Without sweat or endeavour: treason, felony,
 Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
 Would I not have: but Nature should bring forth,
 Of its own kind, all foison, all abundance,
 To feed my innocent people.
 I would with such perfection govern, sir,
 T' excel the golden age.

In Montaigne's essay *Of the Cannibals*, as translated by Florio, we have the following: "Meseemeth that what in

those nations we see by experience doth not only exceed all the pictures wherewith licentious Poesy hath proudly embellished the golden age, and all her quaint inventions to feign a happy condition of man; but also the conception and desire of Philosophy. It is a nation, would I answer Plato, that hath no kind of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of politic superiority; no use of service, of riches, or of poverty; no contracts, no successions, no dividences; no occupation, but idle; no respect of kindred, but common; no apparel but natural; no manuring of lands; no use of wine, corn, or metal: the very words that import lying, falsehood, treason, dissimulation, covetousness, envy, detraction, and pardon, were never heard amongst them."

Here the borrowing is too plain to be questioned; and this fixes the writing of *The Tempest* after 1603. On the other hand, Malone ascertained from some old records that the play was acted by the King's players "before Prince Charles, the Princess Elizabeth, and the Prince Palatine, in the beginning of 1613."

But the time of writing is to be gathered more nearly from another source. The play has several points clearly connecting with some of the then recent marvels of Transatlantic discovery: in fact, I suspect America may justly claim to have borne a considerable part in suggesting and shaping this delectable workmanship. In May, 1609, Sir George Somers, with a fleet of nine ships, headed by the *Sea-Venture*, which was called the Admiral's Ship, sailed for Virginia. In mid-ocean they were struck by a terrible tempest, which scattered the whole fleet; seven of the ships, however, reached Virginia; but the *Sea-Venture* was parted from the rest, driven out of her course, and finally wrecked

on one of the Bermudas. These islands were then thought to be "a most prodigious and enchanted place, affording nothing but gusts, storms, and foul weather"; on which account they had acquired a bad name, as "an enchanted pile of rocks, and a desert inhabitation of devils."

In 1610 appeared a pamphlet entitled *A Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called the Isle of Devils*, giving an account of the storm and shipwreck. The sailors had worked themselves into complete exhaustion, had given over in despair, and taken leave of each other, when the ship was found to be jammed in between two rocks, so that all came safe to land. They found the island uninhabited, the air mild and wholesome, the land exceedingly fruitful; "all the fairies of the rocks were but flocks of birds, and all the devils that haunted the woods were but herds of swine." Staying there some nine months, they had a very delightful time of it, refitted their ship, and then put to sea again, with an ample supply of provisions, and their minds richly freighted with the beauties and wonders of the place.

There can be no rational doubt that from this narrative Shakespeare took various hints for the matter of his drama. Thus much is plainly indicated by his mention of "the still-vex'd Bermoothes," as the Bermudas were then called, and also by the qualities of air and soil ascribed to his happy island. So that 1610 is as early a date as can well be assigned for the composition. The supernatural in the play was no doubt the Poet's own creation; but it would have been in accordance with his usual method to avail himself of whatever interest might spring from the popular notions touching the Bermudas. In his marvellous creations the people would see nothing but the distant marvels with which their fancies were prepossessed.

Concurrent with all this is the internal evidence of the play itself. The style, language, and general cast of thought, the union of richness and severity, the grave, austere beauty of character which pervades it, and the organic compactness of the whole structure, all go to mark it as an issue of the Poet's ripest years. Coleridge regarded it as "certainly one of Shakespeare's latest works, judging from the language only." Campbell the poet considers it his very latest. "*The Tempest*," says he, "has a sort of sacredness as the last work of a mighty workman. Shakespeare, as if conscious that it would be his last, and as if inspired to typify himself, has made his hero a natural, a dignified, and benevolent magician, who could conjure up 'spirits from the vasty deep,' and command supernatural agency by the most seemingly-natural and simple means. Shakespeare himself is Prospero, or rather the superior genius who commands both Prospero and Ariel. But the time was approaching when the potent sorcerer was to break his staff, and bury it fathoms in the ocean 'deeper than did ever plummet sound.' That staff has never been and will never be recovered."

But I suspect there is more of poetry than of truth in this; at least I can find no warrant for it: on the contrary, we have fair ground for believing that at least *Coriolanus*, *King Henry the Eighth*, and perhaps *The Winter's Tale* were written after *The Tempest*. Verplanck, rather than give up the notion so well put by Campbell, suggests that the Poet may have revised *The Tempest* after all his other plays were written, and inserted the passage where Prospero abjures his "rough magic," and buries his staff, and drowns his book. But I can hardly think that Shakespeare had any reference to himself in that passage: for, besides that he did not use to put his own feelings and purposes into the mouth of his

characters, the doing so in this case would infer such a degree of self-exultation as, it seems to me, his native and habitual modesty would scarce permit.

Source of the Plot.

Shakespeare was so unconscious of his great inventive faculty, so unambitious of originality in his plots and materials, and so apt to found his plays upon some popular chronicle or tale or romance, that he is generally, perhaps justly, presumed to have done so in this instance. Yet no play or novel has been identified as having furnished, in any sort, the basis of *The Tempest*, or any materials towards the composition. Commentators have been very diligent and inquisitive in the search; still, for aught appears thus far, the probability is, that, in this case, the plot had its origin in the Poet's mind. Collins the poet, indeed, told Thomas Warton that he had met with a novel called *Aurelio and Isabella*, dated 1588, and printed in Italian, Spanish, French, and English, upon which he thought *The Tempest* to have been founded: but poor Collins was at the time suffering under his mental disorder; and, as regards the particular novel he mentioned, his memory must have been at fault; for the story of Aurelio and Isabella has nothing in common with the play.

In the year 1841, however, Mr. Thoms called attention, in *The New Monthly Magazine*, to some remarkable coincidences between *The Tempest* and a German dramatic piece entitled *The Beautiful Sidea*, composed by Jacob Ayrer, who was a notary of Nuremberg, and contemporary with Shakespeare. In this piece, Prince Ludolph and Prince Leudegast answer to Prospero and Alonso. Ludolph is a magician, has an only daughter, Sidea, and an attendant spirit, Runcifal, who has